

Age-Friendly Times

News from Teaneck's Age-Friendly Community Initiative

Teaneck, a Town for All Ages

A great place to grow up should also be a great place to grow old.

If you polled people on the streets of Teaneck, most would likely agree with that sentiment.

But the fact is, Teaneck, like most American suburbs, was designed and built to better suit the needs of families with young children and minivans, rather than the needs of aging grandparents who no longer drive or need a big house anymore.

So sentiment alone isn't enough to help older people in Teaneck when they want to downsize to a small apartment, find a ride to the grocery store, get someone to shovel the walk or hire a caregiver on their fixed-income budgets.

Enter Age-Friendly Teaneck, a community initiative that is enlisting the township's leaders and activists in the common goal of better serving the needs of residents of all ages. Or to put it another way, to turn a sentiment into a strategy.

Since early 2016, Age-Friendly Teaneck has built a network of supporters, with some of Teaneck's most-active government, business and civic leaders on its steering committee and task forces.

The project is directed by Elizabeth Davis, a licensed clinical social worker who founded Geriatric Services, Inc., a non-profit with oversight over two of Teaneck's affordable living options for seniors - the 65-bed Bright Side Manor assisted living residence and the 62-unit Brookdale senior housing building.

Through her 35 years of work in the field of aging, Davis has long encountered older people who regrettably left behind communities they loved because it became too hard to stay.

Project Coordinator Jacqueline Kates well understands such laments. Kates is a former mayor and township council member who recently retired as community relations coordinator at Holy Name Medical Center. Three years ago, Kates and her husband moved to an apartment in Fort Lee after

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Age-Friendly Teaneck Successes



Getting three seconds added to signal at Cedar Lane and Garrison Avenue so people of all ages have time to cross safely

Advocating for the Township Council to support Complete Streets policies to improve safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users of all ages

Creating a refrigerator magnet resource directory listing services for older adults

Disseminating a community letter aimed at getting assistance to frail and isolated residents, an outreach that so far has identified 10 residents in need

Persuading the County to create a central number (201-336-7400) for seniors seeking affordable subsidized housing

Founding the Teaneck Historical Society



Age-Friendly Teaneck's Business and Banking Task Force has created decals for storefront windows.

Business Tips

Avoid

- ☒ Loud music
- ☒ Heavy doors
- ☒ Crowded aisles
- ☒ Small lettering on signs
- ☒ Convoluted websites

Include

- ☒ Seating
- ☒ Hand rails
- ☒ Accessible bathrooms
- ☒ Visible markings on stairs or inclines
- ☒ Ample parking
- ☒ Zoom control on websites
- ☒ Staff sensitivity training

Age-Friendly Businesses Better for All

The key to attracting older customers might start with some common-sense design features. Good lighting. Accessible aisles. Easy-to-reach shelves.

But cosmetic changes alone aren't enough to truly satisfy the senior citizen shopper.

Business owners also need to think of older customers as a benefit rather than a burden on a business.

That's the advice that Robin Granat, executive director of Five-Star Premier Residences of Teaneck, shared at a recent breakfast gathering aimed at teaching Teaneck business leaders to be more "age-friendly."

"You need to look at this as not something you're doing to be nice," Granat said. "It's something that's necessary for your business."

Five-Star Residence co-sponsored and provided food for the breakfast meeting, which is intended to be one of many educational and collaborative efforts that Age-Friendly Teaneck will

organize with the business community.

Some older people do require accommodations for declining vision, hearing and mobility.

But it's important not to treat every senior as if they are frail, impaired or difficult.

Granat gave the roughly 30 business leaders in

Fact: Nearly 80 percent of the country's net worth is held by people over 50 – AARP

attendance a quiz to determine if they have an age bias.

The first question was, "Do you believe your older self is inferior to your younger self?"

When heads nodded, Granat pointed out that such feelings form the basis of an age bias that can filter into the operations of a business.

"It goes deeper than you think," she said. ♦

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being unable to find a suitable place to downsize in Teaneck.

"I never thought I'd move out of Teaneck," Kates said. "I sort of consider myself the poster child for what I don't want to happen to others."

In addition to its many local partners, Age-Friendly Teaneck is plugged into a network of other New Jersey communities with similar initiatives, all being funded by

the Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation or The Grotta Fund for Senior Care.

The Taub Foundation is also funding a New Jersey Future land-use study of Teaneck to assess the age-friendliness of housing, transportation, public facilities and community services.

As we strive to make Teaneck a more livable community for all ages, we welcome your input. ♦

Transit Training Helps You Get From Here to There

Some suburbanites haven't stepped onto a public bus or train in decades.

When those car-dependent residents reach an age where driving becomes difficult, turning to public transportation seems unimaginable. A bus schedule is hieroglyphics to them.

But a program that's relatively new in Bergen County is seeking to de-mystify public transportation.

Two transit experts from the Rutgers University New Jersey Transportation Independence Program came to the Teaneck Public Library in October to teach older residents the basics of paying fares, planning routes and finding the accommodations they need.


"I had no idea buses could kneel," marveled Dr. Zita Pruitt, after the seminar attended by a dozen residents.

Pruitt, a member of Age-Friendly Teaneck's Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Task Force, was referring to the mechanical step offered on all New Jersey Transit buses, which can be lowered to accommodate anyone who can't manage a steep climb.





NJ Transit also equips buses with wheelchair lifts and plays recorded announcements for the visually impaired that can be heard both in and outside its bus and trains.

Some stations have bridge plates that can be deployed at certain train doors for a mobility-challenged passenger who can't hop over the gap between the train and platform. The two NJTIP trainers, Nieves Pimienta and Melody Bundy, gave tips on how older transit users can get such needed assistance.

NJTIP recently published a guide of senior transit and ride services in Bergen County, describing individualized ride programs and other types of special transportation services such as Access Link, a door-to-door bus service for people with medically documented disabilities.

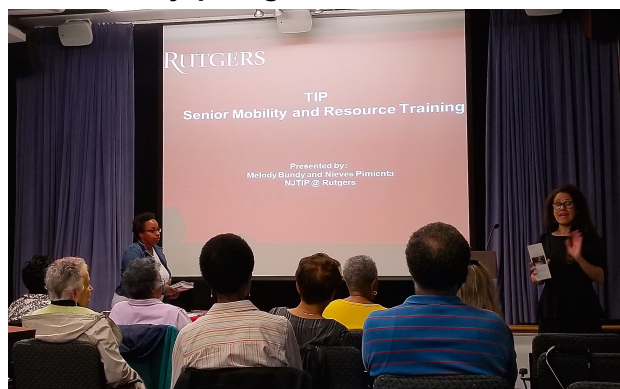


Our Priorities

	Housing Options
	Transportation & Pedestrian Safety
	Communication & Community Resources
	Health & Social Engagement
	Business & Banking

Residents of Teaneck and other Bergen towns also can request one-on-one training sessions with NJTIP trainers, who will teach them travel skills by riding the bus or train with them until they are ready to travel independently. There is no fee, other than the transit fare itself.

For more information, NJTIP can be reached by calling 848-932-4499 or logging onto **www.njtip.rutgers.edu**. ♦



Melody Bundy, left, and Nieves Pimienta, right, teach Teaneck seniors how to use public transit and other ride programs to travel where they need to go.

Staying Safe Means Staying Fit Behind the Wheel

A seat belt tucked under an arm instead of across a shoulder. A steering wheel so low it's hard to maneuver. A side mirror positioned in a spot that leaves the driver with too big of a blind spot.

These were some of the potential hazards that Teaneck Police Officers Sara Quant and Dan Dalessio identified as they inspected the inside and outside of eight different vehicles at a safety evaluation event for older drivers known as CarFit.

As the officers advised those drivers about the factors that might be making them feel less secure on the road, nearly 100 senior citizens were receiving health screenings and learning about services that help older residents stay safe and fit in other ways.

The Senior Health and Resource Fair, held Oct. 4 at the Richard Rodda Recreation Center, was a joint venture by Holy Name Medical Center, Teaneck Township and Age-Friendly Teaneck.

Holy Name had staff on hand to screen participants for risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, bone density loss and pulmonary problems, while a number of local service providers explained resources that older residents can tap to get help.

Age-Friendly Teaneck helped promote and organize the fair as part of its mission to connect older residents to services they need but can't find, as well as to alert them to programs that they might not even be aware they need, such as CarFit.

Quant and Dalessio are among four Teaneck police officers trained in providing the 20-minute CarFit evaluations, part of a national safety awareness program created by AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association.



Above, Officer Dan Dalessio observes a senior getting into driver's seat as part of a CarFit inspection. Right, Senior Health Resource Fair highlights regional programs like Bergen Volunteer Center's Chore Service.



One woman arrived with three different types of pillows that she uses to prop herself up in the driver seat, wanting to know which one the officers thought was more effective. Dalessio instead introduced her to Christine Smith, an occupational therapist at Holy Name, who showed her a catalog of specially designed cushions that would offer better support than a throw pillow.

"For most people, it's just a little tweaking we have to do," Quant said.

Such adjustments can improve a driver's ability to see and react to their surroundings.

The Teaneck Police Department conducts a couple of CarFit events each year. To find out when another one is being held in New Jersey, log onto www.car-fit.org. ♦



Tune in to Age-Friendly Teaneck News

For more information, including a comprehensive listing of resources, local events, and senior-related news, visit our website and pages.

www.agefriendlyteaneck.org ♦ facebook.com/AFTeaneck ♦ twitter.com/AFTeaneck