

AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities
WHO Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

PROGRESS REPORT 2018-2024



Since its establishment in 2016 and becoming a member of the AARP/WHO Networks in 2018, Teaneck continues to strive for being a more age-friendly and livable community through collaboration with Township Municipal Departments and area service providers while also increasing awareness of the needs of the Township's rapidly growing older population. Age-Friendly Teaneck is administered by The Bright Side Family, a nonprofit provider of housing and services for older adults in Teaneck.

Teaneck, New Jersey

www.agefriendlyteaneck.org | www.teanecknj.gov

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DOMAIN 1 **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

Goal: To advocate for improvement of public spaces to gather - indoors and out - that can be used for people of all ages

- Toured our 23 parklands including 9 sites dedicated as “natural areas” after learning about age-friendly design principles. The park redevelopment strategy focused on 4 factors: Access, Comfort, Activity, and Nature
- Completed a Parks Report in January 2021 that was presented to Township Council and to the public; Sent copies to Parks, Playgrounds, and Recreation Advisory Board
- Participated in Teaneck Community Cleanup Days organized by Teaneck Environmental Commission and Department of Public Works

DOMAIN 2 **Transportation**

Goal: To advocate for additional methods of getting around, including information on pedestrian safety and public transit options

- Conducted a senior walkability workshop in October 2018 as part of NJ Department of Transportation’s (NJDOT) Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs safety initiative to raise awareness and help decision makers and professionals better understand older adults’ unique mobility needs; Collaborating partners included Township of Teaneck municipal departments, Age-Friendly Teaneck, NJDOT, WSP, and Civic Eye Collaborative
- Township won an AARP Challenge Grant in 2019 to increase connectivity among township-sponsored activities by improving the safety conditions of Teaneck’s pedestrian walkway network and fostering healthy lifestyles for all; this included additional flashing beacons at well-travelled crossways and adding seconds to crossing

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times that allow for more time to cross safely

- Completed a land-use analysis with NJ Future in February 2019 that maintained age-friendliness at the forefront of its report
- Hosted a Local Planning and Zoning 101 workshop in March 2020 to help township residents demystify the process of what developers understand with how land-use decisions are made; Collaborators included League of Women Voters of Teaneck
- Township passed a resolution for Complete Streets policy as part of its Complete Streets Action Plan
- Collaborate advocacy with Safe Streets Teaneck, a community of Teaneck residents who believe that it's time to put people at the center of planning
- Township secured a second senior van for medical appointments and grocery shopping; both vans are equipped with wheelchair lifts to accommodate disabled residents
- Hosted NJTIP @ Rutgers (NJ Travel Independence Program) to increase the independence and self-sufficiency of people with disabilities, older adults, and others by empowering them to use the public transit system safely and independently
- Encouraged and widely-shared the use of Township and County transportation options, including free ride share services

DOMAIN 3 **Housing**

Goal: To advocate for a diverse housing stock and considering aging-in-place options for differing incomes, ages, and life stages

- Hosted numerous housing options fairs and created one-pagers to educate the public about Missing Middle Housing and the need for diverse affordable housing choices; Collaborators included Teaneck Public Library and Teaneck Senior Center
- Advocated for Bergen County Division of Senior Services to create the role of and hire a Housing Navigator who would serve as a one-stop shop for people looking for affordable housing options; the

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Navigator tracked waitlist openings and new application opportunities then produced monthly newsletters that were sent to hundreds of emails helping thousands of older adults and advocates

- Developed, with tremendous support from the Teaneck's planning board and Council, a 100% affordable housing building with 40 units; The 5-story accessibly-designed building will have a ground floor community center offering health, wellness, and social engagement programs for its tenants, neighborhood residents, and older adults from throughout Teaneck
- Appointed to participate in Teaneck's Master Plan Steering Committee as the housing advocate

DOMAIN 4 **Social Participation**

Goal: To advocate for combatting social isolation

- Hosted numerous social and educational events for Teaneck's older adult community
- Collaborated with Teaneck Public Library on Speed Friending events that facilitate meeting new people and learning new things
- Encouraged the Teaneck Public Library to revamp its Friends Friday group, which hosts educational historical programming
- Promoted Teaneck Senior Center programming at the Richard Rodda Community Center, a very popular and wide array of seasonal activities that are offered year-round with opportunities in education, physical fitness, social recreation and special events, facilitated by renown instructors in their respective fields
- Trained as a coach and hosted A Matter of Balance classes, a fall-prevention program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults
- Conducted a survey during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in August 2020 to the older adults in our community to learn about existing and needed services and presented the report to Township

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Council and public

- Attempted to host a series of Community Table events to start March 2020 that targeted the most isolated older adults in town, identified by Teaneck Volunteer Ambulance Corps, Meals on Wheels providers, and other social service providers; Revisited conversation

DOMAIN 5 **Respect and Social Inclusion**

Goal: To advocate for the value of older adults in the community as well as promote intergenerational gatherings

- Celebrated Older Americans Month through annual programming highlighting the benefits for older adults in the community
- Appointed to participate in Teaneck's Master Plan Steering Committee as the older adult advocate
- Honed Age-Friendly Teaneck's 16 member steering committee and 50-plus members of its five task forces to an 8-12 advisory board with community liaisons that are full of vigor and actively participate in bringing forth ideas and perspectives to the initiative
- Created a "spotlight" in Age-Friendly Teaneck's newsletter for the older adult community to get to know advisory board members
- Initiated a Teaneck Historical Society that has branched off and became its own 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that honors the rich history of the Township; For Teaneck's 125th birthday in 2020, the book, "Images of America: TEANECK", was written by a local older adult author and sponsored by the Teaneck Historical Society in cooperation with the Teaneck Public Library
- Offered an Exploring Careers in Aging summer internship for rising juniors and seniors of various high schools in Teaneck to explore career opportunities as the demand for professionals with expertise in aging is growing rapidly with the changing population; It provided connections with professionals in the fields of aging care related social work, geriatric wellness, technology, home care,

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recreation, food service, housing, elder law, business management, and architects of senior and universal design

- Expanded intergenerational connections by bringing older adults into middle school classrooms to share their perspectives on books read with language arts teachers and provide various insights

DOMAIN 6 **Work and Civic Engagement**

Goal: To advocate for active engagement of older adults to work or volunteer their time and skills

- Engaged volunteerism through community programs of The Bright Side Family's nonprofit organization, allowing retired accountants, bank tellers, social workers, and other fields to utilize their lifelong learned skills; Encouraged the value of homemakers who managed their household budgets in a way that carries transferrable skills
- Promoted Bergen Volunteers' Redefining Retirement program, which helps to facilitate meaningful action for older adults who are in a new phase of life

DOMAIN 7 **Communication and Information**

Goal: To advocate for widely-shared information and transparency of communication through in-person and digital methods

- Communicated through various forms of to reach many audiences, including print newsletters when we had an underwriting sponsor, social media for tech-savvy seniors, digital website and landing pages, printed copies of educational one-pagers and leave behinds, and monthly email news blasts for active linkages
- Endeavored to have as many in-person gatherings with additional options for virtual platforms

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- Advocated for the Township Council and other Township-related meetings to maintain a hybrid option for those who are either unable to transport to Council Chambers or would benefit from having online platform transcriptions and other disability-friendly alternatives
- Created recorded technology training episodes during COVID-19 pandemic featuring advice and demonstrations both for beginners and those with moderate digital skills, on topics such as video chat services, telemedicine, joining in virtual Township government meetings, and on Teaneck Public Library's many digital offerings for ebooks, movies, etc.
- Trained and supervised teenage tutors to learn techniques for teaching technology skills to older residents who have had less exposure to the internet and digital communication platforms
- Posted recorded financial literacy workshops that were held in-person but can be shared with other interested older adults
- Partnered with local service provider to print numerous versions of magnetized resource guide that can be posted and ready-to-access

DOMAIN 8 **Community and Health Services**

Goal: To advocate for health, wellness, and social service resources that are available and accessible

- Collaborated closely with area medical center to host an annual Senior Health and Resource Fair where we arranged nonprofits and other service agencies to table as they scheduled free health screenings, including blood pressure, BMI/weight, stroke risk assessments, diabetes risk assessments, fall risk assessments, cancer support, and health insurance counseling
- Collaborated with area medical center's community health programs to bring the Mobile Education Lab (MEL) van around to different area in Teaneck for close access

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- Provided direct service provisions to the older adult community with our money management program, financial literacy workshops, and home safety screenings for those who are aging with a disability
- Widely and readily referred to benefit screenings and options counseling from the Bergen County Division of Senior Services, the county's Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) and designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in addition to the numerous benefits offered through state and federal entitlement programs

FUTURE STRATEGIES: WHAT'S AHEAD?

Age-Friendly Teaneck continues to make strides in the Township to enhance the lives of older adults and help make the Teaneck a great place to grow up and grow old.

We continue to work closely with our area and regional partner agencies and organizations and build trust in the community as a source of information and integrity. Members of our Age-Friendly Teaneck team serve on various advisory boards to the Township Council, the Bergen County Age-Friendly Task Force, Bergen County Dementia-Friendly Action Team, and Rutgers School of Social Work (RUSSW) Aging Advisory Council. They volunteer their time with League of Women Voters Teaneck, Rotary Club of Teaneck, NJ League of Municipalities, and others.

As we maintain connection with regional advocacy groups including NJ Advocates for Aging Well, The Age-Friendly Research Team at RUSSW, Rutgers Hub for Aging Collaboration, Age-Friendly Bergen Roundtable, and Age-Friendly New Jersey, we're sure the work will keep coming before "age-friendly" becomes be a household term.

