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## Engagement of Older Refugees: Recognizing Their Contributions & Supporting Their Participation

*Webinar on Intergenerational Learning  
for Refugee Service Providers*

*Hilary Binder-Aviles, Moderator*

*Mosaica: The Center for Nonprofit Development and Pluralism  
March 9, 2009*



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### Technology Questions:

- This call is being recorded
- We plan to post PowerPoint slides on CLINIC website shortly
- We'll announce the link on our list serve when it's posted

### Objectives for Today's Webinar

- To better understand different forms of civic engagement among refugee seniors, as well as their motivations and factors that influence engagement
- To share experiences and lessons learned from several projects around the country
- To explore ideas for what you can do to develop efforts to support refugee elder civic participation

### Why Promote The Civic Participation of Refugee Seniors?

- Participation in the civic life of the community is an important part of integration
- Seniors are a tremendous, untapped community resource and asset - they have time to get involved and life experience to share
- Their participation in civic life can build bridges across generations and ethnic communities
- Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act emphasizes civic engagement and new administration is calling on all Americans to serve – how can we help make sure refugee seniors are not left out?

### Guest Speakers

- *Hitomi Yoshida – Project SHINE, Temple University Center for Intergenerational Learning*
- *Amy Trang – Fairfax Area Agency on Aging*
- *Hussien Mohamed – Sagal Radio*




### *Community Treasures:*

### *Recognizing the Contributions of Older Immigrants and Refugees*

March 9, 2009

 Center for  
Intergenerational Learning  
THINKING & LEARNING TOGETHER |  MetLife Foundation

*"I am an elderly but I don't want to give up.  
I want to learn new things. I want to be part of this country. I want my children to be part of my country."*



Hassan Bulle, Ethiopian Elder

### Community Treasures Report Highlights

- Guiding Questions for the Study
- Methodology
- Types of Civic Engagement Activities
- Motivations for Engagement
- Influencing Factors
- Paradigm Shift for Organizations

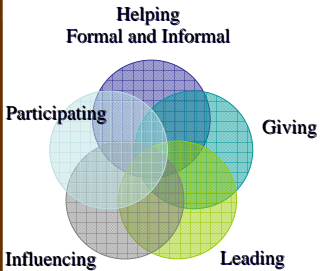
### Knowledge Building: Guiding Questions

- ◆ How are elders engaged in community and family?
- ◆ Why did elders become engaged?
- ◆ What promoted or inhibited participation?
- ◆ What are promising practices for engaging older immigrants and refugees?

### A Range of Perspectives

Philadelphia	Atlanta	Orange County, CA
Chinese	Vietnamese	Chinese
Latino Puerto Rican, Central and South American	Latino Central and South American	Latino Central and South American
Liberian	Somali Ethiopian	Vietnamese
99 Focus Group Participants		
8 Engaged Elder Interviews 14 Key Informant Interviews 13 Organizational Interviews		

### How are Elders Engaged?



Adapted from the Points of Light Foundation (2006)

### Why Do Elders Become Engaged?

- ◆ Giving Back
- ◆ Connection and Purpose
- ◆ Faith
- ◆ Influencing Young Generations
- ◆ Preserving Culture
- ◆ Addressing Community Concerns

### Influencing Factors

- ◆ **Individual Factors**  
(Health, English skills, SES, etc.)
- ◆ **Systemic Factors** (Transportation)
- ◆ **Cultural View of Civic Participation**
- ◆ **Role of Civic Connectors;**
  - *Ethnic-based Social Service Agencies*
  - *Religious Institutions*
  - *Community-led Informal Networks*
  - *Family Members*

### How can organizations promote and support elders' engagement?



### View of Elders

← From Client to Colleague to Community Leader →

	Approach	Approach	Approach
Orientation	Community Members as "Clients"	Community Members as "Contributors and Colleagues"	Community Members as "Community Leaders"
Role of Agency	Service Provider	"Authentic" Partner and Colleague	Capacity Builder/Supporter

### Elder Roles

- ◆ A continuum of formal and informal roles should be available.
- ◆ Understand and capture elders' motivations.
- ◆ Build on informal civic practices as well as creating new opportunities.




## Recruiting Seniors from Multicultural Communities in Fairfax County

Amy Trang, Ph.D.  
Multicultural Outreach and Program Coordinator  
March 2009

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 Adult & Aging Division  
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## Program Objectives

To inform Fairfax County citizens of the various available services for older adults, their caregivers, and adults with disabilities that are supported by Fairfax County, Virginia State and Federal governments.

To provide ethnic communities living in Fairfax County who, because of language and cultural barriers, may not be aware of or know how to find and/or access these services.



## How did the Multicultural Outreach Project get started?

- Fairfax County's 50+ Action plan: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults>
- County demographics compared to actual number of community members in ethnic groups served
- Pilot Korean Senior Information Line in 2006



## Community Outreach Approaches/ Opportunities for Volunteers

What are we currently doing?

- Work with community-based partners and volunteers
- Telephone Communication – Bilingual Info Lines (Korean & Vietnamese)
- Translate printed materials
- Resource Fairs to ethnic communities
- Ethnic media: newspaper, TV, and radio
- "Word of Mouth" – Community Ambassador Program (pilot Chinese community; to expand to other communities by the end of 2009)
- Community Presentations & Workshops



## Bilingual Volunteer Training



- 8-hour Orientation training is held twice a year for new bilingual volunteers



- 1 hour monthly meeting / updated training is essential for volunteer support



## Telephone Communications Bilingual Information Lines



### Option 1

- Caller calls Intake Unit and speaks with an English-speaking employee.
- Caller identifies language needs
- County staff connects caller to contracted interpreter if needed / requested.

### Option 2

- Caller calls a bilingual information line and speaks with a bilingual volunteer.
- Volunteer screens caller's needs & records information and contact data on Intake form.
- Volunteer identifies available services & coordinates points of contact to provide to caller.
- Volunteer provides interpretation services, if necessary via conference call.



## Translate Printed Materials

- Work with community-based partners to translate existing brochures and materials
- Have translated materials verified by the Language Access Coordinator's team.





## Resource Fairs

- Target large populations; attendance by the hundreds and thousands
- Provide county services at existing ethnic community activities & events
- Partner with community-based organizations to organize resource fairs
- Rely on ethnic media for **free** advertising



## Ethnic Media

Utilize available resources in the ethnic communities:

- Radio
- Television
- Newspapers
- Websites



## "Word of Mouth"



- Community Ambassador Program
- Structure with flexibility
- Allows volunteers to interact within their comfort zones
- Provide training of accurate service information
- Track referrals & evaluate program



## Community Presentations & Workshops



- Presentation topics based on community needs and requests
- Multilingual interpretations of presentations for services available to Older adults, their Caregivers, and Adults with Disabilities
- PowerPoint presentations – translated into appropriate language
- Presenters or interpreters with appropriate language skills
- Handouts should be language specific, when available.
- Presentations provided within the community, e.g., community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, senior centers, meeting halls, etc.



## What Can You Do to Promote Refugee Senior Civic Participation?

*At the community level...*

- Host a forum on the topic and use this report to start a dialogue
- Partner with others to survey refugee seniors – what are the experiences and knowledge they have to share? What are their interests?
- Build collaboration between CBOs and AAAs
- Promote message that seniors are "community treasures"

## What Can You Do to Promote Refugee Senior Civic Participation?

*As an individual organization...*

- Share this information with your staff and Board and discuss what your organization can do
- Conduct an asset-based survey or focus groups of refugee seniors you serve
- Start with a small project that engages seniors – test it, evaluate it, and look for resources to support it
- Collaborate with your local Area Agency on Aging and other CBOs

## Next Steps: Tools You Can Use

*Mosaica and Project Shine will share tools you can use, including:*

- Sample survey and focus group questions
- Examples of refugee senior civic engagement projects from around the country
- Checklist of “things to think about” in creating a program
- Ideas for partnerships and resources
- Tools for planning and evaluating a refugee seniors civic participation project

*The Civic Engagement of Older Refugees: Recognizing Their Contributions and Supporting Their Participation*

*For more information, go to:  
<http://www.cliniclegal.org/Refugee.html>*