



*An Endowment Fund
Supporting In-Home Health Services
for Tomorrow's Seniors*

Steuben Senior Services Fund, Inc.



Steuben Senior Services Fund, Inc. Pulteney Aging-in-place Feasibility Study Final Report

Introduction

In the past few years, long-term policy trends have moved away from traditional institutional living to one that is more integrated in the community. Through the Nursing Home Transition and Diversion Waiver, states are allowed to tailor services to meet the needs of a targeted group in a community-based setting. The basis of this waiver is to provide services that are person-driven and individually tailored to an individual's expressed needs and desires for long-term care. In addition, the Long-term Care Restructuring Initiative through the New York State Department of Health and the New York State Office for Aging is looking at existing waivers to see how to restructure programs to serve more individuals, to provide incentives for community based care, and to reduce the utilization of hospitals and nursing homes.

Recently, the New York State Office for Aging has developed a number of initiatives to assist independent living for older New Yorkers. The comprehensive policy and strategy, New York @ Home, includes economic assistance, support for caregivers, home and community based services, healthy aging and prevention strategies, and funding and assistance for "aging in community" planning, organizing, and training initiatives. This includes funding for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) to provide supportive services and activities that enable older adults to age in community.

Beacon Hill Village, a NORC in the Boston area that provides its members with information, services, and activities, was used as a model for this feasibility study. Members of Beacon Hill Village, who pay dues of approximately \$650 annually, can call the village office where they are referred to pre-approved high-quality vendors, from plumbers to tax experts, and will arrange to have a dog walked, a meal prepared, or pictures hung. Most services cost money, although some volunteer assistance is available. Beacon Hill Village also arranges social activities, such as exercise groups and lectures. Since its creation in the 1990's, Beacon Hill Village has spawned dozens of similar efforts nationwide, but few in a rural community such as Pulteney. The Beacon Hill survey was adapted for distribution to the older residents of Pulteney to determine desired services for aging in place.

The Keuka Area Fund provided grant monies to Steuben Senior Services Fund, Inc. (SSSF) to conduct a study in the Town of Pulteney to determine the perceived needs of the older residents that would enable them to "age-in-place" in their own homes, and to determine the potential delivery of those services. Pulteney was selected because, of the communities eligible for consideration, the town has the highest rate of households over age 65 and earning less than \$35,000 per year. In addition, Pulteney is geographically isolated which complicates access to and knowledge of services available.

Method

An Advisory Committee was assembled, and a survey was developed, based on the Beacon Hill Village survey model, to distribute to households in Pulteney for feedback. The Advisory Committee consisted of residents in the Town of Pulteney with a particular interest in determining needs and services for older residents. The committee includes:

- Barb Welles, Pulteney resident
- Jan Stone, Councilman, Pulteney Town Board
- Alise Irwin, Pulteney resident
- Barbara Radigan, Director, Pulteney Free Library
- Kathy Burns, Pulteney Aging-in-place Feasibility Study Consultant

The committee felt strongly that the geographic isolation and rural nature of the town of Pulteney contributed to the lack of knowledge of available services and programs. Therefore, the advisory committee wanted the survey to serve as an educational tool, besides a tool to collect information. Services that are currently available were indicated with an asterisk on the survey form, and individuals were encouraged to call NY Connects to find out more information or to be referred for service. Patty Baroody, NY Connects in Steuben County, did report that they had received phone calls from Pulteney based on information received in the surveys distributed.

The survey questionnaire (see appendices) asked Pulteney residents to indicate which services were important to them to enable them to remain in their own homes in Pulteney. Services were grouped in categories such as Daily Living, Health Assistance, and Organized Social Activities. Residents were also asked to share personal information, if they wished, such as income level, age, and size of household.

The committee worked with the Pulteney Town Clerk and the Town Assessor to utilize the mailing list for the enhanced STAR tax exemption recipient mailing list. To receive the enhanced STAR tax exemption, an individual has to be 65 years of age or older and the household income cannot exceed \$75,000. There were 128 individuals/households on this mailing list, but the committee felt it was important to reach individuals age 55- 64, and individuals who may be over the tax exemption income limit. Surveys were made available at six (6) pick-up/drop-off locations in Pulteney that included the Town Clerk's office, the Post Office, the Pulteney Free Library, the two churches in town, and the Pulteney Fire Hall.

Surveys were mailed, and information was placed in the *Southern Tier Shopper* in Hammondsport and the *Steuben Courier-Advocate* in Bath for two weeks advising Pulteney residents age 55+ to complete and return the surveys. These two newspapers were chosen, as there is no subscription charge for them.

Results

There were a total of 61 surveys that were returned and tallied. If we subtract the number of surveys that were returned by individuals younger than 65, or over the income limit for enhanced STAR, this number translates to a 40% return rate for the surveys that were mailed.

The complete survey questionnaire tally is available (see appendices) complete with comments, and graphs have been included to visually demonstrate the survey results.

For the action plan, the committee decided to concentrate on the ten most requested services. However, efforts could be made to begin to provide many of the desired services. For example, many survey respondents indicated that they wanted continuing education in the areas of legal information and financial information. This request could be easily communicated to the Library Director so that she could begin planning for programming in the coming year.

The top ten most important services from all the categories are:

1. Entertainment Trips (32)
2. Transportation (32)
3. Transportation to Medical Services (31)
4. Shopping (groceries) (30)
5. General Handyman (30)
6. Special Services (plumbing, electrician, etc.) (29)
7. Health Assistance Services (29)
8. Home Delivered Meals (28)
9. Home Health Care/Personal Care Aide (27)
10. Lifeline (medical alert services) (27)

The advisory committee anticipated that transportation issues would be a common concern in the Town of Pulteney, but were surprised that “Entertainment Trips” was selected as the number one need for individuals to remain in their own homes. The committee felt that this was due to the “changing face” of the typical older Pulteney resident that now includes many younger Baby Boomers who have settled in Pulteney to retire, but who are active and continue to be very engaged in the community. The next three desired services, shopping assistance, general handyman, and special services, are all non-medical services that are necessary to remain in and maintain one’s home. Older residents in Pulteney are committed to “aging-in-place”, but foresee needing quality, reliable, and trustworthy assistance in order to meet that goal. As an individual’s health starts to decline, the survey suggests that Pulteney residents are hoping to have home health care and health assistance services readily available. The availability of Lifeline, a medical alert service, was also indicated as a need. Many older residents in the Town of Pulteney, particularly those in the older age brackets who live on a fixed income, are concerned about the ability to pay the monthly fee for Lifeline services.

During the course of this survey distribution and compilation, the committee noted that Pulteney residents are unaware of many services that are currently available. For example, there is a bus route from Pulteney to Bath that is being provided daily by Steuben Area Rides, the transportation division of the Arc of Steuben. Many of the committee members, as well as the residents of Pulteney, were unaware of this service. In a conversation with Debra Gleason, Director of Steuben Area Rides, she noted that this bus route could be expanded, but at present was not being considered due to under-utilization. In addition, Salvation Army of Hornell provided a food pantry through the fall of 2008 through the First Presbyterian Church in Pulteney, but discontinued the service due to lack of participation by Pulteney households. Providing residents with information about available services and activities remains a concern.

Action Plan

The committee met to analyze the results of the surveys and after much discussion determined the following areas as crucial to the implementation of a plan of action to implement the desired services in the Town of Pulteney:

- 1) **Increase access to and knowledge of transportation in the Town of Pulteney.**

Action Steps

- a) Make these survey results available to the existing Transportation Coalition in Steuben County to support the development of a “Transportation Manager” position that would coordinate all transportation in the county.
- b) Coordinate with existing transportation services through Steuben Area Rides and Steuben Coordinated Transportation to increase the routes and schedules of transportation available, to increase publicity of available routes, and to increase the availability of smaller buses and the opportunity to make reservations or appointments for transportation.
- c) Coordinate with Project Care in the Hammondsport area to expand their volunteer driver base to include more opportunities in the Town of Pulteney.

2) Increase the availability of non-medical assistance in the Town of Pulteney.

Action Steps

- a) Coordinate with Joseph’s Hammer in Hammondsport to expand the availability of assistance with minor home repairs, construction of ramps, etc. Work with area churches and Fire auxiliary to tap additional potential volunteers in Pulteney.
- b) Coordinate with Project Care, Hammondsport Central School, BOCES, Keuka College, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts to engage youth volunteers to assist the older residents of Pulteney in such activities as grocery shopping, snow and ice removal, gardening assistance, errands, minor repairs, etc. Coordinate with the Town Board of Pulteney to investigate the possibility of a volunteer youth coordinator to supervise projects and activities in Pulteney.
- c) Investigate the possibility of developing a Handyman/Contractor list through the Steuben County Sheriff’s Office based on the registration model that currently exists through the Hornell Police Department.
- d) Investigate the possibility of creating more recreational opportunities for older residents through the Pulteney Town Board’s recreational funds, Keuka College’s swim/exercise facilities, area travel agents, etc.

3) Increase the availability of medical-related, health assistance services in the Town of Pulteney.

Action Steps

- a) Notify the Steuben County Office for Aging, NY Connects, Expanded In-Home Services Program, and the Caregiver Resource Center of the need for an expanded list of qualified personal care aides, and specifically those that would be trained for clients with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.
- b) Based on a model used at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, investigate the possibility of Keuka College students providing respite services for caregivers in Pulteney.
- c) Coordinate through the Office for Aging and Steuben Senior Services Fund, Inc. to investigate the possibility of securing funding to defray the monthly cost of Lifeline for Pulteney residents in financial need.

4) Increase the publicity and information to older Pulteney residents about the availability of services.

Action Steps

- a) Notify human service agencies of the need of increased publicity of available services to the older residents of Pulteney. The primary way to communicate information to the residents is through the use of mailings and free newspapers.

- b) Investigate the possibility of utilizing new publicity venues such as the Town of Pulteney's website, Hammondsport Central School's newsletter, Empire Telephone's bill (with a larger font), church bulletins, a human services fair in Pulteney, etc.

Appendices

Sample survey and cover letter

Survey Questionnaire Tally

List of all desired services in order of importance

Graph of top ten desired services

Graph of desired services by category

Graph of respondents by age

Graph of respondents by income level

Graph of respondents by household size