

CCOA

Community Coalition for Older Adults

MISSION

The Gainesville *Community Coalition for Older Adults* is a group of concerned citizens, community leaders, professionals, and organizations dedicated to serving elders in our community. Together they act as a team to promote respect and dignity for older adults, and address important issues such as adequate housing, affordable healthcare, intergenerational relations, and safety concerns, to ensure that our seniors can live active and enriched lives.

HISTORY

The City of Gainesville became involved in the *Communities for a Lifetime* initiative in 2002. The City Commission adopted a resolution supporting the State Department of Elder Affairs' initiative to work towards making Florida's communities "elder friendly."

The application was generated by a working group sending recommendations to the City and County Commissions to implement improvements that benefit their residents, both youth and the elderly. The goal of the initiative is to help Florida communities become

better places for elders to live and provide all residents the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of their community. In 2002 Rebecca Falmlen, Alachua County Director of Senior Affairs, was instrumental in a report to the commissions' initiative to make Florida cities "Elder Ready". With a group of senior advocates she developed the CCOA [Community Coalition for Older Adults]. It was eventually chaired by Linda Gardner with the help of committees and members of the City of Gainesville Commission and a plan was developed to make Gainesville "Elder Ready." In March 2003, the city generated a summary of the City's evaluation of the current status, with 86 recommendations in the report.

In January 2008, Elder Options (formerly Mid-Florida Area Agency on Aging) announced the availability of mini grants for those communities with the *Communities for a Lifetime* designation. (The City of Gainesville was only one of three in Alachua County.) In March, 2008 the State approved a \$4,151 grant to be used in the initial planning of a Senior Recreation Center. Rebecca and members of CCOA made visits to other senior centers in the state and with the help of Tower Publication and Charles Delatorre of Senior Times a meeting was held at the Paramount Hotel to get citizen input about a vision for a new senior center in Gainesville. This meeting facilitated by Cynthia Moore Chestnut was well attended and very informative about people's wishes. In addition, there was a request to the City of Gainesville to identify surplus spaces, and a location for the Senior Center was designated at Northside Park.

In July 2008, the City Commission approved a grant application, co-sponsored by Elder Care of Alachua County and the City of Gainesville for a Fixed Capital Grant. Anthony Clarizio worked tirelessly on the grant proposal which received a State of Florida matching grant for \$2 million. The grant identified Elder Care of Alachua County (UF Shands) as the project manager for the Senior Recreation Center. In November 2008 the Voters of Alachua County approved a *Wild Spaces Public Places*, one-half percent sales tax, and the City and County allocated \$1.5 million each, totaling \$3 million for capital construction of the Senior Recreation Center and park improvements. Anthony held many meetings allowing citizens to express their ideas about the design and function of the proposed center. Thus, we now have a beautiful new Senior Recreation Center. The management of the Center is with Elder Care of Alachua County by Anthony Clarizio.

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For a brief period the CCOA continued under the leadership of Carolyn Lukert and Donna Mitchell with some very interesting presentations to the members, but there was no energy to manage new directions and invest in projects. Since that time many members of the CCOA retired and moved on, and interest waned to the point of possibly sun-setting the CCOA. However, with the increasing aging population, and recognizing the CCOA's cooperation with the City of Gainesville Commission, several people felt the organization should be revitalized. Shirley Bloodworth and Jack Donovan reinvigorated the organization, working as co-chairs. Jack Donovan left our community in 2013 and Jon Reiskind was added as co-chair in 2014. In 2015 Kristen Griffis was added as a third co-chair. The plan is to keep working on the City's original recommendations and to explore new directions and ways to maintain Gainesville's designation of a *Community for a Lifetime*.

All of our activities are open to the public, and we encourage leaders and members of our community to participate. We hope to continue to grow, working closely with the Gainesville City Commission and local government, identifying the needs of seniors, and providing intergenerational activities to develop awareness of the needs of others. We look forward to investigating grant opportunities, through the *Communities for a Lifetime and Age Friendly* designation, with the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. Thanks to the *Senior Times* and the *Gainesville Sun* for their support throughout all of these endeavors.

ACTIVITIES

- Conduct Candidate Forums prior to all local and state elections
 - Conducted *Advance Directive* educational seminars
 - Co-sponsored a Fall Prevention Education & Screening program
 - Conducted 50 Civics Classes, 2017 & 2018, co-sponsored by League of Women Voters. 2020 Civics Classes continued by Zoom.
 - Co-sponsored seminar: *Understanding Homeowner's Taxes*
 - Conducted seminars on *Aging Well and Planning Ahead*, Spring 2019
 - *Research Showcase*, virtually, Spring 2021
 - Civics quarterly & monthly programs of community interest, 2021 & 2022
- Intergenerational activities have included support of these local organizations: Children's Trust of Alachua County, the YMCA, Planned Parenthood, and United Nations Student Models at the University of Florida, Santa Fe College, and local high schools, GNV4ALL-Empowerment Zone

CONTACT INFORMATION

Membership is by meeting attendance and open to all parties interested in the wellbeing of seniors and our greater community.

Meetings are held the **2nd Friday of every month (except November)** at the **Senior Recreation Center, 5701 NW 34th Blvd. Gainesville.**

We continue to conduct monthly meetings with presentations on topics of information and interest to seniors in our community.

For more information please contact:

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or find us on Facebook at *Community Coalition for Older Adults*.

