




---

**Engaged Universities Are Central to Strong Communities**


---

## COPCs and the Elderly Face Growing Challenges Together

The elderly population in the United States is increasing and will explode as the baby boom generation reaches its senior years beginning in 2010. As this unprecedented demographic shift to an older population continues into the next century, communities will confront a variety of new and emerging issues, such as the need for a variety of housing options, healthcare support, and social services. Both the public and private sectors are using their resources to work with communities to address some of these concerns.

The federal government overall, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in particular, is committed to helping seniors maintain their independence and ensuring a high quality of life for this country's older generation. The federal government is addressing the solvency of Social Security and the problems with Medicare to ensure that the programs assisting seniors continue to do so. Through programs such as HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program, Section 8 rental assistance vouchers, public housing, and the Healthy Homes initiative, HUD has

long been committed to ensuring the availability of adequate, affordable, accessible, and appropriate housing for seniors.

The Clinton Administration has recently designed a Housing Security Plan that will help communities assemble and coordinate a comprehensive continuum of care to meet the changing housing and service needs of their seniors. The plan embodies three overarching goals:

- To help seniors remain in their own homes and connected to their families and communities.
- To expand affordable housing opportunities for lower income seniors.
- To improve the range and coordination of housing/service combinations.

Through Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPCs), institutions of higher education are committed to engaging and serving the growing elderly populations in their neighborhoods. In an effort to address the needs of an aging population, COPCs are creating new programs and expanding existing ones. They are tapping into the vast talents and skills of seniors, encouraging aging

Americans to remain active participants in university and community life. Universities are providing community services to senior citizens, incorporating healthcare and wellness programs that address the wide array of health concerns of the elderly. COPCs are developing other support services for seniors who assume nontraditional roles in their communities. They are working with communities to help them face the challenge of providing housing for the elderly, which needs to be affordable to those with fixed

*"Today, there are more elderly citizens than ever before, and we owe it to them to make sure that their lives are happy, healthy, and secure."*

Andrew Cuomo  
Secretary, U.S. Department of  
Housing and Urban Development

incomes, provide a variety of services, and adapt to the special needs of the population. COPC programs are using their resources to help

*Continued on page 3*

### THE AGING OF AMERICA<sup>1</sup>

- Today, 1 in 8 Americans—34.1 million people—is a senior citizen (age 65 years or older), compared with 1 in 25 in the early 1900s.
- The current elderly population is projected to double by 2030, expanding at a rate of almost 3 percent each year to almost 70 million people.
- Almost 4 million senior citizens were in the labor force in 1997.
- In 1994–95, more than one-half of the older population reported having at least one disability—one-third had at least one severe disability.
- More than 7.4 million households (30 percent of all elderly households) pay more than they can afford for housing.
- Six percent of seniors (1.45 million households) live in housing that needs repair and/or rehabilitation—500,000 of these households live in severely substandard dwellings that pose a threat to their safety and welfare. ■

<sup>1</sup>From *The Challenge of Housing Security: Report to Congress on the Housing Conditions and Needs of Older Americans*, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, April 1999. Also see the Administration On Aging Webpage at <http://www.aoa.gov/aoa>.

## Seniors Sustain Their Health With COPC Programs

**T**wo Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPCs)—Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC)—are working with their communities to meet the needs of area seniors.

The COPC at Duquesne University opened a wellness clinic for seniors to help them combat the rising cost of healthcare. "The focus of this program is on wellness, not illness," says Lenore Resick, assistant professor of nursing at Duquesne University, who directs two wellness clinics. In 1995 Duquesne used a COPC grant to open an interdisciplinary, nurse-managed wellness clinic at K. Leroy Irvis Towers. The clinic at Irvis Towers, a highrise apartment complex for senior citizens, was modeled after a similar one formed by the university's school of nursing at St. Justin Plaza (another senior apartment complex).

Clinic services are designed to augment, not duplicate or replace, existing healthcare services. The clinic's goal is to help seniors avoid unnecessary hospitalization and encourage appropriate use of the healthcare system. Clinic staff provide seniors with health and exercise information, help monitor chronic conditions, conduct health screenings, and refer clients to their physicians for

appropriate followup. By helping residents keep track of their medications and working with the residents' physicians, clinic staff have discovered and helped correct several dosage errors and helped to reduce drug side effects, reports Resick.

Open twice a week, each clinic is managed by a nurse practitioner and staffed by up to three students from the university's nursing, occupational therapy, and pharmacy programs. Each year, more than 100 students fulfill degree requirements for clinical experience while they gain practical "know-how." In 1998 the clinics handled more than 5,000 visits, representing visits from more than 70 percent of residents.

The Urban Outreach Initiative (UOI) at the UMKC COPC also reaches out to seniors. The COPC's Grandparents Outreach program began after university staff noticed an increased number of grandparents in their community who were rearing their grandchildren. The program assists grandparents with support services, referrals, and access to information that they have identified as helpful in their efforts to raise their grandchildren in the 1990s. A tutoring/mentoring project is currently being developed in response to requests from several grandparents who felt

unable to assist their grandchildren with homework. Once the project is implemented, university students will serve as tutors and mentors.

Currently in its second year, the program assists approximately 100 grandparents. Most participants are single women or couples living near the university who are raising more than one grandchild. "It took a lot of work to identify the participants. Some did not want to be identified because they were afraid to get their children in trouble," says LaNor Maune, project coordinator for UMKC's Urban Affairs program. UOI identified prospective participants through referrals from local nonprofit organizations, the state family services office, and other participants.

UOI provides referrals for legal information (especially guardianship issues), city services (including housing), and free or low-cost

medical services at area clinics. The initiative sponsors a summer academy for the grandchildren that introduces them to the college campus, enabling them to get accustomed to the setting as well as use campus facilities.

Recognized as a best practice at HUD's 1999 Best Practices Conference, UMKC's Grandparents Outreach program has been well received by the community. Former participants are returning as volunteers to assist other grandparents who are facing the challenge of parenting their grandchildren.

For more information, contact Lenore Resick, Duquesne University School of Nursing, (412) 396-5228; Philip Olson, Professor of Sociology, University of Missouri at Kansas City, (816) 235-2522; or LaNor Maune, Project Coordinator, University of Missouri at Kansas City, Urban Affairs, (816) 235-1785. ■



*COPC Central* is a free quarterly publication prepared by the University Partnerships Clearinghouse, the information service sponsored by HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP). *COPC Central* highlights the contributions of universities and colleges to local community revitalization efforts. You may contact the University Partnerships Clearinghouse at P.O. Box 6091, Rockville, MD 20849, (800) 245-2691, (fax) (301) 519-5767. See the Office of University Partnerships on the World Wide Web at <http://www.oup.org>.

## Partnerships Increase Affordable Housing for the Elderly

Communities are tapping University and college resources to meet the need for quality affordable housing for America's growing elderly population. Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPCs) have responded by offering a variety of housing services to seniors.

In Brooklyn, New York, community-based organizations (CBOs) access the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development's resources as they design housing for the elderly. "The Pratt Center is an exciting place," explains senior planner Devyani Guha, "mainly because the projects we work on involve working with some of the most innovative and committed community-based organizations and individuals in the nation." Each year 5 to 10 Pratt students work with the center's faculty to assist the CBOs with their applications for HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing Services for the Elderly program. The CBOs depend on Section 202 assistance to finance new construction and rehabilitation of senior housing, using the funding to ensure housing affordability as well as to offer support services to residents.

Pratt students and faculty assisted four organizations with the financial and feasibility evaluation of Section 202 projects in 1999. (Over the past 5 years, the center has helped eight organizations win Section 202 funding.) Pratt students and faculty also lend their expertise to other senior housing projects. Two CBOs have utilized the skills of Pratt students to

gather market data and conduct design analysis for nursing homes that house the low-income elderly.

Elderly residents in the south Texas colonias are also improving their homes with the help of students and faculty from the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) COPC. "The nature of the colonias has lent itself to providing new housing services for the elderly," explains Rossana Ramirez Robertson, COPC director at UTPA. The colonias in the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas are mostly unincorporated communities that lack basic infrastructure such as water, sewers, and paved roads. They also have a high level of dilapidated housing, especially among the homes of elderly residents.

The COPC's outreach program sends students to visit disadvantaged families—many of which include the elderly—whose incomes are often far below the poverty level. Since the family members frequently do not speak English, the COPC's help is critical in linking families with housing improvement programs. "Our students conduct outreach to the colonias where many residents have built their houses piecemeal. What's new about this approach is that the students literally bring the complete resources that people need right to their doors," says Robertson. During their visits, students assist residents with applications to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) housing rehabilitation loan and grant program, translate application materials, and help residents gather



supporting application documents. Students also inform residents about the COPC's homebuyer course as well as homeownership counseling located at a local community center.

More than 100 families have benefited from the partnership between the university and the Cameron Park and Progreso colonia neighborhoods. Families have attended the homebuyer seminars and accessed home improvement information at the community center. Student outreach has helped approximately 20 seniors find the assistance they need to repair their homes by helping them with applications for the USDA home loan and grant programs. UTPA has successfully institutionalized its housing activity into both the university and the community—students are paid as staff for their outreach work and also receive course credit for serving as research assistants with the program.

For more information, contact Devyani Guha, Senior Planner, Pratt Institute,

Center for Community and Environmental Development, (718) 636-3486, ext. 6462; or Rossana Ramirez Robertson, COPC Director, University of Texas-Pan American, (956) 385-3808. ■

*Continued from page 1*

### Growing Challenges

communities improve existing and develop new elderly housing. Additionally, COPCs are tapping seniors' talents and skills while connecting them to their communities through computer technology education. Seniors are using their knowledge to send E-mail to their families, hold part-time jobs, start new hobbies, and tutor local children.

This issue of *COPC Central* illustrates how COPC grantees are developing relationships with their elderly neighbors and designing programs to help communities meet the growing demands of their elderly populations. ■

## COPCs Connect Seniors With Computer Technology

Many senior citizens have eagerly grasped today's technological advancements. Several colleges and universities—including Stillman College and Rutgers University—are using Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grants to develop courses in computer training to help seniors develop and hone their skills. Using E-mail and Internet services, seniors return to school, pursue new interests, and interact with family and friends. These programs are also linking generations, with seniors using computers to tutor local schoolchildren and help them with homework. They have been so successful that COPCs are expanding beyond basic introductory computer classes to offer more advanced applications.

In Tuscaloosa, Alabama, seniors living near Stillman College have access to the on-campus Family Life Center, which offers a variety of courses in arts and crafts,

wellness, and culture through its Senior Citizens Program. Participants in the center's program have indicated a desire to learn both basic computer skills and how to "surf the net." One participant explained, "I want to share experiences with my grandchildren. I cannot even switch a computer on, much less talk about the Internet." Center staff have implemented a weekly computer class called Seniors and Cyberspace, a 10-week course that helps seniors learn everything from using a mouse and creating word-processed documents to completing searches on the Internet and using E-mail.

Fifteen students completed the center's first computer course, which was designed by Stillman College faculty. Staff expect approximately 30 seniors to participate in the next session. COPC and Family Life Center staff are developing a curriculum that includes a computer-based genealogy course. Stillman students fulfill a community

service requirement for graduation by assisting with the training.

The Rutgers University COPC serves its elderly population by assisting four community-based organizations—Corinthian Housing, International Youth Organization, The Salvation Army, and United Community Corporation—to establish a Community Technology Network (CTN) in the West Side Park neighborhood of Newark, New Jersey.

Each partner organization will establish a computer lab and provide courses using a basic computer literacy curriculum. The curriculum was designed by the Rutgers Technical Training Program, an extension service of the university that also provides technical assistance and training to the organizations. Once the labs are established, each partner will develop a unique course to be offered only at its location. CTN presently offers six courses—including classes on basic

word processing and spreadsheets and how to use the Internet and E-mail—and is developing more advanced ones.

Rutgers students volunteer as teachers and assistants with CTN through courses in the university's Citizenship and Service Education Program, which combines academic studies with community service.

CTN also plans to use computers to pair senior citizens in mentoring relationships with school-age children. Seniors will receive free E-mail accounts in exchange for assisting students with homework and remedial schoolwork in the computer lab.

For more information, contact Cora Sanders, COPC Director, Stillman College, (205) 366-3668; Robert W. Lake, Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University, (732) 932-3133, ext. 521; or Alle Ries Levy, West Side Park Urban Coordinating Council, (973) 430-9901. ■

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
University Partnerships Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 6091  
Rockville, MD 20849-6091  
Return Service Requested  
Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
HUD  
Permit No. G-795