Addressing the Needs of Senior Citizens in Madison Borough, Chatham Borough, and Chatham Township

By: Rachel Yerks
In partnership with Tri-Town 55+ Coalition
https://www.tritown55plus.org/
My Project before COVID-19

- I partnered with Tri-Town 55+ Coalition, which is an organization geared towards helping seniors in the three townships get involved in the community through use of rideshare service discounts (via government grants) and attendance of events at age-friendly businesses located in the townships.

- My partner and I hosted two events to encourage seniors to sign up for the ride share services Tri-Town 55+ Coalition offers and to attend local events hosted by age-friendly businesses around town. They were given informational booklets and resources to reach out for any assistance they may need. These events were held at the Madison Public Library and the Chatham Library.
The events had an average of 15 attendees per session, with an increase in signups seen in December compared with other months*.

*However, it is important to note this could be due to increased awareness of the program, as Tri-Town 55+ Coalition runs more advertisements late in the year in order for people to gift their senior relatives rides as presents, leading to more sign-ups by seniors in order to use the gifts.
The Necessity of this Project

- Older people are often sidelined in society and face barriers to social participation that can lead to loneliness (Goll et al., 2015)*.

- After experiencing this firsthand while volunteering at senior centers throughout my highschool years, I wanted to devise a project to get seniors more involved in their local communities. Tri-Town 55+ Coalition gives $20 in rideshare credit per month to seniors using their rideshare services, and they provide resources on “age-friendly businesses” in town that cater especially to seniors and offer fun activities and meetings for them to get involved in town. I wanted to help make these resources accessible to those who hadn’t heard of them.
Who Benefits from this Project?

- Seniors, aged 65 and older are able to use the rideshare services at a discount to run errands, attend town events, and visit their families, leading to increased feelings of inclusion.

- One attendee at our Chatham Library informational event was a daughter of a senior citizen who expressed her gratitude for the service, saying that it got her mother out of the house and gave her a way to be involved within the community. These resources can give the seniors their independence back, using the rideshare to run errands if they cannot drive themselves, attend town events, etc.
My Project during COVID-19

- Although approximately half of my project hours went towards encouraging and providing seniors with the resources needed to get more involved in their communities, the second half of my project is still in progress. It was immediately clear it would be irresponsible on my part and Tri-Town’s to be encouraging seniors to use ride share services and be active in the community outside their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- My project has now pivoted towards encouraging seniors to be involved with their communities remotely, discussing resources such as neighborhood grocery delivery networks, using online services to virtually attend town meetings, helpful senior-specialized services during this time and how to protect themselves during the epidemic.
Attention Madison Seniors

Madison Area Call to Action has created a hotline to help seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you or a loved one would like grocery shopping assistance,

Call: 1-800-337-0236
Email: MadisonSeniors2020@gmail.com

Be aware of your local resources! Due to overcrowding at grocery stores, Stop & Shop is opening from 6AM-7:30AM for people over the age of 60 to shop safely.

Senior Shopping Hour at Stop & Shop

Starting Thursday, March 19th, Stop & Shop locations will open early for customers over the age of 60. These restricted hours are from 6 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. to allow for grocery shopping without large crowds.
How this Project Relates to Me

- In high school, I volunteered at the Middlebury Convalescent Home (CT) for my junior and senior years, and I’ve been Tri-Town 55+ Coalition’s Social Media, Marketing, and Communications intern since sophomore year of Drew.

- Because of my past experiences, I have a connection to the senior population, and I’ve seen how isolated this portion of the population can be. I would like to continue volunteering/working for programs and services geared towards senior citizens in the future to continue trying to improve social conditions and community involvement. I think seniors have a lot to offer society both in terms of interpersonal connections as well as their individual involvement in community activities, and they benefit from social events that help ward off loneliness.

- Graduating with my degree in Psychology and Neuroscience, I’d like to eventually work in a nursing home as an events coordinator to help improve the lives of residents and show both them and the community how important and necessary seniors are in the active community.
Thank you for your time, and stay healthy!