

Collaborative on Positive Aging (COPA)

A project of the Council on Aging, Sonoma County

COPA is a collaboration of representatives from agencies around Sonoma County, independent professionals, and interested members of the public. Our goal is to promote and facilitate positive aging in Sonoma County. To this end, we have joined together to explore ways to capitalize on, and accelerate, national interest in expanding opportunities and options for people in the 2nd half of life. We envision Sonoma County becoming a national leader in the Positive Aging movement.

Do our goals resonate with you? Is this work worth your time and energy? To be successful, we will need your help. We meet on the 3rd Thursday of every month, 10:30-noon, at the Council on Aging facility. We encourage new members and active participation. Our work to date is summarized below, and thank you to all who participated in our survey. **For more information on joining us, please come to a meeting or email information@councilonaging.com**

Positive Aging Survey Results 2012

The following chart summarizes findings from a survey on positive aging conducted by COPA during September and October 2012. The survey was conducted online, in print, and at >20 Positive Aging discussion groups conducted at various locations around Sonoma County. It is noted that some themes occur in more than one category, as reflective of the numerous perceptions of the attendees.

| THREATS | OPPORTUNITIES |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economics - lack of planning for longevity/uncontrollable external forces• Lack of transportation• Ageist stereotypes• Loss of relationships (existing and new, including intergenerational)• Isolation/loneliness• Relocation• Non-relevancy• Insufficient affordable housing• Becoming caregivers• Becoming a burden to others• Family expectations/obligations• Health challenges• Unemployment/under-employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redefine aging<ul style="list-style-type: none">- education/reframe aging- positive role models (full range, not just rich, famous, glamorous)• Improved physical/social/mental fitness• Life review/integration• Positive self-perception• Reach for personal potential• Exploration/new interests, new friends• Community connection• Intergenerational relationships• Mentoring - intergenerational, in both directions• Continuing education• "Village Neighborhood" concept |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental barriers • Lack of knowledge on optimal aging | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for future positive aging • Freedom • Volunteerism • Advocacy (at all societal levels) • Define new life-stage at personal level |
| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wisdom/maturity • Emotional stability • Creative & pioneering spirit of boomers • Flexibility • Time • Positive attitude • Family & community support • Patience • Persistence • Good health • Courage • Ability to contribute | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of physical, social, spiritual, mental health • Fear & anxiety • Negative self-perception • Internalized ageism • Lack of flexibility • Lack of family support • Lack of resources to deal with longevity |
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After discussing thoughts, beliefs and experiences of aging, attendees were asked “What would be most helpful to you in maximizing your own version of positive aging”. The following chart summarizes the responses.

| RESOURCES | EDUCATION | MEDIA |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Affordable housing options/senior; multi-generational room-mate referrals • Elder corps • Link to jobs/cash-flow • Barter forum • Professional & non-professional vetted referral system • Strengthen neighborhood relationships (ex. www.nextdoor.com) • Village concept – community-based membership orgs. (www.vtvnetwork.org) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early realistic financial planning • Positive aging concepts • Planning tools for longevity • Maintaining good physical & mental health • Engage in life-long learning • Utilize technological advances • Social support services navigation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise visibility for positive aging • Positive & authentic role models |
| SOCIAL CONNECTION | ADVOCACY | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated discussion groups -learn from collective knowledge & inspire each other • Meet & greet likeminded others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local, state, federal • Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nonprofits - private businesses - service clubs - collaboratives | |

The following resource guide was assembled by members of the COPA team. It is by no means comprehensive, yet it does provide good inroads to the rapidly-growing body of work in the Positive Aging field.