DESIGNING DIGNITY
for Antrim County Seniors

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Pilot Project Launched

In early May, the Commission on Aging (COA) began offering programming that provides respite care to seniors and their caregivers.

As this was a new type of service, COA staff was not certain how quickly word would get out. However, **within two weeks, four of the five openings were filled.**

"It has been fulfilling to see these participants engage with other seniors," said Paula Chermside, COA Director. "Caregiver feedback has been positive. One shared that her mom was smiling all week after her first session and was so happy to get out of the house and be with other seniors."





Another benefit, Ms. Chermside said, has been for the caregivers. "They were excited about having some time to themselves."

Due to current space constraints, this pilot program can only be offered to seniors who are not at risk of wandering. Total capacity is five seniors and the program is offered on Mondays only from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm. Existing staff and volunteers are providing the new services in the current building.

"Based on our first two weeks with very little promotion," Ms. Chermside said, "it is evident there is a need. Our hope is the success of this pilot program will help us gain access to grants and other funding sources."

The Vision

A proposed ±4,500 sq. ft. addition to the existing COA building in Bellaire would provide space for additional services Monday through Friday. Services would include:

- **Adult Day Respite Care:** Supervised care for seniors with cognitive/physical needs
- **Personal Care:** Bathing/grooming/footcare
- **Accessible covered entrance:** Safe drop-off
- **Multi-purpose activities:** Opportunities for fitness, arts, education, and social engagement
- **Confidential office space:** Consultation and assistance on legal issues, tax preparation, Medicare/Medicaid enrollment, etc.

The addition is estimated to cost $3.8 million. Approximately $500,000 of the COA's fund balance is scheduled to be allocated to the project. This leaves a funding gap of $3.3 million. The COA has launched a capital fundraising campaign, is requesting appropriations from Federal and State legislators, and is pursuing grant possibilities.

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Next update in late summer!