

**2015 Annual Report for the Creative Aging Advisory Committee  
To Lincoln County (CAAC) Date of Report: 3.1.16.**

I. Creative Aging Advisory Committee Mission Statement.

We, the Creative Aging Advisory Committee of Lincoln County, recognize that many key factors that influence a livable community are determined locally, in our case Lincoln County. We, therefore, strive to create an opportunity to bring together decision makers and influencers across the public, private and volunteer sectors at the county level to work in partnership with older adults to put in place imaginative changes that will have a real impact on their day-to-day lives throughout the county.

II. Function.

CAAC's focus and meetings were structured around seven domains taken from a World Health and AARP Survey we utilized in 2013; transportation, healthcare, employment, housing, social activities, community involvement, and information/communication. CAAC disseminated information about upcoming events that were connected to these domains regularly in our monthly meetings, and contributed information to newspaper and magazine articles. We worked to educate and encourage both ourselves and others to investigate ways to improve the quality of life for aging adults residing in Lincoln County.

III. Leadership.

For the first eight months of 2015, we met weekly at Eastern New Mexico University – Ruidoso Branch. Clara Farah led the sessions, with Cecile Kinnan acting as a Co-leader and Luddy Leong serving as Recording Secretary. An average of 9 CAAC volunteers attended our meetings during this time. In mid-July, CAAC went before the Lincoln County Commissioners and it was agreed to change our name from the Creative Aging Advisory Committee to ENMU to the Creative Aging Advisory Committee to Lincoln County. For the rest of the year, CAAC moved to a monthly meeting format with multiple tasks and small group committee meetings taking place between the more formal monthly sessions.

IV. Outside Speakers.

During 2015, CAAC hosted a number of speakers to educate us primarily on public transportation in rural areas. However, we also studied other quality of life issues for older adults regularly. We invited numerous speakers to our meetings:

- Eastern New Mexico's University-Ruidoso Branch President, Clayton Alred and Dean of Student Affairs, Pierre Larouche;
- Ruidoso Valley Chamber of Commerce Director, Becky Brooks;
- Southeast New Mexico Economic Development Organization, Hubert Quintana;
- New Mexico State University Extension Agent, Marsha Palmer;
- Ruidoso Tourist Director, Gina Kelly;
- Zia/ Senior Centers' Director, Renee Montes;
- Lincoln County Transit Manager, Bonnie Ambrose;
- Ruidoso Downs Councilors;
- Village of Ruidoso Councilors;
- County Commissioners.

V. Domains of Focus:

A. Transportation.

-1. Our major effort focused on improving public transport for our county as it greatly affects the quality of life for our senior residents. Dr. Joel Diener, an economist from New Mexico State University, consulted with us over several meetings.

- 2. CAAC Volunteers interviewed and surveyed area employers about their transportation needs: the US Forest Service, area motels, Village of Ruidoso retail businesses, Wal-Mart, Fort Stanton, Billy the Kid Tourist Center, Hubbard Museum, LC Chamber of Commerce and the Mayors of Ruidoso and Ruidoso Downs.
- 3. The Village of Ruidoso and Ruidoso Downs initiated a task force on the future of public transportation, and CAAC volunteers participated in this the Task Force. Multiple needs were reviewed and some success achieved with the addition of increased hours, increased wages and expanded services into Mescalero.
- 4. A new CAAC Volunteer, Don Spencer, joined CAAC and aided in our understanding of local, free veteran transportation services.

#### B. Healthcare.

- 1. CAAC volunteers participated in the creation of the first Lincoln County Hunger Collaborative. Bi-monthly meetings were established with a focus on increasing food distribution throughout Lincoln County. Clara Farah attended the NM State Hunger Initiative, Second Annual Conference in Albuquerque.
- 2. Focusing on countywide health care, regular monthly meetings by the Commissioners kept us up to date with the progress of the financing and renovation of the Lincoln County Hospital. We gave additional attention to ancillary needs in the area including home health care and the possibility of a new assisted living facility.
- 3. Considerable attention was also given to relationship building and research into understanding how our area senior centers, the Zia Centers function and are managed.

#### C. Employment.

- 1. An employment counselor for older adults, funded and supervised by the Aging and Long Term Services Department, NM, was employed.
- 2. This 50+ Employment Connection hired Phyllis Starr, a CAAC Volunteer, who has established a program to register seniors for employment opportunities, skills training and resume writing.

#### D. Housing.

- 1. Affordable housing for seniors and all county citizens, coupled with a skilled labor force need, dominated conversations about quality of life that would allow new people to come into our area and allow seniors to age in place in safe and financially secure ways.
- 2. We studied the Village of Ruidoso's task force's new plan and ordinance on work force housing, identified USDA rural housing opportunities, and discovered opportunities for future investigation.

#### E. Social activities and community involvement.

- 1. Discussions about increasing the number of our volunteers, as well as widening our exposure throughout the county, lead us to focus more broadly on expanding our civic engagement.
- 2. An invitation was extended for CAAC volunteers to attend regular monthly meetings of the Roswell Commission on Aging. As a result, CAAC Volunteers were encouraged by this commission to develop a similar organization in Lincoln County. It was this focus on organizational structure that led CAAC to move into becoming an advisory committee to our County Commissioners.

#### F. Information and Communication:

- 1. CAAC continued to define its mission and to determine its best purpose for effecting positive change in our County. Perhaps it is in this domain that our volunteers excelled in networking, engaging both those inside and outside our county in dialogue on possible future directions for quality of life for our seniors.
- 2. CAAC prepared a seven-page introductory statement defining our organization, including illustrations of the results from the 2013 survey. This report is the Creative Aging Advisory Summary - 2015.
- 3. We publicized our meetings and upcoming events in the Carrizozo Email Newsletter, the Ruidoso News, The Lincoln County News, the ENMU Calendar, and the area senior centers.

#### VI. Conclusion.

- 1. We continued to meet to research, counsel, educate, and advise residents and organizations about how to improve the quality of life for aging adults. Clara Farah chaired the final four monthly meetings at the Ruidoso Community Center, and the Zia Centers in Carrizozo, Capitan, and Ruidoso Downs.
- 2. Attendance grew in the later months of 2015 with an average attendance of 17 to 20 volunteers.
- 3. CAAC continued working to bring awareness of issues involving quality of life for seniors to officials and older residents in this county, realizing that these issues also benefit all the residents of LC.
- 4. We held open meetings and encouraged residents to become active participants in our commitment to Lincoln County quality of life issues.

Luddy Leong, Recording Secretary.