

## Creative Aging Narrative:

### **A. Nonprofit purpose.**

**Mission Statement:** "We the Creative Aging Advisory Committee, recognize that many of the key factors that influence a livable community are determined locally, in our case within Lincoln County, N.M. 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 and work in partnership with seniors to put in place imaginative changes that will have real impact on the day-to-day lives of all of us as we age in this frontier community." (2014)

The Creative Aging Advisory Committee to Lincoln County (CAAC) was created by a group of ENMU-Ruidoso Community College students that attended classes on Creative Aging, taught by Clara Farah, Ph.D. (classes taught from 2013 to 2015) Creative Aging was formed in 2013 as a volunteer driven organization responsive to both officials and the public, acting as an advisory counsel. The Committee was open to all adults whether they had taken the semester classes or not.

Creative Aging kept the name of the original class — Creative Aging — and began its mission by investigating quality of life issues that older adults face in Lincoln County surveying over 50+ age residents in Lincoln County. This survey was based on the "AARP Livable Community Survey" and was used as a needs assessment. It was completed with statistically reliable data in late 2013. Total respondents were 4% of the population of over 50+ age residents, 10,034, from a total population of the county of 20,497 residents. This AARP Survey asked questions around 7 domains focusing on quality of life issues. Creative Aging chose initially the most problematic domains for initial focus and began local exploration to study what specific needs were most important for our over 50 population. For example, both the domains of information/communication and transportation were found to be high priorities.

Creative Aging has moved over the past 3 years into studying these initial domains and other related concerns of aging adults in our county and has partnered continually with ENMU and later with the Lincoln County Commissioners. (2015) Outside counsel has included N.M. AARP, N.M. Department of Aging and the Roswell Commission on Aging.

Creative Aging meets monthly with smaller subcommittees meetings in between. Meetings are held at the college and county senior centers to obtain maximum input. Creative Aging monthly attendance has grown in regular participation from 10 to 25 or more older adults. Creative Aging has also grown in geographic diversity becoming more inclusive countywide. Creative Aging currently has 125 members who are provided monthly, via email, on meeting information, minutes and other notifications. Our program is regularly listed each semester in the Class Schedule for ENMU under: The Creative Aging Advisory Committee - Community Education Classes - Personal Enrichment entitled: "Being of Service: Civic Engagement."

Creative Aging's purpose has stayed consistent with its mission statement over these past few years. We continue to support seniors and want to be responsive to their needs by helping through research, networking and educating individuals and also other organizations that work for the welfare of seniors. Creative Aging is now expanding and needs to find a permanent location. ENMU has provided classroom space, copying, other support services, marketing and consultation. Recently Creative Aging asked ENMU for a physical home space to obtain regular scheduled hours with volunteers available for addressing public questions.

It is for this purpose, that we wished to become a nonprofit organization and requested fiscal agent sponsorship from the NM Community Foundation. Creative Aging's application to N.M. Secretary of State for Nonprofit Incorporation was mailed on July 15, 2016.

In moving forward Creative Aging has become a non-profit organization, and maintains its purpose of functioning in an advisory

role and adding on to this fundraising and grant writing. We have established an Aging Well Resource Center at ENMU, open part time and staffed by volunteers. This Resource Center concept came from research by AARP's Livable Communities Program and also from the NM Department of Aging Program that houses a face-to-face and online/on call statewide office called the "Aging and Disability Resource Center" in Santa Fe.

The function of Creative Aging's center will be to continue researching both local and non local resources available to seniors, offering one on one personalized assistance, group educational events and multiple other opportunities for seniors to gather, ask questions and become more knowledgeable about opportunities. With office space, shared community spaces and technological/ educational opportunities availability our center will take advantage of classes for upgrading skills for the workforce, a 50+ job counselor and the staff of the Workforce Connection, housed also at ENMU.

### **B. Scope:**

A geographic outreach effort to our outlying communities beyond Ruidoso ensures that Creative Aging's mission and programs will be readily available to all senior Lincoln County residents. Beside the Resource Center housed at ENMU, the breadth of additional services Creative Aging will continue to explore accessibility to: healthcare, transportation, housing, and various types of engagement. Within the engagement area, Creative Aging studies and becomes involved in problem around such subject areas as employment, poverty, education and social activities.

### **C. Target Beneficiaries:**

Creative Aging's focus population is older adults in Lincoln County, N.M. Indigent elders, low-income elders and middle-income elders all tend to ask for information on services. In fact, all levels of income elders appear to have multiple questions pertaining to this adult developmental stage. Also, when addressing quality of life issues for these residents, Creative Aging realizes that all ages benefit from the subject areas Creative Aging investigates. Similar quality of life issues tend to be universal over the life span. Quality of life issues

and livable communities do and must continue to strive to benefit all of their population.

#### **D. Vision of Success:**

Creative Aging's nonprofit organization will continue to grow and expand its range of subject areas to study the population it serves and the multiple public and private partners it joins to solve problems to benefit our older adults. If Creative Aging is able to obtain the NMCF fiscal agent status, it will then be able to increase the multiple services it provides through funding from a variety of grants and fundraising.

Our vision is to create a lighthouse as a resource center staffed part-time by volunteers, where seniors from Lincoln County will come to talk about what they need to be able to improve their quality of life. They will receive information regarding: the availability of the health care they need, access to houses they could comfortably live in as they age, public transportation in their community, opportunities to engage in education, physical, social and governmental activities of their choice, and learn how they may be able to receive what they need regardless of their financial situation. We will augment our activities with information in the local newspapers, email sites, radio and social media.

The field of aging research is growing quickly and there are many avenues to explore when looking at how to improve quality of life for seniors. Our rural county is home to both very low and very high-income older adults. All deserve the knowledge and opportunity for excellent quality of life in their later years. Such a vision takes the work of dedicated volunteers, finances, and partnership through grants including with our elected officials, civic groups and other organization to make needed changes that can benefit all.

Creative Aging's vision encompasses the goal of making Lincoln County a very special place for older adults as we grow, 'Change and empower each other toward creative endeavors, vital aging and increased compassion that is inclusive and brings us closer together uniting in the collective life view of hope and well being.