

## Group planning for wave of aging baby boomers

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A wave of aging baby boomers is coming, and the Older Dominion Partnership is making sure Virginia is prepared.

In a meeting at the Richmond Times-Dispatch's downtown offices yesterday, about 100 people discussed the nonprofit group's efforts, its progress and hopes for the future.

Created in 2007 by community leaders with the support of the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation and others, the Older Dominion Partnership is a nonprofit initiative aimed at helping Virginia prepare for that demographic shift, or age wave.

The fledgling partnership is made up of academics, philanthropists, business leaders, nonprofits groups and government representatives concerned about the impact of the "gray tsunami."

"I knew we were onto something when Bruce Springsteen was on the cover of AARP," said Thomas A. Silvestri, chairman of the Older Dominion Partnership and president and publisher of The Times-Dispatch.

He stressed building awareness of the impending age wave, broadening involvement, supporting community strategies and "making stuff happen sooner rather than later."

By 2030, the population of Virginians 65 and older, about 900,000 currently, is expected to double to more than 1.8 million -- about 20 percent of the state's total population.

If that estimate holds true, one of every five people in the state will be older than 65, putting an enormous strain on services, health care and housing for boomers.

Linda Nablo, commissioner for the Virginia Department for the Aging, said the partnership could build off

ongoing governmental efforts.

In 2008, the General Assembly passed a mandate for the Department for the Aging to lead a four-year plan for aging residents due at the end of this month.

"There's obvious interest and concern and some level of awareness," Nablo said. "This is not necessarily the most coordinated effort or the most thought-through and evolved effort, but every time a legislator introduces a piece of legislation that says the state ought to be doing a better job of planning, it absolutely passes."

In five years, the partnership hopes to have age-wave plans under way in communities across Virginia through its efforts and resources. In 10 years, the group expects to begin tying them together into a master plan with the state.

Many communities across the state already have begun preparing. A partnership between the United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg and Senior Connections recently started work on a Richmond Region 2030 Plan.

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