

PRESS RELEASE

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Virginia to Hold First Annual Forum on Age Wave Planning

Experts will address government officials, civic leaders in May session for sharing insights, data and best practices

RICHMOND--The greatest social issue facing Virginia communities over the next 20 years will be preparing for a rapidly aging population. Government officials and civic leaders will have an opportunity May 20 to learn more about the scope of the challenge and hear what others are doing about it at the Virginia Forum on Age Wave Planning.

There aren't many social crises that community leaders can see bearing down five to 15 years before they arrive, but the Age Wave comes with plenty of advance warning. The over-65 population will double in Virginia to 1.8 million citizens by 2030. And the new generation of seniors, Baby Boomers, have very different expectations of how they want to live than today's seniors.

"Although current economic challenges are at the top of all our agendas today, we can't ignore another significant change headed for Virginia," said Gov. Timothy M. Kaine, who will address the gathering by videoconference. "The Old Dominion is getting older – fast. This is one change we can clearly see coming as the huge number of baby boomers begin to reach traditional retirement age."

"I encourage all communities to actively plan now for the challenges and the opportunities this future will bring," the governor said. "The strength of local economies and the quality of life for young and old alike will depend on it."

The event, to be held at the Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, is cosponsored by the Virginia Department for the Aging, the Older Dominion Partnership, the Virginia Municipal League, the Virginia Association of Counties, the Virginia Association of Local Human Services Officials, the Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging, AARP Virginia and the Boomer Project.

"The purpose of the forum is to educate and inspire local leaders to help their communities plan for the coming age wave," says Linda Nablo, commissioner of the Virginia Department for the Aging. "We're encouraging communities to understand what's going to be happening in the next five to 15 years and to get ready."

The elderly have many special needs. Their transportation options are curtailed. They have complex medical issues. They often have difficulty living independently, and they suffer disproportionately from a lack of social interaction. While the number of elderly in Virginia will swell as the giant baby boomer age cohort advances in age, the number of trained caretakers will shrink as Boomers in the workforce are replaced by the smaller Generation X.

At the same time, a growing gray population creates opportunities. Some communities seek to lure retirees because they contribute more in local taxes than they require in the way of services. Affluent retirees can stimulate economic development by creating a market for products and services provided by local entrepreneurs. In some cases, retirees seeking encore careers become entrepreneurs themselves. Retirees also are seen as a boon for civic engagement, as they have more time to volunteer.

The forum is designed to educate elected officials, municipal administrators, regional planners, local foundations, United Ways, Chambers of Commerce, aging advocates, and other leading civic groups.

Presentations in the agenda include:

- **Let's Do the Numbers.** Presentation of demographic trends by experts with the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia.
- **Boomers Will Change Our Communities.** John Martin, CEO of the Boomer Project, will describe how Boomers will reinvent old age.
- **Economic Opportunities for Your Community.** Kim Sheeler, the new president of the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, will draw upon his experience as a chamber executive in Jacksonville, Fla., to discuss the economic impact, both pro and con, of the post-65 population on the community.
- **You Can Create a "Livable Community."** Elinor Ginzler, a senior vice president with AARP, will discuss the association's Livable Communities initiative.
- **What Your Neighbors Are Doing to Prepare.** Four panelists – from Fairfax County, the Rappahannock Rapidan Region, Richmond and Charlottesville – will discuss age wave planning initiatives in their communities.
- **Resources that Can Help.** Officials with the Older Dominion Partnership will describe planning resources available to Virginia communities.

The event, which starts at 10 a.m. and will conclude at 4 p.m., will be followed by a complementary wine tasting featuring local vineyards.

Attendees will leave with a strong working knowledge of the main age wave-related issues as well as manuals, guides, tool kits and other resources to start planning. "Send a team from your community," says Nablo. "It's only one day, and it costs only \$25 per person. Come together, hear the message, go back to your community, and start planning!"

Registration

Space is limited. The deadline for registration and payment is May 15.

To register visit the Older Dominion Partnership web site at <http://www.olderdominion.org>.

For additional registration details, contact Carol Cameron, Director of Member Services of VACo, at 804-343-2507.