



ODP Board Approves Age-Wave Projects

The Older Dominion Partnership OKs research database, statewide conference and pilot plan for Richmond region.

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RICHMOND--The board of directors of the Older Dominion Partnership (ODP) has approved three strategic initiatives to help Virginia prepare for the impending Age Wave: Build a statewide age wave-preparedness research database, organize statewide community readiness for the age wave, and support the Richmond metropolitan region's 2030 plan on aging.

The board action sets the first formal priorities for the organization, which had functioned since 2007 as a voluntary collaboration between public and private groups. With seed funding from the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, the ODP appointed a board of directors and hired a managing director earlier this year.

The over-65 population in Virginia is expected to double by 2030, and no comprehensive plan exists in Virginia to deal with the demands of an aging population. Seniors have special needs in the areas of transportation, housing, health care and social contact. The mission of the ODP is to create an academically rigorous database that tracks the needs of the aging population, builds awareness of the challenges to every corner of the state, and shares best practices.

"The new board's first order of business has been to focus on projects where the ODP can make a big difference quickly," said Tom Silvestri, board chairman and publisher of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. "Among the outcomes will be the first statewide database on the condition of the over-65 population, the first statewide age-wave preparedness forum, and Richmond's first comprehensive regional plan on aging. We could not have gotten here without the outstanding work of a growing grass-roots legion of passionate servant-leaders who understand Virginia has its work cut out for itself on this emerging issue."

The key initiatives include:

Statewide research database. Currently, Virginia relies primarily upon U.S. Census data for information about the over-65 population. That data, while useful, does not address

metrics like diet, nutrition and oral health. The last detailed survey of older Virginians took place 30 years ago and is hopelessly out of date.

It is difficult for service providers, be they public or private, to meet the needs of the elderly without reliable data on where the needs exist, says Dr. Richard Lindsay, an academic physician at the University of Virginia, an ODP board member and head of the research database work group. "Virginia is flying blind in its aging policy. The data is essential for planning."

Community readiness. Virginia communities vary widely in their readiness to deal with an aging population. Not only will there be a larger over-65 population, but Boomers will have different expectations than elder members of the Silent Generation, says Linda Nablo, commissioner of the Virginia Department for the Aging and an ODP board member. By means of a statewide forum in May and other initiatives, the community readiness work group will spread awareness of the challenges, encourage local planning and share best practices.

"The size of the elderly population is growing, and Boomers are redefining what it means to age," said Nablo. "We can let this happen to us, or we can be proactive."

The 2030 plan. The ODP will provide expertise, data and some funding for a community-initiated effort to plan for the age wave in the Richmond region. This 2030 plan will differ from government-led projects in other states and regions by involving stakeholders from business and the non-profit sector. While the 2030 plan will have a Richmond focus, explained Sherrie Brach, CEO of the United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg and an ODP board member, the goal is to produce a process and methodology useful to, and building upon the work of, other Virginia communities so they don't have to "reinvent the wheel."

"The Richmond Memorial Health Foundation is pleased to help our healthcare and aging services infrastructure plan for the needs and expectations of aging Baby Boomers," said Jeffrey S. Cribbs, Sr., president and CEO of the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation and an ODP board member: "Aligning business, government, foundations and the non-profit community is a necessary step toward optimizing the allocation of finite community resources."

The Older Dominion Partnership (ODP) is a non-profit initiative of Virginia businesses, government, foundations, and non-profits to help Virginia ride the age wave. The ODP serves as an inspiration, catalyst, and independent platform for networking, collaborating, planning, and potential funding partner for ODP members.

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