

## **DOVER COUNCIL ON AGING “WHAT IS A SENIOR CENTER?”**

As the Dover Council on Aging studies the issues of living an independent lifestyle while growing older, it has become apparent that seniors do not understand the new reality of senior centers. Do you picture older people (much older than you, of course) sitting around playing bingo and shuffleboard? Eating bland meals while a television is blaring? It is time to update your vision! Senior centers are not what they used to be. Today’s senior center is a vibrant, action-packed combination of fitness center, volunteering headquarters, transportation hub, dining locale and counseling center.

Many senior centers are for anyone aged 50+. Today, nearly 11,000 senior centers serve 1 million older adults aged 50+ every day. Approximately 70% of senior center participants are woman with many visiting up to 3 times a week. Research shows that compared with their peers, senior center participants have higher levels of health, social interaction and life satisfaction. **Perhaps that is why over 40 Dover seniors have used the Medfield Senior Center this past year. In a survey conducted by the Dover Council on Aging of these residents, an exercise room and an area for coffee and juice, where they can socialize with friends and neighbors, was chosen by the majority of respondents as areas they would utilize within a Dover Senior Center.**

Senior centers offer more than card games – everything from trips and special events to fine arts and crafts, music and dance, lifelong learning and fitness and health programs. They are also a great place to get healthy. Health and fitness are where senior centers have really expanded in recent years. In addition to traditional programs like aerobics, Zumba, yoga, Chi Gong and Tai Chi, many senior centers now offer evidence-based health programs that have been scientifically proven to make people healthier. One example is “A Matter of Balance”, a program that gives people practical tips to reduce the fear of falling. Another is the “Chronic Disease Self-Management Program” which helps people with conditions like diabetes, heart disease and arthritis learn how to reduce their symptoms, eat well and communicate with their doctors. Many senior centers also offer regularly scheduled blood pressure and glucose screenings that can replace tedious trips to medical clinic for those simple procedures. One of the vital services offered by senior centers is counseling which allows seniors to live in their homes longer.

If you would like to be added to the Dover Council on Aging’s email list to receive information and updates on “Senior Needs”, please contact us at [coa@doverma.org](mailto:coa@doverma.org) or telephone 508-785-0032 x246.

