

# AGE-FRIENDLY RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION WORKGROUP MINUTES



Date: 07/22/2020

Time: 09:00 AM

Facilitator: Tracy Adkins and Suellen Seigel

## In Attendance

Terri Hansen

MJ Engle

Alice Lewis

Tracy Adkins

Karen Basinger

Kathleen Krintz—recording secretary

Emily Leclercq

Lakisha Williams

Suellen Seigel

Erika Strauss Chavarria – Presenter

## Minutes Approved

Terri went over June Minutes during the meeting. There were no changes.

## Announcements:

There are members from the Age-Friendly Housing work group that are stake holders on the larger task force and the consultants will be meeting with them on Monday and Tuesday.

Terri stated all the Co-chairs are getting together on July 23, for their first meeting, and sharing what each individual group has been doing to see where there is a crossover and better sharing of information.

## Old Business:

- Lakisha will be sending out letters to 2 organizations that she wanted to reach out to regarding our workgroup and as possible speakers
  - HC drug free – who reach out to the diverse populations of the schools
  - African American Roundtable
- Lakisha mentioned that people often associate stigmas with drugs and do not necessarily reach out to organizations like HC drug free program
  - Tracy agreed that the isolation involved with medications/drugs limits people's participation

## New Business:

- Lakisha mentioned a thing about story telling she saw on PBS. They have a space now where people can do little videos and talk about themselves. Perhaps we could develop something from that concept.
  - Suellen said it sounded like Story Core where you can create your own story.
- Terri asked if Suellen could look into this and share it. A couple of members could take that on and make it our own concept. Terri also mentioned that the County has a volunteer program for individuals who want a social conversation on a weekly basis. The Office on

**Aging and Independence (OAI) currently has about 5 or 6 volunteers will be trained. Still need participants who would be interested in that program.**

**Guest Speaker (9:30AM) – Ms. Erika Strauss Chavarria, Columbia Community Cares: Q&A regarding trends seen during COVID-19 and community concerns.**

**Erika Strauss Chavarria, a Spanish teacher from Wilde Lake High School, started the non-profit group Columbia Community Cares when she anticipated schools closing in response to the coronavirus. The goal of the group is to provide food to any family who needs it, whether they have children in the school system or not. They serve from 6 sites in Columbia. The program started with 40 volunteers and has grown to 6,000 members, serving thousands of people since its inception in March.**

#### **Questions and Answers from Presentation**

- **Tracy asked if she has data on the number of people served.**
  - **Erika keeps count at the five sites across Columbia. They see about 60 to 100 families per site, per day. They have home delivery for those who can not leave their homes and currently have had about 4,000 home deliveries at this point.**
- **Tracy asked how they acquire volunteers, especially for home delivery.**
  - **Ericka uses social media. Baltimore Sun article at the very beginning and a couple of interviews in English and Spanish helped.**
- **Tracy asked about the use of translators. What languages other than Spanish do you provide translation for?**
  - **Erika stated they have a Haitian Creole population and they have several volunteers that will help when needed. They also make sure to have translators at each of the sites. We dispatch translators for the families that get home deliveries. Translators are the liaison between the families and the shoppers. We have volunteers that speak other languages that we can call to help us.**
- **Tracy asked if there are seniors living with family members Erika is serving, if this is common or sporadic.**
  - **Erika explained they do not collect data on the age of the family members but from the feedback that they have received they have served many older folks, some who are living alone. For some, the technology can be an issue. We have had people call the person to do the order forms for those that can't order online. Older adults are struggling right now, and we are happy to provide meals, groceries whatever they need.**
- **MJ wanted to know if they are grocery shopping or just using the donations.**
  - **Erika stated they have an order form that has various food, household and baby items and they have two Churches who have generously donated their spaces to set up our pantries. We fill the orders from the pantries. If someone needs grocery delivery, they fill out the order form for items that we currently have, we put it in a data base. I collect all the families' orders and then assign to our shoppers. Shoppers go to the church and collect what items are on the order form and then deliver to the family.**
  - **We use the monetary donations to order items in bulk and store them in the pantries. We currently have a contract with Sysco. The owner of the Blow Fish Poky Restaurant helps do all our produce orders. Any donations of products go to our sites where we can accept anything.**
- **MJ wanted to know if there was any qualifications to be eligible to receive the food.**

- Erika said they do not ask for identification. She believes that is why they have been so successful because people do not feel intimidated or judged that their needs are being questioned.
  - At our sites we have storage pods where we keep all our equipment for setup. We have volunteers who set up early in the morning and people wait in lines and come through to get what they need.
- Erika explained that they set up the sites where they saw the most traffic at the School's Grab n Go meals. Columbia Community Cares is giving away grocery items that one takes home and cooks. The school system is providing just a single meal. The idea was to supplement the school system's program and provide more substantial items so that families can cook for the whole week.
  - Emily shared the link for the Columbia Care Website <http://columbiacare.live/>
  - There is also a Facebook page Columbia Community Care.
- MJ asked if only Columbia Residents can participate or is it for all of Howard County.
  - Erika said originally the focus was Columbia, but the need was throughout Howard County. Home deliveries are for Howard County only. She has received numerous calls from other counties and they allow anyone to come to their sites.
- Tracy wanted to know if there was other areas Columbia Care is branching out to besides just food.
  - Erika answered: Yes, several things. We are looking to do a mutual aid with small businesses facing hardships. We purchase meals from small businesses /restaurants and spread their name, give them business and then they donate also. We also have had 3 Facebook break off groups that are providing necessities that we saw posted on our page. We have a clothing sister page, we have another break off page called Summer Fun for kids since everything is closed. So, on Saturdays donations can be dropped off for summer fun kits that are age appropriate and can be picked up at several locations throughout the County. We are in a partnership now with a group called Harvest United and are focusing on teaching families how to grow their own food without a garden. We are also partnering with the Freetown Farm on Freetown Road and will soon have a plot of farmland and any interested family can decide if they want to contribute to that plot of land. They would be responsible for growing their own produce. They help upkeep the Columbia Care plot of land and can take what they grow. We are doing a lot of outreach with Community Care, mutual aid and are excited about the new partnerships.
- Tracy mentioned that the program has become an established 501C-3 as well.
  - Erika explained they are under a fiscal sponsorship. The fiscal sponsorship is Equity for HC; Columbia Care is a project under Equity for HC and all donations are tax deductible. This will allow the group to apply for some very specific grants and have official partnerships with other organizations.
- Tracy congratulated Erika on an amazing job and in mobilizing the volunteers in such a short amount of time.
  - Suellen wanted to let Erika know that she is an inspiration to all of us.
- MJ wanted to know if this program will continue or is it only until pandemic is over.
- Erika I am a full time teach and have a lot to think about as far as moving this program forward. Because we know these problems are not just because of COVID the goal is to keep Columbia Care going in a permanent way. Have a lot of ideas and hope that the ones with the power and money give us what we want.
- Tracy asked about the donations and whether there was a rise and fall and any donation fatigue from week to week.

- Alice asked how you go about volunteering for Columbia Cares.
  - Erika offered several ways, the 5 different sites are always in need of volunteers. We also accept donations from people who can not or do not want to leave their homes and volunteers drive around to pick up those donations. There is a need for volunteer shoppers who go to our pantries with the order from and shop for those families and finally dispatched translators. For anyone interested, the email is [columbiacommunitycare@gmail.com](mailto:columbiacommunitycare@gmail.com)

Following the presentation there was discussion about this could benefit the Age-Friendly initiative.

- Alice mentioned that the program would certainly offer a lot of intergenerational opportunities.
- Terri felt that a lot of what Erika has done is along the lines of what Age-Friendly is about. She chose the food issue and has branched out and involved community groups and businesses. She indicated an interest in contacting Erika about becoming a partner with the Age-Friendly initiative.

Tracy asked the group what kind of projects/action items we could operationalize going forward. Previously discussed ideas included: international opportunities, computers/technology and communication.

- Alice stated that some parents may need coaching to be able to help their children with online learning and may have challenges with the technology as well.
- Alice suggested a partnership with the Howard County Library system. Perhaps a very basic step by step process for computers.
  - Lakisha concurs and suggested reaching out to the Horizon Foundation. They would be a good resource for some programming. She stated she will explore what the foundation is currently doing that may be relevant to this topic. She suggested that the library may be thinking or have already started some courses online for seniors. A few years ago, my church partner with the school system with a mentoring program. She suggested a mentoring program with the school system since there are grandparents, parents and non-parents helping kids with school. Perhaps there could be a virtual event that would bridge the gap of those generations and encourage partnership with them and mention how this helps the Age-Friendly initiative.
- Terri is very intrigued by the idea that came up about the training for parents/grandparents and other individuals who will be helping students doing virtual school. Are there individuals within the group who are willing to work on this initiative?
  - Tracy said she would be interested. Because it is technology, she believes it would be best to have a place for people to come by appointment and to provide for social distancing. She asked about the use of the 50+ Centers.
  - Lakisha said there is an opportunity to have training through WebEx if someone has a computer. That is the virtual way of giving training. Can have a group of people as well for the training.
  - Anyone who is interested in working on this project should email Tracy. Terri will contact the Office of Children and Families within our department to see if they would be interested.
- Tracy asked Lakisha if she would look into the Horizon foundation and report back to the group at our next meeting.
  - Lakisha will attempt to draft a template language to reach out to people and set up a meeting with a few organizations to get feedback from them and get them to buy into the Age-Friendly initiative.

- Lakisha reminded everyone that all members' emails are on the google drive if anyone needs to contact someone from the group. Working on document so that it has your name and what organization you are working on, so we do not have duplication. Tracy asked everyone to try to get onto the Google Drive to make sure you can do so.

## Homework Assignments:

### Next Meeting:

August 26, 2020 – 9:00 AM