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*SERA 19 – Houston, Texas*

*August, 2008*



# The Need

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- 52% of older Mississippians live in rural areas; over 80% live in their own family dwellings
- Since 1970 the state's 60+ population has grown by 40%
- The challenge: finding ways to maintain and improve the health of our seniors while allowing them the freedom to reside in their own homes



# Project Objectives

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- Identify community resources and deficits relative to supporting health and health care needs of seniors
- Engage communities in grassroots efforts to improve health and health care access
- Initiate health promotional activities targeting rural aging populations

*4 Counties – Oktibbeha, Clay, Copiah and Lincoln*

# Project Elements

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- ❑ First Impressions
- ❑ Senior Health and Health Care Resource Directories
- ❑ Forums on Healthy Aging
- ❑ Lay health educator volunteer program
- ❑ Message of the month



# Forums

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- ❑ What are the programs, services, and resources that encourage and support healthy aging in your county?
- ❑ What are the main challenges to supporting the goal of healthy aging?
- ❑ If you had 3 wishes, which programs or services currently lacking are worth pursuing?





# What's Working?

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## □ General health and fitness

- Diabetic Boot Camp
- Wellness Center, Sanderson Center
- Hospital and walk-in clinics
- Health fairs
- Hospital Lunch and Learn programs
- MSU Extension Service health and nutrition programs
- Seniors exercise and Keenager programs, Presbyterian church
- Line dancing, First Methodist
- No smoking ordinance
- PACE class
- Walking trails
- Ramped sidewalks
- Downtown benches
- Media health and medical segments
- Wal-Mart \$4 prescriptions
- Hospital physical therapy
- Department of Health

# What's Working?

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## □ Social interaction and support

- Newcomers Club
- Association of Retired Faculty
- AARP
- Parks and Recreation – crafts and quilting
- Red Hat Society
- Alzheimer's Support Group
- Diabetes Support Group
- Continuing education programs at MSU
- Emerson Family Center programs
- Relay for Life
- Welcome Wagon
- Churches

## □ Social services

- Meals on Wheels
- Home health
- Hospice
- Homemaker and respite care services
- Angel Food program
- Prairie Opportunity
- Helping Hands ministry
- Community Counseling Services
- Sherriff's Department Daily Reassurance Program
- Life Line service
- Watchful Eye Care services
- Library



# 3 Wishes – Multiplied by Many!

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- Caregiver assistance
- Programs to help seniors with medications, a medical planner
- More walk-in and urgent care facilities
- More general practice physicians and a gerontologist
- People to help seniors and their caregivers better understand health situation and access internet information
- Educate clergy and medical personnel on senior services
- Communitywide health and fitness campaign
- A Senior Citizen Center (education, recreation, and information)
- Programs to help fight boredom and isolation – social visiting
- Hearing, vision, and oral care programs
- More living facilities appropriate for independent senior living
- More affordable assisted living facilities
- Program to prevent senior abuse
- Assistance for those without family





# 3 Wishes – Multiplied by Many!

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- ❑ Transportation (including evening hours and throughout county)
- ❑ Home accident prevention programs
- ❑ Afternoon programs for seniors
- ❑ College students as “live-ins” for seniors
- ❑ Combine children’s daycare and senior programs
- ❑ Awareness days – Sleep Apnea, Healthy Eating
- ❑ A rural health agency to bring all services together
- ❑ Medicare education program
- ❑ Affordable wellness programs and services
- ❑ Transportation to or accessibility of programs for rural county residents
- ❑ Adult daycare center
- ❑ Guide to Senior community services
- ❑ Volunteer opportunities for Seniors
- ❑ Mentally challenging recreation – move beyond the stereotype of bingo





# Challenges and Obstacles

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- Seniors without a sense of purpose
  - Not having the will or desire for healthy aging
- Communication
  - Not knowing what is available
  - Senior literacy issues
- Cultural issues – fried and greasy is the norm
- Perception of aging – stereotyping the elderly
- Lack of cooperation among some churches in providing services
  - Fear of infringement; competition between churches
  - Racial issues between churches
- Some programs seen as more available for whites than for African-Americans



# Challenges and Obstacles

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- ❑ Lack of funds and resources
- ❑ Transportation problems
- ❑ Agencies failure to work together to better serve Seniors
- ❑ Lack of public education
- ❑ Lack of sufficient legislation to support healthy aging

# Community Priorities

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Nine Community Action Groups have been formed

- Four senior center groups
- Navigation/Information System
- Transportation
- Volunteer help for seniors
- Programs for independent living
- Education of clergy and medical personnel



It can happen...

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And, it can happen again...



# Other successes

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- ❑ 25 *Healthy Futures Volunteers* trained; health messages delivered to 168 seniors
- ❑ 8,000 "Messages of the Month" distributed on "Know Your Numbers", Depression, Preventing Falls, and Osteoporosis
- ❑ 5,500 Senior Health and Health Care Resource directories distributed

Mississippi State UNIVERSITY Extension Service



“Aging is not ‘lost youth’ but a new stage of opportunity and strength.”

*-Betty Friedan*





*Funding for this project is provided by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture and has been carried out in partnership between Mississippi State University Extension Service and Copiah-Lincoln Community College. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.*



**SMART AGING**   
HEALTHY FUTURES