

Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging
2020 Annual Report
January 28, 2021

As with everything else, 2020 was a year of sudden change, gradual adjustment, and repositioning for Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging (Connections). We started the year with two new and exciting initiatives (both funded by Jewish Family and Children's Service (JF&CS): the first-ever Latina outreach worker at the Council on Aging (CoA) and planning for a Waltham Senior Civic Academy. We were also continuing our popular walking program in the Bentley University field house (a record 75 walked one day in January) and talking about adding new sites to our monthly food pantry at three Waltham senior public housing buildings.

We were also starting the year with a six-month extension of our Tufts Health Foundation grant and with an application submitted for a two-year extension starting in July that would support the Civic Academy, as well as a Waltham Healthy Aging Summit a year later. A core part of the proposal for the Academy and the Summit was extensive outreach and organizing in Waltham immigrant and low-income communities to make sure their experiences and needs were heard.

Then the virus hit in March. The CoA kept operating to help seniors, but the Senior Center shut its doors. The Latinx outreach worker's hours were cut way back since her children were out of school and childcare. This was quite a blow since in her short time she demonstrated the value of the position (see Attachment 1 – page 4). The Bentley field house closed; our senior volunteers could no longer enter public housing buildings; and it was clear that the Academy could not proceed as a face-to-face program. The workplan for the two-year renewal proposal we had written to Tufts was no longer feasible, and it was unclear what our future proposal could be. Unspent funds on our JF&CS grants had to be used by June 30 or they would be returned to the State.

The Connections Coordinating Committee quickly moved to weekly meetings via Zoom to figure out how to deal with these new realities. We decided to continue planning for the Academy but to offer it online via Zoom. Housing Authority staff took over the senior food pantry. We received permission from JF&CS to split \$4,215 in unspent funds between buying food cards for the CoA to give to low-income seniors and carts for senior residents of public housing to transport their pantry food.

In June Tufts gave us a two-year \$100,000 extension of our grant without requiring a revised proposal. They told us we could use the funds as we saw fit in the new world, including carrying over the funds beyond two years if our expenses slowed due to the pandemic. One major expense that was reduced was our Director from Healthy Waltham, Maria DiMaggio, since there was less for her to direct, and also since she took over coordination of Healthy Waltham's greatly expanded city-wide food bank.

The food pantries in senior public housing continued and under the leadership of Housing Authority Service Coordinator, Ann Callahan, supported by tenant volunteers. They raised the number of participants from 60 to 100. Although we were not able to find a way to safely bring back Connections senior volunteers, Connections has provided financial support in the form of funding for additional food and supplies, as well as purchase of tables and cabinets to store and distribute food at new sites. The pantries also collaborate with the large Healthy Waltham food pantry for additional food for seniors. Additionally, from 6 to 8 of our senior volunteers from the Housing Authority pantries regularly volunteer at the Health Waltham pantries, where they pack bags outdoors at tables.

The Civic Academy planning team continued to meet weekly via Zoom for the rest of the year. Planning to offer the Academy on Zoom proved to be very time consuming, so the start was pushed back into early 2021. In September we received a \$5,000 grant from AARP as core funding for planning and implementation of the Academy, including support for our paid Coordinator, Laura San Juan, who leads the planning team of Laurel Brody, Kathy Kuhn, Bill Wade, & Betsy Leutz. To make the Academy as inclusive as possible we developed and implemented a broad outreach effort that included leafletting senior subsidized housing sites and assistance from more than a dozen Connections partner agencies and allies in the community, e.g., State Representative Tom Stanley's newsletter, WATCH, Africano, the Rotary, and the "village" at Bishops Forest Condominium.

We also decided to not let lack of a computer and internet connection be a barrier to participation in the Academy, so part of the marketing was to offer free computers, internet and training to Academy applicants who could not afford them. To make this possible, we partnered with Tech Goes Home (TGH), which has helped many school systems connect their low-income students to online classes. For \$589 per person TGH supplies a Chromebook, a year's free wifi, and training for our team, who will help seniors get connected. Three of our team became certified trainers.

Only one of the Academy participants took the Chromebook offer, but in spring 2021 we are offering a free-standing Welcome to the Digital Age program for up to 22 seniors to get the Chromebook, internet, and training. In January we will start marketing through leafletting of low-income senior housing, the CoA newsletter, and partner agencies. We are able to do the outreach and training in both English and Spanish. Laura San Juan is again leading the planning team, which consists of Bill Wade, Betsy & Walter Leutz, and Brandeis student Kyra Frasier. We are searching for a paid administrator to assist Laura with the extensive TGH paperwork and with enrollment of and communications with participants.

Working with the CoA we discussed other ways to address the needs and interests of seniors at risk of isolation during the pandemic. A History of Waltham class, a collaboration between Connections' partners Brandeis Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (BOLLI) and the CoA was offered on-line starting April 22nd. In the fall, under the leadership of Connections volunteer Kathy Kuhn, we began to develop the idea of a Zoom program called Mind, Body, Spirit (MBS), which will help seniors try out ways to connect with themselves, their community, and each other through new practices (e.g., yoga, Taiyoba, meditation, journaling, and a short version of the Waltham history class).

The MBS program and the internet connectivity initiative caught the attention of McLean Hospital and CHNA 18, which gave us a \$12,000 grant in November to develop and offer MBS and the 22 new Chromebooks in Welcome to the Digital Age.

As the year concluded, the Civic Academy was ready to launch a seven-session (three hours each) program in early February covering healthy aging, government operations, and advocacy. The 14 seniors enrolled will get a chance to hear from and ask questions of 12 presenters from city, state and federal government; 8 representatives of private service and advocacy agencies from Waltham and the state level; and 4 members of the Connections planning team. The daily roster of speakers and topics is found in Attachment 2 on page 12.

One goal that was not achieved was systematic outreach to and organizing of seniors who are immigrants, low-income, and/or isolated. Without the possibility of face-to-face organizing and meeting, we decided this work was not possible. We will turn to this when this kind of organizing is again feasible.

In conclusion, 2020 was not the year we initially thought it was going to be, but we have kept Connections going and furthered our goals to make Waltham a more age-friendly community and offer Waltham seniors chances to experience healthy aging and contribute to their community. In 2021 we will continue to work with our partner agencies and senior volunteers to deliver the programs we have planned and to develop new ones as (we hope) the world gets back to something more like normal. Thanks to all who have contributed.

Attachments

1. Report on Latinx outreach worker – page 4
2. Roster of Civic Academy presenters and topics – page 12

Attachment 1: Report on Latinx Outreach Worker

Interim Report on
Latinx Outreach Worker/Organizer at Waltham Council on Aging
From Walter Leutz, PhD
Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging
May 18, 2020

Summary

This report details the activities and accomplishments of a Latina outreach worker/community organizer based at the Waltham Council on Aging (CoA) from November 2019 to March 2020, when the CoA's Senior Center closed due to the Corona virus. The position was designed as a demonstration of how to better include Spanish-speaking seniors in Waltham, particularly at and through the CoA. The worker is paid through Waltham Connections grants from Jewish Family and Children's Services (JF&CS) and Mt. Auburn Hospital.

Two things stand out in this report:

1. There is much that can be done to better include Latinx seniors.
2. We were able to hire an outstanding, highly qualified person for this job, who in less than four months set many things in motion.

The report also illustrates several paths to inclusion, including:

1. Collaboration with other agencies, e.g., through sharing information and referrals.
2. Help for individual seniors.
3. Creating new CoA programming and helping to make current CoA programs more accessible to Latinx seniors.

The report includes extensive excerpts from the worker's records and notes from interviews conducted with the worker. The detail will hopefully prove valuable when the Senior Center reopens and if and when the worker returns to the job.

The origins and description of the position

The need for a Latinx outreach worker/community organizer ("the worker") at the CoA was highlighted in a 2017 focus group of 23 Latinx seniors conducted by Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging. Only 3 of the 23 participants had been to the Senior Center. The discussion showed that for many older Latinos, services to older adults are "hidden," in the sense that they have a vague idea of services but do not know what they are, for whom they are intended, or how to access them. One participant summed it up: "The Americans, they have these centers where they receive support. They have services that help the elderly to fill the taxes. We have nothing in Spanish.... I do not know anything that currently exists, only the 'Aging Council,' but the problems are, one, it's not in Spanish."

The first actions that Connections took to better serve Latinx seniors were several bi-lingual social events at the Waltham Senior Center in 2017 and 2018, as well as the translation of the monthly CoA newsletter into Spanish, which started in late 2018. The event highlight was a Fiesta with Latin music and food, attended by about 50 Latinx seniors. These events attracted 8 Latinx volunteers for Connections as well as a handful of new Latinx participants in CoA activities (e.g., trips and exercise classes). The Spanish newsletters (as well as Haitian Creole versions) are distributed by Connections volunteers and CoA staff to churches, agencies, businesses, and senior housing sites around the city. They prompted some phone calls and visits to the CoA for help, but absent Spanish speaking staff, the CoA's ability to respond to them was hampered.

Recognizing the continuing shortcomings in serving Latinx seniors, Waltham Connections decided to seek funds to hire a part-time Latinx outreach worker/organizer to work at the CoA to demonstrate a better way to reach and serve Latinx seniors in Waltham. In the Fall of 2019 Connections obtained a \$5,000 grant from Jewish Family and Children's Services (JF&CS) and \$1,000 from Mt. Auburn Hospital to do so.

The job description for an outreach worker/community organizer was developed and circulated in the community. This part-time position (initially 6 hours a week, increased to 8 hours in February) had the goals of improving and expanding participation of Waltham's Latinx seniors in CoA services and activities and of better connecting these seniors with other community services. After a community-wide search, the new Latinx worker was hired and began in mid-November. She is a bi-lingual, bi-cultural, Latina who is a long-time Waltham resident and mother of three young children. She holds a Masters degree in International Health Policy and Management from Brandeis's Heller School. While based at the CoA, the worker is formally an employee of Healthy Waltham, which manages Waltham Connections grants.

In the first month on the job the worker participated in orientation sessions with CoA staff regarding outreach, income evaluation, and procedures. She also met with Connections leaders and Latinx volunteers. The orientation included discussions of an evaluation of the position and how to collect and share needed information.

Methods for the Report

The data for this report were gathered primarily from detailed time sheets maintained by the worker, as well as monthly interviews with her and the CoA Director, Marybeth Duffy. The daily time sheets contain notes on what she did and how much time was spent on various activities. The types of activities tracked include contacts with community agencies, individual help provided, holding group discussions, and developing new/improved services.

The original evaluation plan also called for tracking indicators of success in engaging Latinx seniors, including attendance of Latinos at activities (e.g., health screening, fitness classes, trips) and numbers receiving services, (e.g, meals on wheels, fuel assistance, transportation.) However, when the Senior Center closed in mid-March (due to the Co-vid

19 public health emergency) these activities and services were suspended and further tracking was not possible. Before the Senior Center closed the worker updated the “My Senior Center Portal” database so it will be easier in the future to provide accurate reports.

Findings

Findings are presented in four areas. In her short tenure to date, the outreach worker/organizer has made progress on all four:

1. Outreach to and work with Waltham area agencies and organizations
2. Outreach to and work with Latinx older adults
3. Services/activities developed/enhanced
4. Future plans

1. Outreach to and work with Waltham area agencies and organizations

A major goal of the outreach worker/organizer is to reach out to other organizations serving (or potentially serving) Latinx seniors to let them know of the new position at the CoA and the goal of the CoA to better serve Latinx seniors. This should have several benefits – better services for Latinx seniors at the CoA, better connections for the CoA with other organizations serving Latinx seniors, and new activities/programming at the CoA with the help of partner organizations.

After training and orientation in November, the worker reached out through emails to community organizations about their resources and services for Spanish-speaking seniors. Organizations included AARP, Springwell, Kit Clark Senior Services in Boston, JF&CS, WATCH/CDC, and selected Waltham faith communities. These activities and results are summarized below.

St. Mary's Catholic Church: The outreach worker held an information session with approximately 50 Latinx members of St. Mary's in December. She used a PowerPoint presentation to discuss resources in Waltham, e.g., the CoA, the TRIAD program. This resulted in requests for assistance from 8 Spanish-speaking seniors.

Other churches: The worker has tried to set up similar sessions at several other churches and had a tentative date at Centro de Adoracion in May and Sacred Heart. Both cancelled due to the health emergency. She has continued to send follow-up outreach letters and emails to other faith communities in Waltham. Thus far she has not made progress.

Springwell: In December the worker met with staff from Springwell, which is Waltham's core provider of home care and support. The worker learned that Springwell has no Spanish speakers on staff. They use a web-based translating system when they receive inquiries in Spanish. They shared some Spanish-language pamphlets and resources they use. The worker has referred two people to Springwell.

Latino Health Insurance Program (LHIP). In December the worker connected with LHIP, which helps Latinos in Eastern Massachusetts to access health insurance. It also provides health promotion programs in Spanish. The worker gained agreement from LHIP to do a presentation at the CoA in Spanish about their services and also to offer a diabetes self-management program in Spanish. These could not be delivered before the CoA closed in March.

WATCH/CDC (WATCH): The worker had several discussions with the community organizer at WATCH, which provides a variety of services and supports to Waltham immigrants and others. The worker has referred several Latinx seniors to WATCH's citizenship program, employment help, and help on housing.

JF&CS: The worker connected with the JF&CS Dementia Café program and discussed holding a Café for Spanish-speaking individuals.

Charles River Community Health Center: In January the worker connected with staff at Charles River to share and obtain information about services for Spanish-speaking seniors. Later she met with outreach staff and management. Their largest population is Spanish-speaking seniors. They said they would help recruit more seniors for CoA programs. They developed a plan for the worker to go to the Center's health fair in August.

Latinos in Accion: The worker contacted them and learned that the group is no longer very active besides having a table at the annual Latinx event on the Waltham common.

Expand distribution of translated CoA newsletters: In January the worker identified new sites to take translated newsletters. Although she has not had a chance to follow-up with individuals at these new sites, Connections' volunteers offered to drop off copies of the newsletters at these sites. This happened in January and February.

2. Outreach to and work with Latinx Older Adults

The outreach worker has used several approaches to reaching out to, serving and organizing Latinx seniors. They include translating the CoA Resource Guide and other materials into Spanish, refining the CoA's membership list, holding a focus group with activist Latinx seniors, and providing direct help.

Translate materials: Five areas of translation stand out:

- In November the worker translated the CoA's 9-page Resource Guide about supports and services for seniors in Waltham into Spanish and arranged for it to be printed and posted on the CoA website.
- The January CoA newsletter, including the Spanish version, introduced the worker to the community. The newsletter also contained a Waltham Connections newsletter with a more complete introduction (in Spanish and English) and a photo.

- In February the worker responded to a request from the Waltham TRIAD officer to translate the Vial of Life into Spanish. The vial is a program that allows individuals to have their complete medical information ready in their home for emergency personnel to reference during an emergency. Using a scanned version she recreated it in Publisher and printed a version with English on one side and Spanish on the other, which allows emergency workers to cross-reference the English questions. The TRIAD would also like to have a Creole version.
- In February the worker updated the CoA's Spanish answering service message phone recording from a recording that the CoA's Latino van driver made months earlier.
- In February the worker translated materials on the Waltham Connections' Facebook page into Spanish.

Refine the CoA membership list: In November the worker ran reports using the CoA database to obtain a list of Latinx members of the CoA. The database has a designation of ethnic origin that includes Latinx, but the designation has been completed by staff rather than the individual seniors. The original list identified 119 members as Latinx. In December the worker phoned those members, recorded responses on a spreadsheet and refined the list seniors who are actually of Spanish origin. Unfortunately the list is at the Senior Center, which is closed. Eventually, this refined list will serve as a baseline for tracking whether the outreach work increases the number of Latinx members and also the activities in which they are participating. During the calls the worker told seniors about the translated resource guide and also about her position. The calls also yielded requests for individual help from the worker. Making the calls took all month.

Focus group of Latinx seniors: In December the worker organized and led a focus group of 8 Latinx seniors who have been active Connections volunteers. The goal was to tap their understanding of the experiences, questions and needs of other Latinx seniors. Among the issues and options identified were the following:

- Language can always be a barrier.
- Fear of using services because of fear of reporting to ICE.
- Large families and expectations that seniors will work for income and/or take care of children.
- Many men will age alone, since they will work as long as they are physically able in order to send money to family in their home country.
- Ask Latinx seniors to register for the senior center so that they are familiar with what is available if/when they need any services.
- Hold CoA information sessions in Spanish at several places of worship in Waltham.
- Transportation is often a problem due to lack of knowledge/assistance of navigating the system to obtain a license and/or use public transit.
- Lack of education on primary care.
- Lack of family/friends for support for those that are here alone (especially men).
- Lack of Insurance sends Latinx seniors to emergency rooms and they often miss follow-up care for chronic conditions.

- Activities that would likely interest Latinx seniors: Spanish dance class, diabetes education, screenings for diabetes, kidney disease and heart problems, support groups for seniors living alone, dominos, and celebrations of Latinx holidays.

Service to individuals:

The outreach and communications work described above has yielded a steady stream of Latinx seniors seeking help from the worker. To manage the work she created a spreadsheet of individual clients where she makes notes on needs (hearing tests, handyman, etc.) and actions (appointments, follow up calls).

The excerpts from the monthly notes below give a good sense of the volume and scope of her work with individual clients.

Nov & Dec

- Met with client re housing, transportation and fuel assistance.
- Emailed Officer Bailey (TRIAD) re a client's needs.

January

- Fuel assistance application (2)
- Housing application
- CoA registration (3)
- Tax prep program
- Meals at CoA (2)
- Cambridge CoA client who wanted help in Spanish, Mass Health and SNAP eligibility, hearing screening, case management

Feb:

- Client referred from a Waltham physician. Pressing needs for SHINE and MA Health.
- Urgent walk-in application for housing. This is the most common need. Late on rent. Referred to a shelter and day center for seniors. Needs follow up.
- Couple with issue with a neighbor. Referred to TRIAD. Continuing to follow up.
- Housing application. Hard to refer out because the agency may not have a Spanish speaker.
- Mailed rental help application for a client (denied). Maybe the program will have more funds in new year.
- Follow up calls – ongoing.
- Follow up meetings re fuel assistance (new documents), housing application update (3), registration at CoA.

3. Services/activities developed/enhanced

In addition to working with other agencies and with individual seniors, the job description asks the outreach worker/organizer to help make existing CoA services more accessible to Spanish speaking seniors. She made progress on this and more, particularly in bringing

new activities to the CoA. Again, here are brief descriptions of activities and accomplishments by month.

December

- Outlined possible activities/programs to be offered in Spanish.
- Created an electronic intake form available to all on the CoA shared folder.

January & February

- Worked with Waltham Connections on planning a Cinco de Mayo event at the CoA.
- Found a Spanish-speaking tax preparer who started to offer help at the CoA on Tuesdays and Fridays.
- Helped Powers music school on their grant to increase diversity for its music classes. Connected them with St. Mary's church and Ugandan immigrants, plus musical seniors at the CoA.
- Facilitated the offering of Spanish classes for English speakers at the CoA. A retired, bi-lingual Spanish teacher has volunteered to lead.
- Found a Zumba Gold teacher who will offer classes at the CoA in Spanish and English.
- Connected a Latina art specialist with CoA theatre and arts program.
- Finalized plans for a diabetes class in Spanish at the CoA. Created recruitment plan, flyer and newsletter article.

March

- Everything put on hold, including meeting Alzheimers' Association to talk about a program in Spanish for seniors.

4. Future plans

An interview with the outreach worker/organizer after the Senior Center closed was an opportunity for the worker to share plans that will now have to wait.

- Reach out to a candidate she has identified for a Haitian Creole outreach worker/organizer.
- Table for Latino day (w/Latinos in Accion), Waltham Day, RiverFest, the Farmers' Market.
- Offer a class with TRIAD Officer Bailey and a community police officer who speaks Spanish.
- Expand Latinx outreach to newer immigrant groups, e.g., Guatemalans.
- Plan and conduct two events for Latinx seniors at the CoA on May 5 and September 18. The May date was planned as a small social/luncheon. September will be larger and in honor of Spanish Heritage Month.
- Get this all in the newsletter.

When the Senior Center reopens, the material in this report demonstrates that it will be valuable to re-activate a Latinx outreach worker/community organizer. The report details the work to be done: the community contacts that can be re-established, the information

systems that can support the work, the types of needs Latinx seniors present, and ways to improve access to and expand services and activities. Hopefully this successful demonstration will result in a permanent position.

Attachment 2 – Civic Academy Roster of Speakers and Topics

SPEAKERS AND TIMES **Waltham Senior Civic Academy (WSCA)**

Day 1 – Tuesday, February 2, 2021, Introduction to Healthy Aging & Civic Engagement

Welcome, goals, expectations, & evaluation 9:30-10:10

Laura San Juan, WSCA Facilitator

Betsy Leutz - Connections - WSCA Team

Engaging in virtual class meetings: 10:15-11:45

Bill Wade - Connections - WSCA Team

Healthy aging and the age-friendly effort in Mass 11:45-12:25

Walter Leutz – Connections - WSCA Team

James Fuccione, Senior Director – MA Healthy Aging Collaborative

Day 2 – Tuesday, February 9, 2021, Advocacy Workshop

Waltham Healthy Aging Study and Waltham Connections 9:55-10:25

Walter & Betsy Leutz, Connections, - WSCA Team

Advocacy 10:30-10:55

Lisa Gurgone, MS, Executive Director, Mass Home Care

Discussion of healthy aging issues 10:55-11:25

Walter Leutz, Connections, - WSCA Team

Skill building workshop 11:30-12:10

Lisa Gurgone, MS, Executive Director, Mass Home Care

Day 3 – Tuesday, February 16, 2021, Communication Skills with which to Advocate (Writing a Persuasive Argument and Public Speaking)

Advocacy in real life 9:35-10:00

Edna Pruce, President, Mass Senior Action Council (MSAC)

Connecting issues to agencies 10:00-10:25

Kathy Kuhn & Laura San Juan - Connections - WSCA Team

Public speaking tips 10:30-11:10

Winston Pierre, City of Boston (CoB) Toastmasters International,
CoB, Mayor's Office of Diversity
Director, Diversity Programs – Boston University

Using a personal story to advocate 11:10-12:10

Laurel Brody, Connections - WSCA Team

Day 4 – Tuesday, February 23, 2021, Introduction and Engagement with City Government: Part 1

Meet the Mayor 10:05-10:35

Jeanette McCarthy, Mayor, City of Waltham 10:05-10:35

Meet the City Council 10:50-11:15

Paul C. Brasco, City Council President

Jonathan Paz, City Councilor, Ward 9 10:55-11:15

City Service Panel 11:20-12:20

Marybeth Duffy, Director, Waltham Council on Aging

Jon Bailey, TRIAD Officer, Waltham Police Department

John Gollinger, Executive Director, Waltham Housing Authority

Robert J. Waters, Housing Supervisor, Waltham Housing Division

Day 5 – Tuesday, March 2, 2021, Engagement with City Government and Community Agencies: Part 2

The Waltham City Budget 9:50-10:10

Paul G. Centofanti, Waltham City Auditor

City and Local Aging Services Panel 10:15-11:15

Marybeth Duffy, Director, Waltham Council on Aging

Trish Smith, CEO, Springwell

Kathy Burnes, Director, Services for Older Adults, JF&CS

Lauren Nackel, Community Engagement Specialist, REACH

Genoveva Tavera, Community Organizer, WATCH

Skills building workshop: Apply Advocacy Principles to Engaging with City 11:20-12:20

Laurel Brody, Connections - WSCA Team

Day 6 – Tuesday, March 9, 2021, Introduction to Federal and State Governments

State Legislative Panel 9:50-10:15

Tom Stanley, Massachusetts State Representative, 9th Middlesex

John Lawn, Massachusetts State Representative, 10th Middlesex

State elder services 10:20-10:50

Carole Malone, Assistant Secretary, Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA)

Federal Panel 10:50-11:30

Jay Higgins, Assistant to US Rep. Katherine Clark

Jennifer Throwe, Regional Administrator – US Dept. of Health and Human Services,
Administration on Community Living (ACL), New England Region

Skills building workshop: Apply Advocacy Principles to Engaging with all levels of government 11:35-12:15

Laurel Brody, Connections - WSCA Team

Day 7 – Tuesday, March 16, 2021, Graduation and Connection to Advocacy Groups

All Guest Speakers invited

WSCA Project Team

Graduates