

CONNECTIONS TO COMMUNITY: EMPOWERED CHOICES FOR OLDER ADULTS

MAYOR LOPEZ ROGERS: “Hello, I am speaking to you today as the Mayor of the City of Avondale, and President of the National League of Cities.”

“I am also a wife, mother, grandmother, daughter, and friend. All of these relationships are important to me. You have similar roles in your lives.”

“One issue that affects every one of us is aging.”

“We are all changing the expectations and images we have of the years beyond 65.”

“As the President of NLC, I see dramatic changes across the country. Everywhere, the number of older adults is increasing significantly. Right here in Maricopa County, we will see a 50 per cent increase in the number of older adults just within the next eight years. This is a unique opportunity to leverage the strengths and skills of people aged 65 years plus.”

“As the Mayor of a growing community, I understand the importance of planning ahead.”

“We are listening to you and using your feedback to shape new pilot projects throughout the region.”

“This work is important to me as a wife, mother, and grandmother. I want what’s best for my family. That means having more choices, to live near relatives, to connect with my community, and to live the life I want.”

“Most of us want to continue living in our homes, in our communities as the years pass. The conversation is changing from growing old to growing well. This video offers examples of people who are doing just that, growing, discovering and connecting with their community in exciting ways.”

DR. CATHERINE LINDSTROM: “You see a lot more activity now in seniors in their sixties than you ever did in prior generations. Health is a reason for that, better nutrition, more opportunities, lots of activities, so I would say sixty is really the new forty.”

NARRATOR: Every day, the number of older adults is growing, across the country and within our region.

As this dramatic increase continues, our communities need to prepare to integrate the experience and skills this generation brings.

Within this growth in the older population, is the important concept of Aging in Community.

Aging in Community means having more choices about how and where you live, while increasing the types of opportunities people have to connect to their community!

AMY ST. PETER: “The Maricopa Association of Governments has been working with a broad range of really talented partners. We have been working together with local governments, nonprofit agencies, places of worship, local foundations, national foundations, in order to create more opportunities more choices for in our

neighborhoods. Older adults need to be meaningfully engaged they need to be a part of their communities, so they have an opportunity to give back.”

NARRATOR: The MAG regional Aging in Community Network was designed to better integrate and use the talents of older adults.

This network helps people over 60, be less isolated and will result in a stronger community for people of all ages.

MAG is coordinating several pilot projects to launch new programs for people age 60 and over...

Agencies helping to implement these pilot projects include the City of Phoenix, Tempe Community Council, and two West Valley nonprofits, Benevilla and Sun Health.

It will take such diverse community efforts to change the regional mindset.

DR. CATHERINE LINDSTROM: “I think if communities really want to engage in age, they need to let go of old belief systems about what’s certain ages mean arbitrarily, they need to be involved in really learning what their retired folks are thinking, doing and engaging in, and they may be surprised. Communities need to offer opportunities for a lot of things”

AMY ST. PETER: We have to really erase the lines that have separated us before and come together with perfectly, in perfect alignment with the intention to make a change and the intention to leverage older adults and to see them as part of the solution as we redesign how our lives will be in the future and not just the lives of people um who are 50, 60, 70, 80 right now but our own lives, this work is very personal um the number of older adults who will be in our community in the future impacts everyone’s bottom line, every business, every local government, every place of worship it also impacts us personally, will we be able to remain in our homes, in our communities?

HOPE INIGUEZ: “I have been here for 42 years.”

NARRATOR: Years ago, this area was known as the Golden Gate Barrio. It is now known as South Mountain village or simply South Phoenix. This has been Hope’s home for 75 years.

Hope’s roots here are very deep. Her mother and grandmother were both born here. She has grown children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren living nearby.

HOPE INIGUEZ: “I would like to stay here close to all the friends I have around here. Most of the things I do, I do them here in this area.”

NARRATOR: Hope enjoys staying connected with her community and staying active. She lost one-hundred pounds at the Y. Hope is active in several clubs and donates her time helping those in need.

Today, she is helping out at the American Legion...collecting diapers for families of soldiers stationed overseas.

HOPE INIGUEZ: “Helping, I think that’s what makes me happier. If I know it is going to help somebody. It gives you such satisfaction. If you are sitting at home and not knowing, what to do; find something, find something that will help somebody else.”

NARRATOR: Volunteerism is important to a majority of older people in our region.

Other items of importance to older adults: Independence... self-worth...mobility... transportation...money... health... and staying in their homes, to name a few.

AMY ST PETER: “It is significantly more cost effective for older adults to remain in their homes with the proper level of support. For example, if someone is forced to leave their home because they don’t have that support, then most often they have to go into a nursing home or an institutionalized facility like that. They are extremely expensive; they can cost several thousands of dollars over a year even a couple thousand dollars every single month. Older adults, most of them, do not have that kind of income and then it falls on society and our communities to support them in a very expensive form of care that they would not have needed had they had the proper support in their homes”.

DR. CATHERINE LINDSTROM: “One of the key things about aging is the importance not only of a sense of meaning and purpose but also the sense or the need for a very vibrant social network. So while you are living autonomously and independently you still needing to be a part of an on-going social group or a group of friends or family to stay engaged with other adults and with other generations so that you still have a place and a meaning in the greater community. It’s really important not only to do that for the community’s benefit, but for you own mental health.”

NARRATOR: Senior centers are all over our valley...

And are tremendous assets for those who utilize them...but studies are finding that many new older adults are not accessing senior centers. Communities are now looking at how to best adapt these centers to better serve their residents.

The senior centers and services, we offer now provide critical support, given the increase in the number of older adults, we need to make sure that the services are relevant and cost effective.

We are finding that changes can be made to better meet people’s shifting priorities in the future.

AMY ST PETER: “We’re changing now; we’re changing from thinking about people in terms of their chronological years to thinking about their level of activity, and really defining people as fit, frail or fragile. Very often when people talk about older adults they automatically go to the very fragile, not realizing that’s an important source of the population, but also it’s the minority. It’s a relatively low number of the people, the majority of older adults are very vibrant, they’re very active, they’re very healthy and in doing so that creates a very different service delivery, it creates a very different kind of engagement and interaction with older adults it changes the solutions that we need to have in place.”

MAYOR GREG STANTON: “The City of Phoenix can only reach its full potential, if we fully tap into the talents of our senior community and aging in place is critically important to accomplish that goal. As I think about people aging in place and giving back to their community, I can think of no better example than my own parents. They raised me and my sibling’s right here in West Phoenix. They instilled in each one of us a strong desire to serve

our community. They believed in public service and in the difference that one person can make. That made a big difference for me. And I want to use those experiences to make a difference for the people of our city”

“One way we can make a difference is to ensure people like my parents have opportunities to remain living in their own homes and in their own neighborhoods as they age. Our communities are stronger if every person can reach their potential in place. That means our communities need to be accessible to every person in them. Our transportation systems, sidewalks and roads, buildings, our environment and our activities need to be adapted for people of all ages and abilities. This doesn’t benefit just older adults. These changes, these positive changes will benefit all of us.”

NARRATOR: Mel and Sharon Bauck are a part of that positive change! They spend many hours a week, working to strengthen their community.

Although Mel retired in 1996, from his career in the military...he still has a job...but now, it is as a volunteer for Benevilla, a non-profit dedicated to cultivating caring communities.

MEL BAUCK: “It’s hard to put words on what I receive because; I receive more than money can buy.”

“Hi Mr. Miller, how are you doing? Would you like it on the counter, certainly.”

“A lot of people, the younger generation, they are a lot younger, they view older adults as just old people, that they don’t have anything to contribute to society and we really do.”

NARRATOR: Today Mel and Sharon are contributing by delivering meals to home-bound people like Gerald, who otherwise would go without; and food is only part of the equation.

MEL BAUCK: “Sharon and I spend a little extra time with them to make sure that they are physically and mentally doing okay”.

SHARON BAUK: “You’re my pretty girl. You’re the pretty girl, starting to purr.”

NARRATOR: The Baucks stay active despite their health issues. Sharon has had several spine surgeries and still has a difficult time just walking. Mel’s devotion to Sharon is easy to see.

MEL BAUCK: “Sharon and I have been married 45 years and I just love to give her my all.”

“Sitting and looking at TV all day, is totally in my opinion, unhealthy. It’s more healthy to go out and help others. The satisfaction you get, you cannot put money on that. And it’s actually good for your health, most important your psychological health and your self-worth To stay in the home, you have a tendency of depression and without doing something, your mind, a lot of other things can happen, dementia, a little early because you are not using your mind.”

NARRATOR: Mel and Sharon’s mission now, is to stay busy. It not only helps others, but it also helps them to feel good about themselves.

DR. CATHERINE LINDSTROM: “Think about it when you go to a cocktail party and you have conversations people don’t ask who are you they ask what do you do? And so it’s important to have that sense of identity. As seniors

and older people engage in their community that sense of doing things for the benefits of others, engaging in activities and volunteer functions that really raise the level of the community and the life of the community as a whole, become more important to us because we are leaving a legacy.”

“We have the ability to use our skills, our knowledge, our experience and our backgrounds in ways to make everything better to make society better and seniors are interested in doing that.”

NARRATOR: Staying engaged with others can be a great tonic for staying young.

CAROL HORAN: “I think we get old because we stop moving. You know we don’t stop moving because we get old. But if you stop moving you can get old. And it’s really an attitude as much as anything else. And if you don’t let your age a number define who you are then you are going to be healthier.”

NARRATOR: Carol lives in this retirement community in Goodyear. Besides doing this...

She also uses her experience as a former family therapist to volunteer for her church and non-profits, like the Southwest Family Advocacy Center.

For Carol, being surrounded by friends is a real key to happiness.

CAROL HORAN: “I have got a great neighborhood for one thing, really dear friends....just the people I work with here have been very supportive, all the clubs I am in, and they are really nice and supportive people. I have a lot of neat networks of people out there that I just love to be around.”

NARRATOR: Carol’s advice for others?

CAROL HORAN: “Stay active try something new that you never did, take a little risk. Because you need to take a risk if you are going to try something new and don’t be afraid of failure, I mean I have failed miserably many times you should see some of my golf games...”

HOPE INIGUEZ: “Stay out there and stay active, exercise, love your family, love the people around you, say hi to a stranger--it doesn’t hurt. If they answer oh how beautiful, if they don’t did it hurt you?”

AMY ST PETER: “And we need to be ready and there are things that we can do right now to prepare ourselves to make better use of our resources and also to make better use of the social capital, the human capital that we have particularly thru older adults. This is the most educated work force ever to retire, they have more experience, and they have more skills, than we have ever seen before. And we have a real opportunity right now to be able to tap into that, to strengthen our communities really for all people.

CAROL KRATZ: “Virginia Galvin Piper was the widow of Paul Galvin who founded Motorola. She truly believed we all have the capacity, and even responsibility, to help others and give back to the community. She worked from home spending countless hours personally responding to more than 1,000 grant requests. The support she gave during her life continues to this day through the work of the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust. At the trust, we are committed to carrying on her commitment to the community, including older adults.”

NARRATOR: Virginia Piper was a pioneer for Aging in Place, long before the term was used. She gave generously to support services, for people aged 65 years and more.

CAROL KRATZ: “After 25 years of giving to others, she passed away in her home that she loved so much. She understood the value of being able to remain living in one’s home because she had done that herself. At the trust, we are working today to ensure others have that same choice.”

NARRATOR: Piper is joined in these efforts by national leaders like the Pfizer Foundation and Grantmakers in Aging. They are investing in innovations across the country and in this region to make communities even better for people of all ages.

CAROL KRATZ: “This project is part of their Community AGEnda, Improving America for All Ages project. In partnership with our national funders and local leaders, the Trust is supporting this work because we need to redesign how the region responds to aging. We need to expand our view of older adults as being frail and needy to being vibrant and an incredible resource. It’s been said that the greatest gift of the last century was people being able to live longer. The challenge of this century will be figuring out what to do with the extra years we have now. “

NARRATOR: For more information about all of the Aging in Community resources, programs and information, you can visit Connect60plus.com, a new website developed by and for older adults, to keep them connected to each other and the opportunities that increase quality of life.

MOS: “I spent my career in the corporate environment which developed the left side of my brain, so I am welding now to open up the right side of my brain.”

MAYOR LOPEZ ROGERS: “Together, we are redefining what the time after 65 years of age looks like. It is more vibrant and rewarding than ever before.

“Today people are living longer. We are healthier, better educated, and have accomplished careers. Many of us are not ready to retire. Some may want to explore new directions and learn different skills. Others give back to their communities.”

MAYOR GREG STANTON: “What choices can you make to build a better community now, to help you years down the road? We can all make a difference right now, right here in this region. Our region has a long history of innovations in aging, meeting the needs of older adults, and tapping into their talents. Right now, we have an unprecedented opportunity to bridge the generational gap by connecting older adults and youth. Doing so will strengthen our communities for the long haul. You are part of the solution we need. Changes are underway everywhere around us. And I politely invite you to be a part of that positive change! “