

CAFE: The Center for Age-Friendly Excellence

Advancing Livable Communities for all Generations



CAFE Focus Group Report Daly City April 17, 2019 Older Adults (Women at Pilipino Bayanihan Resource Center)

Transportation

Focus group members explained that one needs significant funds to take Uber and Lyft. In addition, they don't know how to use the ride apps. At least one participant "lives on Lyft" and routinely compares costs between Uber and Lyft. Members shared negative stories of Uber drivers and expressed fear of taking Uber. The PBRC is attempting to educate the community on how to use the Uber and Lyft apps. One woman's son put \$100 into her Lyft account- this situation and solution represent a relatively easy fix project for the community involving families in supporting independent transportation.

For the first time, a member of a focus group told of being unable to navigate the Department of Motor Vehicles online site. She could not renew her California ID, and now must travel everywhere with her passport.

Members of this group shared their struggles with driving and told stories of minor accidents, memory issues and very old vehicles. One participant explained that the Peninsula Family Services has a program that helps seniors find a car; they also know where seniors can go for routine maintenance. This service is essential for one participant as she must pick up her grandchildren after school. (This is an example of an excellent, unique and model program that may be more widely advertised). The focus group members were aware of a program with St. Vincent de Paul volunteers that offer all sorts of assistance, including drivers. In addition, the Cancer Society provides drivers to cancer treatment medical appointments. No member of this focus group used Redi-Wheels.

The focus group members were aware of the free Daly City bus funded by San Mateo County, but they did not know where the bus stops were located (another good opportunity to promote existing services). These focus group members said that they don't know how to find information about bus stop locations; they asked for printed maps of bus stops. (This is another easy fix regarding unmet transportation needs). We learned that SamTrans volunteers will soon help these seniors learn how to take the bus.

Housing

Focus group members shared that there is not enough senior housing or subsidized housing in the community. This group calls HART (Healthy Aging Resource Team) for help. Subsidized housing is awarded by lottery and recent rents are: \$700 for a one bedroom and \$1,200 for a larger property. One member reported that her rent is greater than her Social Security check and she explained that it would be worse if she owned a home because of the property taxes. This person has seen her rent increase \$1,000 in four years to \$2,400 – and yet this is less than the market rate of \$3,000 in the area. One participant shared that her rent is \$1,600 and utilities \$200, which is about equal to her total income. She needs to find work to pay the bills. This group also expressed confusion about reverse mortgage options.

Seniors who own property reported struggles managing it and dealing with tenants, legal entanglements and day-to-day maintenance.

Social Participation

Focus group members said that PBRC is a hub of activity including exercise and tai chi, and Zumba. War Memorial Community Center offers many activities. There are also activities at Doelger Senior Center. They shared that Daly City has a lot of activities, but the problem is getting to them.

Some participants said that Filipino Americans (at least among this group) prefer to engage in activities with other Filipino persons, rather than mix with mainstream others. They are not sure of the reasons- perhaps they are not invited, or perhaps they just prefer to be with familiar people. They did say they wish to be with people of their same age group.

There was a frank discussion of mental health and counseling concerns. They shared that they don't really want to get involved with outside people. They are embarrassed. They think women are more open to counseling compared to men. They said they would rather stay isolated and not share their problems with a stranger. And they will not identify themselves as needing help. (Perhaps a Filipino peer counseling project would be worth testing).

Respect and Social Inclusion

The group told of the hazards of riding the bus. Seniors are not offered seats and another rider kicked one limping elder. Other riders ignore or seem ignorant to the Federal law to offer seats to seniors. (A mass media campaign regarding senior bus seat priority may have significant impact).

Regarding respect and social inclusion in families, respect for elders is part of the Filipino culture. But there are differences between Filipino immigrants and US born Filipinos. It is considered a blessing for a person to take care of elders and the disabled.

Unfortunately there is a dark side; they reported that some elders are abused (financially) and ignored at home. Victims don't tell authorities because they don't know how or who to tell and then there is the haunting fear that they may be sent back to the Philippines. One glimmer of hope are physicians who understand elder abuse and can connect the elder to a social worker or other designated/mandated reporter.

Civic Participation & Employment

The group was aware of many volunteer programs for older persons. At the same time, the pressure surrounds finances and employment issues. One participant told the story that her Social Security and pension are not enough to cover her rent. She had other property in the past, but taxes forced a loss. This same person is an on call staffperson for hospice cases in order to earn income.

Another focus group member explained that it is difficult to find work in the region. One reason is that young graduates willing to work for \$20/hour when she is paid \$60/hr. (engineer).

Regarding volunteer opportunities, they said that one has to hunt them down. As they are not clearly listed or stated anywhere, at least for this focus group. (If there is not a central place listing volunteer opportunities in Daly City, such a listing, widely distributed, could have significant impact).

Communication and Information

The group did know about job openings and volunteer opportunities listed at senior centers. These lists may not be current. Some organizations list "odd jobs" that may appeal to older persons.

This group expressed a need for technology training. These kinds of classes are offered at Doelger, but the times of classes are not working for some. And the need continues, so more classes can be offered. Additional classes are offered by the library and Lincoln Community Center; at the same time, classes are cancelled for low enrollment and even then, limited to only 5 or 6 seats.

Westmore and Jefferson High Schools offer classes for high school students after school, but they are not open to seniors. They were aware that War Memorial Community Center has 5 computers and that this is not enough. Focus group members said that they need more information on classes, how to enroll and how to get to the classes. Once again, transportation is a major barrier.

Other sources of information come from churches, libraries, Filipino magazines (Philippine Star and Positively Filipino). They also think the PBRC is key to disseminating information.

Community Support & Health Services

The PBRC is an important source of information for this group. A 136 page directory given to new immigrants via the Filipino Mental Health Initiative provides mental health support. This directory also has information on Social Security and immigration issues. However, this directory needs to be updated. There are challenges facing PBRC. It is 35 years old but not well known outside of the close group and they need staff and office funds. It is the only not for profit Filipino organization in San Mateo County.

Doelger Senior Center has information on health care plans.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Many in the focus group feel that the chilly weather prevents much outdoor activity. The chilly fog and mist is too cold for many.

A major complaint is the filthy conditions of bus stops with urine and feces, broken glass and vandalism. They noted that bus stops in upscale neighborhoods are kept clean. If they have to choose between clean, sheltered bus stops and on time buses, they want on time buses. (The situation of alleged differential bus stop care is worth further inquiry).

Some residents must walk miles to a bus stop and the focus group members are always balancing paid verses free options and shuttles verses fixed route systems. They all agreed that the Senior Clipper Card is a valuable help, but not all seniors know how to obtain one.