

**BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING  
MINUTES**

October 5, 2023,                      Hybrid Meeting  
8:30am – 10:30AM

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**                      Abigail Brown, Julie Hart, Barbara Carey, Mary Rita Hurley, Beverly Heiden, Barbara Carey, Hannah Kimball, Gazel Tan, Diana Thompson, Eleanor Lee, Anne Rittenhouse, Shana Aucsmith

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**                      Phyllis Smilen, Kira Hackett.

**STAFF PRESENT:**                      Dan Lassiter, Bellevue Parks & Community Services – Rec. Div.  
Christy Stangland, Bellevue Parks & Community Services – Human Services Div.

**GUESTS:**                      Andrea Cline, Kathy Iverson, Kari Mareno, Karen Hart,

**Abigail Brown, BNOA Chair**, introduced the newest BNOA member Mary Rita Hurley. Mary Rita described past experiences with boards and other organizations where Mary Rita had worked and volunteered.

**PRESENTER(S): Dinah Stephens is the Program Manager for Age Friendly Seattle speaking on Ageism.**

**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Daniel Lassiter, Bellevue Parks & Community Services

**WELCOME AND ROLL CALL:** The meeting was called to order by Abigail Brown.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** October 2023 minutes approved.

## **PRESENTATION: Impacts of Ageism!**

Who is considered “old”? No universal definition exists!

Many arbitrary dates:

- Age 65 for Medicare
- Age 62-67 for Social Security
- Age 40 to be in a protected class.
- Age 55 to benefit from King County VSHL funds.
- Age 60 to receive Age Friendly Seattle discount Gold Card

These can act as cues to us, telling us when we become members of the “old” group. “You look good for your age” = “constantly getting old”. Very few positive images exist of how older adults are portrayed. Only 15% of tv shows portrayed older adults and a high percentage of that is negative.

### **Stereotype Embodiment Theory (SET)**

“Stereotypes are embodied when their assimilation from the surrounding culture leads to self-definitions that, in turn, influence functioning and health.” (Levy 2009)

- Internalized across the life span.
- Can operate unconsciously.
- Gain salience from self-relevance
- Utilize multiple pathways: psychological, behavioral, physiological.

We absorb stereotypes:

- top-down (society to individual)
- over time (from childhood to old age)

### **Ageism**

World Health Organization (WHO) definition: Ageism refers to the **stereotypes** (how we think), **prejudice** (how we feel) and **discrimination** (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age (WHO 2023)

Three variables of ageism adversely impacting health (Levy 2009):

1. Detrimental treatment of older adults (discrimination)

2. Older adults' negative beliefs about older adults (stereotypes)
3. Negative perception of one's own aging (prejudice)

Research shows directionality: **ageism affects health.**

Awareness of belonging to "old" group and the related stereotypes (even if you don't agree!)

**Psychological pathways:** Age-Based Stereotype Threats → creates worry about confirming a negative stereotype, and consequently leads to underperformance.

**Behavioral pathways:** negative attitudes about aging → less likely to engage in healthy activities.

**Physiological pathways:** negative attitudes correlated with brain deterioration.

**What's so bad about ageism?**

- Ageism cost \$63 billion in health care spending in 1 year.
- People with more positive views on aging live 7.5 years longer.
- Robs our ability to look forward to aging and deprives people of intergenerational communities.

**Health effects of ageism.**

- Decreased memory and cognitive functions.
- Decreased likelihood to engage in healthy behaviors.
- Higher likelihood of cardiovascular disease.
- Worsened balance.
- Poorer psychological health (depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, morale).
- Will to live.
- Longevity.

**Cost of Ageism in health system.**

2020 study looked at 8 of the most expensive health conditions in the US: cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, musculoskeletal disorders, injuries, diabetes mellitus, treatment of smoking, mental disorders, and non-communicable diseases (Levy 2020).

Asked 2 questions:

- Is it more expensive to treat people who experience high vs low degrees of ageism?
- How many health conditions are due to ageism?

## **Results: Ageism is expensive.**

- More than total US spending on health care costs of morbid obesity that year.
- 15% of overall health care spending for these conditions among those 60+.
- Cost per person was significantly higher for those experiencing high ageism.
- The prevalence of each condition was significantly greater than people experiencing high ageism. (17M cases due to ageism!)

## **Effects of Ageism Variables.**

Health care cost highest for:

1. Negative self-perceptions of aging. (est. cost 10 billion dollars annually)
2. Negative age stereotypes. (est. cost 28 billion dollars annually)
3. Age discrimination. (est. cost 10 billion dollars annually)

Our own feelings can do the most harm.

Ageism and Other “Isms”.

### **Injustices compound over a lifetime:**

- Economic inequities
- Primary disease prevention
- Structural barriers
- Chronic disease management
- Stress

### **Examples of health inequities in older adults:**

- Black OAs experience higher rates of disabilities and dementias.
- Older women more likely to be low-income and rent burdened.
- LGBTQ OAs more likely to be socially isolated.
- Older immigrants less likely to have health insurance.

**“All oppression is connected!”**

**Ageism can be undone! (or at least impacts mitigated)**

Strategies for older people:

- Pride in age group membership
- Positive views of the future
- Body confidence

Strategies for younger people:

- Education to shift attitudes.
- Intergenerational contact.

**Many older adults already have positive views on aging.**  
(University of Michigan, National Poll on Healthy Aging, 2020)

88% of older adults feel more comfortable being themselves.

80% of older adults have a strong sense of purpose.

67% of older adults feel more positive about aging.

65% of older adults think their life is better than they thought it would be.

**How can you be an Anti-Ageist?**

- 1. You’re already doing it!**
- 2. Recognize stereotypes!**
- 3. Use words carefully – facts, not stereotypes!**
- 4. Avoid ageism cues – no patronizing!**
- 5. Challenge your own mindset about aging!**

**Bring others into this conversation—maybe through the anti-ageism training!**

The BNOA members asked several questions of Dianah and had a 10-minute back and forth conversation about personal experiences. The BNOA then questioned Dianah about the Age Friendly Seattle concept. Dianah responded about the program in general and how it must begin at the top of leadership for a city, such as the mayor or city council. Dianah indicated that training is available in the City of Seattle to learn about the concept.

Dinah ended her presentation.

## **MONTHLY REPORTS**

**Human Services Report:** Christy Stangland

No report this month.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** *Members were asked to read the following committee reports before the meeting for discussion.*

### **Outreach: Gazel**

The BNOA Resource book has had another 500 copies printed. That is 1000 copies printed for 2023. Time to update the booklet again, which the committee will be taking on soon. Gazel reminded the group that Kirkland Senior Council is producing a large regional book that will be available to Bellevue residents.

### **ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORT: Diana Thompson**

There will be no October meeting as members will instead attend the Senior Lobby Day via Zoom on October 19<sup>th</sup>.

The **Federal** legislators have received the BNOA approved **Federal** legislative agenda.

Diana talked about Medicare expansion of mental health coverage. Medicare will cover mental health counselors beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> 2024.

### **HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE: Anne**

The BNOA referred back to the minutes of the September Housing and Transportation minutes for specific information. No one had questions for the committee.

## **COMMUNITY MEETING REPORTS:**

No reports given.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

Recruitment – Several applications have been received and interviews will be set for the end of October. Hannah, Anne, Beverly, and Phyllis are on the recruitment team. Barbara indicated she would help as able and that she had another person interested in applying.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

The City of Bellevue Older Adult Information Sharing Meeting scheduled for Wednesday October 11, 2023, was discussed with varying degrees of what should be shared by Gazel, the representative for BNOA at the meeting. Some members wanted to be clear to City Departments that they are not hearing the older adults' input, at least how it's been reflected in planning meetings. Some wanted to continue to suggest that a staff liaison should be at all the department board meetings to represent the Bellevue Older Adult View. Many stated that it is important for every BNOA member to get involved in these public meetings to hear firsthand what is going on in the planning processes and let the group know they are there and part of BNOA. "The overall concern was to go to the meeting, listen to what each department is doing to see the needs of older adults of Bellevue, present what the BNOA does to that end and then ask, "How can the BNOA be helpful to your department?". The BNOA will have succeeded as they are invited to work with the various departments.

*Meeting adjourned at 10:30am*