

Living the Questions
Listening to Leaders Session
Women Business Leaders
June 14, 2006

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The Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging is a collaborative of thirteen leading nonprofit organizations with statewide service and advocacy presence. Formed in 2004 to advocate for home and community-based services the Council has met with community leaders to raise awareness of and discuss the demographic, social and economic issues related to the aging of the Baby Boom generation through an initiative called *Living the Questions*.

Through a series of *Listening to Leaders* dialogue sessions, the Council is gathering information about community aging issues as viewed by foundations, housing and community developers, civic groups, education officials, transportation representatives, faith communities, disability organizations, business and industry, and others.

More information about the Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging can be obtained from www.mnlcoa.org.

Background

The Prouty Project hosted a session attended by five women executives. Four represented private companies. One is the current staff lead of the Greater Twin Cities United Way for the Health and Independence division. One person's business was in the field of eldercare.

Common themes of the session included concern for an adequate workforce across all business sectors, and specifically in the health and long-term care industries to care for aging Baby Boomers. Participants reflected on the current immigration policy of the United States, questioning its economic rationale related to ensuring an adequate future workforce. While all agreed that the information presented during the session was not new, the presentation helped them think about aging as a global issue and to look to other countries for approaches and solutions. Several participants commented on the assets and potential of older persons as community members.

Key Questions

1. There is currently limited access to transportation, affordable health care and "nice" affordable housing. These problems are only going to get worse unless we

- engage in thinking and planning for the long-term. What incentives need to be in place to make that happen?
2. The workforce issues force us to consider older people as potential, vital members of the workforce and not just older people. We cannot penalize older people financially for working. Policy issues must be addressed. Will we see retirement pushed out to later in life as the Boomers forge new territory and shift our thinking? How does society respect and accommodate older workers?
 3. We have an extremely diverse workforce in long-term care today. Have economists analyzed the value of immigration to our country and our workforce?
 4. Our organizations are thinking about what we want and what our moms want; there are two customers. How can we encourage thinking about meeting the needs of the older person and their family caregiver?
 5. AARP is creatively leveraging its membership to serve as ambassadors who can educate, inform their peers, and mentor others about dealing with aging issues. This is a great model. How can this effort be expanded?
 6. How do we change public opinion to recognize that seniors have tremendous contributions to make to society?

Other Questions

- Some communities are thinking about age and ability-integrated communities today. Integration has potential to support all generations, but how realistic is it to ask people to step up to the plate and ask them to take care of community residents who are not members of their families?
- It is important to define the issues of older people more finely. There are a growing number of people in the 50 – 64 age group raising their grandchildren. How can low and moderate-income grandparents afford health insurance and other essentials for their grandchildren, much less themselves?
- Baby Boomers have different philanthropic views and giving patterns than the older generation. What does this mean for communities?
- The nation needs to be convinced that aging is a total community issue. Where are the compelling stories and effective messengers, such as John Kennedy and his influence on spurring youth to action?

The Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging exists to coalesce the resources and power of senior consumer, advocacy, social and health service organizations, and the individuals we serve and represent, to boldly advocate for and achieve positive system changes for elders in Minnesota.

www.mnlcoa.org