

Chapter 6: Strengthening Caring Communities through Active Citizenship

Older people contribute their talents and guidance to the betterment of our society. At the same time, our community's elders may need extra support from their neighbors. Both directions in this two-way street of neighborliness and community involvement demonstrate a quality known as *social capital*. Social capital is a term for the interactions among people that facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit. It is essential for the survival of a healthy community.

During 2020 public forums, seniors identified *caring communities* as an important element for a positive future. The recommendations that follow include a range of approaches, such as collaborating for improved safety, promoting active participation in the political process, connecting the generations, and increasing volunteerism. Through each is woven the common thread of strengthening social capital so that the entire community is enriched.

1. ENHANCE SERVICES AND ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE RESOURCES FOR SENIORS AND CAREGIVERS.

- 1.1 Promote community partnerships to improve safety and protection of seniors.
- 1.2 Ensure that area seniors have access to legal services.
- 1.3 Promote community awareness and political support for the concerns of seniors and caregivers.
- 1.4 Enhance community members' direct support for seniors and caregivers.

2. FOSTER AND SHOWCASE SENIORS' COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS.

- 2.1 Promote opportunities for seniors to continue working and increase awareness among organizations about senior-friendly employment policies and customer services.
- 2.2 Promote higher levels of volunteerism by seniors.
- 2.3 Create opportunities for others to learn from older people and increase intergenerational activities (see Chapter 7), and
- 2.4 Increase awareness of senior issues, needs, and contributions through public education and volunteerism.

