

**COMMISSION ON THE AGING**  
**4 Brush Hill Road**  
**New Fairfield, CT 06812**

**COMMUNITY FORUM**

**“AGING MATTERS”**

**MINUTES**

**November 7, 2015**

The Commission on the Aging hosted a Community Forum on Saturday, November 7, 2015 in the Community Room above the Senior Center from 10:00am-12:00pm. The topic was “Aging Matters”. Secretary, Laurie Busse, took the minutes.

**PRESENT:** Maureen Salerno, Chair, Cindy LaCour, Vice Chair, Janet Loya, Jeannette Sweeney, Kathy Hull, Stephanie Shaughnessy, Julia MacMillan, and Roberta Ilardo

**Absent:** Katy Johannssen

**SPEAKERS:** Dr. Myron Glucksman, Danbury Hospital and Evy Brescia, LMSW, New England Home Care.

**RESPONDERS:** Janet Telford and Jay Voss

Maureen Salerno welcomed everyone and introduced Dr. Myron Glucksman.

Dr. Glucksman opened with some jokes on aging, and talked about how age 75 is the new age 65. In the last century life expectancy has almost doubled thus causing a significant growth in the senior population. The current life expectancy for a man is age 78 and for a woman is age 82. While other cultures such as the Chinese who not only value their elders but seek them out for their advice, our culture has something called “Ageism” which is prejudice against the aging. Our culture emphasizes on youth, and we do not value people who are older with experience and have something to offer. He talked about how one can’t receive a full pension at age 65 but yet not considered hiring material for a job after age 60.

Dr. Glucksman talked about the stages in life going from infancy and depending on your parents to take care of you to childhood, teen years and young adulthood. After age 60 or 70 your bodies begin to deteriorate, both physically and mentally. Physically the body is weaker despite exercise. This is because a person loses connective tissue as they age. Many people develop arthritis and one’s coordination declines. This can be due to

eyesight and hearing loss. Other changes include the brain shrinks. In a person age 25 the brain fills the entire cavity; however by age 80 there is a space between the skull and the brain. This is also known as atrophy of the brain. Separation from your family as your children get older and may move away. Separation from your friends as either they or you move away to live your retirement in a different climate. And ultimately separation from your spouse who may have passed away or needs to live in an assisted living facility. Often time's seniors will consider these things failures or losses and if they do not have a coping mechanism depression will set in. Dr. Glucksman talked about short term memory is the first to go. Short term memory refers to your memory within the last few days or a week. Many people retain their long term memory, often remembering what they did in their youth as opposed to what happened last week. The thought process slows down, cognitive processing. However in spite of all of these issues, older people gain wisdom, perhaps it is because their thought process is slower, they have a great love and pride for their family and grandchildren. Their perspective and judgement is better, because they have seen and done so much.

Dr. Glucksman ended his speech by encouraging seniors to stay active, physically, socially and mentally. Get exercise, take a walk, take a course at a university, play cards and go to the Senior Center. Most important stay involved with others.

#### **Questions and Answers:**

Dr. Glucksman addressed questions and comments from the audience. People were asking about memory loss and how to change our culture to respect elders.

There is stem cell research in Seattle Washington to repair damaged and aging organs. Hopefully one day there will be a cure for Alzheimer's and Dementia. Perhaps the best way to change "Ageism" is for seniors to be visible, be active, go into classrooms, and perhaps have younger people witness wisdom and not tell them.

After a short intermission, Maureen Salerno introduced the members of the COA and introduced our sponsors. Maureen Salerno thanked Ray Juskiewicz for all of his efforts to tape today's forum.

Maureen Salerno introduced Evy Brescia, LMSW, New England Home Care. Evy Brescia also opened with some jokes and talked about how age 85 and older is the biggest growing population. Baby Boomers will start collecting social security, noting there is a declining younger generation as families now only have 1 or 2 children. Ms. Brescia talked about the highest suicide rate is for white men over the age of 70. This may be due to some of the reasons Dr. Glucksman talked about earlier. Just because you retire, don't lose sight of who you are. You may no longer be a teacher or engineer, but you may still be a husband, a father, a brother. It is important to keep active. If you are in a wheelchair enter competitions, get on Wii games, and do exercises in your chair. Getting a volunteer job will introduce you to new people and challenges, plus you will feel good knowing that you helped others. There are even on line dating services. It is a choice to sit back and let aging happen or take the bull by the horns and show the younger generation how it's done.

Janet Telfy responded. The turning point in her life was the New Fairfield Senior Center. She takes exercise and painting classes. She wanted to get out and do things, but due to her limited income found it difficult. She can afford the Senior Center as most programs are free or moderately priced. She has made new friends and the Senior Center and no longer cares that her husband wants to stay home and watch TV. She babysits her grandchildren who do not think she is old as she is showing them that she stays active.

Jay Voss responded. Despite the statistics, he is not suicidal. He lost his wife 5 years ago and her memory lives on through her paintings, some of which are hanging up in the Senior Center. He hopes the paintings will be a legacy for his children. He stays active and meets friends at Starbucks for coffee on a weekly/biweekly basis. He goes to Massage Envy twice a month to help him relax and this is the best thing ever. His therapist refers to herself as his life coach and helps him set short term goals. He takes road trips as he finds them challenging and adventurous. He doesn't mind being alone, but he is not lonely.

Evy Brescia answered questions for the audience which included which course she teaches at Western Connecticut State University. She teaches a class called "Aging" number 260-71 on Monday evenings. In reference to the many stages in life she said life is what you make of it.

Maureen Salerno thanked everyone for joining us today. The Forum was adjourned at 12 noon.