

Addressing social isolation in older adults in Otsego County

Diane Cusworth, RN, BSN, MSHA

Director of Community Health, Bassett Healthcare Network

Jeffrey J. Woepfel, MHA

Retired Healthcare Administrator, Board Treasurer OCCSC

Kimberly Witkowski

Executive Director, The Gathering Place

Overview

Bassett Healthcare Network is a newly designated Age Friendly Health System. We have chosen to collaborate with Connections and The Gathering Place to enhance socialization services for seniors impacted by isolation and loneliness.

Quick facts:

- Bassett serves patients living in eight counties in Central New York, across 5,600 square miles.
- Bassett consists of five hospitals, two skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, 28+ primary care centers and 22 school-based clinics.
- Connections is in the Northern part of Otsego County (Cooperstown).
- The Gathering Place is in the Southern part of the county (Oneonta).



How we chose our community partners

One in every four Otsego County adults over the age of 65 experiences social isolation.

Otsego County has a population of 58,000 and 13,020 (24%) are over age 65. Of these older adults, 5,364 (41%) live alone, and 4,557 (35%) self identified as being socially isolated.*

*Sources: American Community Survey, New York State Office for the Aging

- The cohort we serve includes marginalized individuals who are affected by high rates of mental illness and suicide, cardiovascular and immune issues and premature death.
- The Gathering Place and Connections serve those who are experiencing, or are at high risk for, social isolation. These organizations provide socialization opportunities for older adults to foster healthy relationships and friendships.
- Connections, The Gathering Place and Bassett Healthcare Network share the goal of educating and supporting older adults in improving their physical and mental health and wellbeing, so they can live healthy, independent and active lives.

Success stories

Since September 2023, The Gathering Place, Bassett and Connections have:

- enrolled 600+ older adults in the programming;
- Bassett led four informational health workshops, focused on mental health and wellness, health equity, self-advocacy, chronic disease management and polypharmacy;
- referred eight people to the New York State Office for the Aging;
- began beta testing Bell Age, a program on My Senior Center, to help members optimize their health and wellbeing and help us track improvement in physical and mental health; and
- provided 62+ classes to help reduce social isolation, including:
 - Arts and Crafts – 63 attendees
 - Tech Classes – 20 attendees
 - Music – 52 attendees
 - Defensive Driving – 16 attendees
 - Movement and Exercise – 333 attendees
 - Line Dancing – 23 attendees
 - Tai Chi – 200 attendees
 - Yoga and meditation – 505 attendees
 - What’s for lunch? – 119 attendees
 - Games – 102 attendees

Success stories

Testimonies from The Gathering Place, shared with the Executive Director:

“Two sisters walked into the Oneonta Gathering Place and were ecstatic and amazed to see what their stay-at-home parents needed, because they constantly complained. They said, ‘they are bored and there is nothing to do.’ The sisters gathered activities information from Sue Barney, the Activities Director, and went to spread the word to their parents.

We all need to seek a new purpose to fill that void and keep going. We must have and maintain a purpose. We can now share our thoughts and talents to once again be part of something that is in common with humanity.

- To the Gathering Place 50 Plus Community Center... for Purpose.”



“I was so afraid of my smartphone before I started coming into the Tech Tuesday Class. After sitting with Kim a few times, I am now able to make and receive phone calls, and even started messaging on my phone. I am still learning how to send pictures to my friends and family, but this class has made me feel like I am actually catching up with this new generation.”

Challenges

- Grant funding was approved mid-cycle, limiting our timeline to identify and collaborate with a community-based organization.
- The need for services in other parts of the county required us to expand our programming beyond our original plan.
- Both The Gathering Place and Connections were new to the area and needed to form relationships with key stakeholders.
- Hiring a program director took longer than expected.
- Interest in The Gathering Place was higher than anticipated, with over 400 people registered before opening and an additional 200 registered at the open house.
- Identifying sustainable sources of funding is a challenge.

What's next?

- The partnership between Bassett, Connections and The Gathering Place will continue to grow in 2024. Four additional health classes will be led by Bassett at Connections. These classes will be integrated into both organizations' ongoing programming.
- A new Community Health Program, led by Bassett's Population Health Department, will establish focus groups at each location to understand the needs of the Otsego County senior population. This will align with Bassett's Aging in Place grant work.
- The Gathering Place will use the My Senior Center platform to provide a longitudinal view of changes in members' physical and mental health, and adjust programming and services according to their needs.
- A survey will be conducted in February 2024 to measure member satisfaction.





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EXCELLENCE AND INCLUSION

Questions?

Diane Cusworth, RN, BSN, MSHA
Director of Community Health
Bassett Healthcare Network
Diane.Cusworth@bassett.org

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Retired Healthcare Administrator
Board Treasurer OCCSC
Jeffrey.Woepfel@gmail.com

Kimberly Witkowski
Executive Director
The Gathering Place
kim@gatheringplace50plus.org