York County Community Foundation's Embracing Aging goes to Washington D.C.

York’s program stood out to the national group

York County Community Foundation

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You may recall reading one of our past articles in which we shared some of the pushback we have received regarding the name of our initiative, Embracing Aging.

That's why when the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) called to invite York County Community Foundation’s Embracing Aging initiative to speak about the strategies we’re working on to address attitudes around aging at its May 6 event in Washington, D.C., we were thrilled to accept.

The event, which took place at the Dirksen Senate Office Building, showcased n4a's research on the growth of the Livable Communities of All Ages movement in the United States. York County was one of six communities nationwide to participate in n4a's yearlong Livable Communities Collaborative in 2014. Of the six, we were one of two invited to speak about what's happening at the local level.

So why did n4a ask us to speak? It turns out our strategy to change the culture and attitudes around aging resonated strongly with the leaders of n4a and made York County stand out. When we created our Embracing Aging initiative, we determined the first step towards making York County a great place to age was to promote positive aging. If older adults are not respected and integrated into our culture, we haven't done our jobs.

We need people to embrace our older population so that they can best understand, from the source, what is needed to make York County a great place to age.

At the event in DC, n4a released a new national report, Making Your Community Work for All Ages: What's Working. The report provides the context for growing interest in developing Livable Communities, which are communities working to meet the needs of people across their lifespan. The work we have done in York, as well as the work of the other five counties participating in the collaborative representing select cities and counties in New York, Colorado, Florida, New Mexico, and Kansas, are showcased in the report. The report also highlights recommendations and best practices culled from over a decade of research conducted by n4a, its member agencies, and other community-based organizations.

According to n4a, interest in developing Livable Communities for All Ages is decades old, but momentum has escalated in recent years as the first wave of baby boomers turned age 65. The ramifications for our society of an older adult population that will not only double between 2000 and 2030, but will also live longer and be more productive than previous generations, have become increasingly clear. Without the physical, social and support infrastructures needed to help older adults age well in their homes and communities, quality of life — for people of all ages — will be compromised. Since its release on May 6, the report has been downloaded nearly 100,000 times; a clear indication that communities across the country are looking for guidance on creating more livable communities.
We're proud to learn that our work around shifting the culture of aging is inspiring other communities to tackle ageism. And as we shared in last month's column, we look forward to the roll out of a training we created with a group of older adults for businesses, organizations, and school districts to address aging biases and help dispel myths about aging coming this summer. To learn more about this training, contact Cathy Bollinger, Managing Director of Embracing Aging at cbollinger@yccf.org or 717.848.3733.

Online

To read the report visit http://www.n4a.org/files/n4aMakingYourCommunityLivable1.pdf.

To learn more about York County Community Foundation's Embracing Aging, visit www.embracingaging.org.