

BROOKLINE SENIOR CENTER

ANNUAL 2024

REPORT





2024 Annual Report

The Brookline Council on Aging (COA) / Brookline Senior Center (BSC) is a resource for residents over the age of 60. Our mission is providing social services that allow people to remain independent. We operate the Senior Center five days a week, with some evening and weekend programs.

<http://www.BrooklineSeniorCenter.org>

Our Priority Vulnerable Older Adults

- Women over the age of 60
- Older adults of color
- Older adults not proficient in English
- LGBTQIA+ older adults
- Oldest and frailest residents
- Older adults living in public housing
- Financially insecure older adults



2020 Census data showed that there are 13,222 residents over the age of 60 in Brookline, almost a 20% increase from 2010.

Our Services

- Case management, mental health services
 - Clutter/hoarding support
 - Home care: meal prep, errands, cleaning, shopping
 - Income tax prep, job search, computer skills, Property Tax Work-Off Program
 - Health: blood pressure, podiatry, hearing, flu and vaccine clinics
 - VIBRANT assistive program for visually impaired
 - Legal clinic
 - Advocacy
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- Transportation: medical and eye appointments, bus, van, TRIPPS ride sharing
 - SHINE Medicare counseling, Farmer's Market coupons, fuel assistance, Digital Navigator services
 - Food commodity program, daily lunches
 - Fitness Center
 - Medical equipment loans
 - PARC (Parking Access for Residents' Caregivers)
 - Support groups: bereavement, Alzheimer's, mindfulness, spirituality
 - Monthly and weekly publications, Elder Resource Guide, Ask a Geriatrician
 - Educational & recreational programming
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Our Successes

- The Town of Brookline joined the AARP nation-wide Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. Network members demonstrate ongoing commitment to provide services and programs that ensure their communities are livable for residents in all life stages. Brookline was the first New England community recognized into the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities in 2012.
 - Renowned Yale singing group, the Whiffenpoofs, performed at the Brookline Senior Center.
 - For the first time, BSC secured runners in 2024 to run the 2025 Boston Marathon. Proceeds raised will benefit BSC programming.
 - Recipient of MassDOT Community Transit Grant Program: Operating and Mobility Management Award of \$100,000
 - Awarded an electric vehicle through the MassDOT Community Transit Grant Program
 - 40 th anniversary of Senior Craft Fair & Rummage Sale
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Our 2023 Innovations

- Launched programs including Aging Solo & Wise Aging
- Launched “Growing Older and Wiser in Brookline” column series
- Conducted Emergency Preparedness trainings
- Created monthly infographics highlighting COA programs/services View 2024 infographics <https://www.brooklineseniorcenter.org/our-stats-2023-infographics/>
- Provided volunteer medical escort services



COA Staff Changes

- After a 6-year career working with BSC’s HELP Program and Equipment LoanFund (ELF), clinical social worker Michael Allen moved with family to Washington D.C.
- BSC welcomed clinical social worker Maryam Hassoon, building custodian Paul Lacy, and clinical social worker/ HELP Program counselor Anne Essaran.

COA Board

- Conducted both in-person and remote meetings
 - New Citizen Members to the Council were Peggy Maguire and Monique Richardson
 - Yolanda Rodriguez continued as Chair of the Council with Judith Chasin as Vice- Chair.
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Director Ruthann Dobek **Announces Retirement in 2024**



After a 42-year career at Brookline Council on Aging/ Brookline Senior Center, 23 served as the Center's Director, Ruthann Dobek announced her retirement in 2024.

During her tenure, Ruthann:

- Raised, through capital campaign, \$4,380,000 to design, build, and furnish the Senior Center
 - Secured grants for programs and services
 - Worked with the Senior Center Foundation to establish the Foundation's endowment
 - Started the first BSC Craft Fair in 1984
 - Designed the Home and Escort Linkage Program (HELP)
 - Created employment opportunity programs for older adults
 - Implemented new transportation programs and established Transportation, Resources, Information, Planning & Partnership for Seniors (TRIPPS)
 - Created the Volunteer Program, including the intergenerational SHOP program
 - Produced informational and educational publications for the community (Brookline Beacon, Elder Resource Guide, Ask a Geriatrician, etc.)
 - Fostered and maintained partnerships with town agencies and other social service agencies in the larger community
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- Mentored and supervised student interns, high school through graduate school, in the field of aging
- Increased BSC capacity around diversity
- Served as Co-chair of Age Friendly Cities Committee, resulting in Brookline being named the first Age Friendly community in New England (under World Health Organization standards)
- Co-founded Brookline Community Aging Network (BrooklineCAN) with renowned gerontologist Frank Caro

Ruthann was the Recipient of:

- Boston University School of Social Work Alumni Association award in recognition of Outstanding Contributions to the Field of Social Work- 2001
- Massachusetts National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Social Worker of the Year Award- 2008
- Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) Innovator of the Year Award- 2015
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Distinguished Employer Award- 2018

The December 2024 Council on Aging meeting was a celebration of Ms. Dobek's tenure, with tributes from staff and colleagues.





Programs



BSC offered online and in-person programming including:

- Art workshops
 - Boomers & Beyond trips
 - Springwell Nutrition Talks
 - Savvy & Safe Workshop
 - Stress Reduction & Meditation
 - Legacy Writers Group
 - Concerts
 - Dance, Fitness, Karate, Ping Pong and Chair Yoga classes
 - Intergenerational Fridays
 - Walking groups
 - Words Galore, Rainbow Jeopardy and other interactive group games
 - Craft Fair and Rummage Sale
 - Gallery 93 Art Exhibits
 - iPhone /iPad basics classes
 - Chinese New Year and Autumn Moon Festivals
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ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funding Update

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were essential for dealing with post-pandemic issues. The COA focused funding on our vulnerable populations. This year we continued food insecurity programming, transportation access, and technology.

BSC received additional ARPA funding in Round 3 of the town's distribution:

- \$41,975 to help with food insecurity
- \$260,000 toward transportation

ARPA Funds Green Initiative

The Town utilized ARPA funding to electrify the Brookline Senior Center building (goodbye natural gas). Bids were accepted Fall 2024, and work will commence early 2025.

The Senior Center also received an award to purchase a new, all-electric minivan with a wheelchair lift. Delivery expected 2025. Unfortunately, ARPA funding will be ending at the end of 2026, and new sources of funding will need to be found.





COA Successful with Grant Applications

In addition to ARPA, MassDOT, Transportation Network Company (TNC), and State Formula grants, the Council on Aging applied for multiple grant opportunities.

- Three Family Foundation grants were underwritten for the Drawing for Pleasure class, monthly birthday parties, and the Volunteer Recognition Event. Grants from ITN America provided free rides to eye appointments.
- State Representative Tommy Vitolo provided a \$25,000 grant for employment services.
- The COA partnered with the Brookline Chamber of Commerce and Brookline Food Pantry to purchase and provide local restaurant meals. Meals were distributed in the community.
- Brookline Community Foundation supported the Tech Buddies program, allowing COA to distribute over 200 tablets. The COA also provided one-on-one education and support on digital technology.
- Jewish Family & Children's Services (JF&CS) provided funding for art programs to decrease social isolation and loneliness.

Demand For Transportation Increases

Transportation requests post-Covid are rising. In FY 2024, the program had 574 active participants that took 4,125 rides to and from BSC. Rides for medical appointments and other essential activities totaled 10,642. TRIPPS staff conducted many outreach activities, including processing 130 Senior Charlie Cards. TRIPPS added several group events to local grocery stores and the Farmer's Market for public housing residents. Our subsidized rides are economical at an average cost of \$16.93 per ride.



VOLUNTEER UPDATE



- At BSC annual Spring Volunteer Appreciation Event, retired audiologist Judy Chasin was awarded BSC's 2024 John & Molly Dolan Volunteer of the Year Award. Ms. Chasin was honored for her many volunteer roles, including Vice Chair of the COA Board, representative on the Springwell Board, leader of both the Ukulele and Virtual Folk Singing groups, coordinator of the eyeglass donation and flower programs for the Senior Center, and coordinator for the donation of unsold Craft Fair and Yard Sale items to Welcome Home
 - SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone on Medicare) was granted the Brookline Council on Aging's 2024 Community Partner Award. In 2024, five SHINE volunteers provided free health insurance and prescription coverage information, as well as counseling to 400+ Medicare eligible residents or their caregivers, through virtual and in-person appointments.
 - 260+ active volunteers taught classes, staffed the food insecurity programs/events, and served as board members/advisors.
 - Volunteer Allen Waxman designed and taught a popular class on navigating digital home health apps. Digital Home Healthcare was offered as 90-minute sessions for 10 weeks.
 - Volunteer Tech Buddies gave 1-on-1 support to Brookline's older adults at the Senior Center and in public housing sites to navigate digital challenges.
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BrooklineCAN (Brookline Community Aging Network)

- Promoted services and activities that make Brookline a place to age gracefully. BrooklineCAN and the Brookline Council on Aging are proud to continue to play a significant role in ending social isolation and loneliness. <http://www.BrooklineCan.org>
- BrooklineCAN hosted educational events and the annual Candidate's Forum in April

THANK YOU

Because of our staff, volunteers and Board, 2024 was successful. We are grateful to those that make Brookline a desirable place and welcome increased community involvement.



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To learn more about BSC please visit brooklineseniorcenter.org