

Focus groups with senior citizens

What's it like to be a senior citizen
in Knox County?:

Results of focus groups with senior citizens

Knox County Community Assessment

Focus group project, Part 3: Senior citizens
October 2005

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Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the 28 senior citizens who agreed to share their thoughts, experiences, and opinions with us. We thank them for their valuable insights and suggestions.

Karen Boyd, professor of social work at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, facilitated the four focus groups. Jennifer Odenweller, Executive Director of United Way of Knox County, assisted with the focus groups and Liza Maurer Snow was the note taker and report writer.

Several social service agencies that work with senior citizens in Knox County helped to recruit participants. These included Sanctuary Community Action, Interchurch Social Services, Fredericktown Senior Center, The Station Break, Kno-Ho-Co Community Action R.S.V.P. and Foster Grandparent Programs, and Centerburg Senior Services.

Summary

Purpose, methods, and participant characteristics

This report summarizes the results of four focus groups with senior citizens that were held in December 2004-June 2005.

Focus group participants were recruited through various senior agencies and groups and were held in public buildings or senior centers. Twenty-eight seniors from four areas of the county participated: 1) Danville and eastern Knox County, 2) Centerburg 3) Fredericktown, and 4) Mount Vernon/Howard.

Community strengths and assets

There were many strengths discussed in each of the four senior groups. Consistently, seniors identified attributes of a small community as Knox County's strengths. Overall, the community strengths that were most commonly mentioned among the four groups were:

- Safe community
- Know your neighbors
- People are friendly and willing to help
- Active churches
- Good fire department/emergency squads
- Many volunteer opportunities
- Senior groups/agencies, other clubs, and activities

High-priority issues

Transportation was the only topic that all four groups identified as a high priority issue. Other than transportation, there was great diversity among the groups in selecting top priority issues; however, there was some overlap in what issues were generally discussed as community weaknesses. High priority issues discussed most often include:

- Transportation
- Feeling excluded from county seat and left out
- Nothing for youth to do
- Health care
- Public awareness of volunteer needs and opportunities

Unmet needs and suggestions for improvement

Senior citizens identified many unmet needs and provided several specific suggestions for improving the community. Overall, their highest-priority needs and suggestions were:

Better transportation services:

- Improve Mid-Ohio Transit Authority (MOTA) by lowering prices for senior citizens, expanding services to include evenings and weekends, and creating a set route with specific times throughout Knox County
- Provide transportation through Centerburg Senior Services for seniors in Centerburg
- Develop a bus line to connect the county, possibly using buses no longer being utilized
- Expand the FISH program (a program through Interchurch Social Services where volunteers provide medical runs for those who cannot drive themselves to a medical appointment) by recruiting more drivers
- Provide better reimbursement for volunteers of the FISH program

More for youth to do:

- Create a youth center for teens in the area
- Open a movie theater, a new restaurant, or some place where youth can hang out (particularly in areas outside Mount Vernon)

Health care:

- Organize more community health fairs for seniors that would:
 - 1) Test blood pressure, sugar, and cholesterol levels
 - 2) Educate about mental and physical health
 - 3) Advertise agencies that help seniors
- Create a free health clinic in a traveling bus offering services for eyeglasses, dental, etc.
- Offer more assistance with comprehension of medication and other medical instructions

Barriers to getting help

Isolation seems to be a barrier to seniors getting help. Some participants shared that they feel alone in tough times. Another barrier is reluctance to call on family. Many participants shared that their children either have moved away or are too busy with their own lives.

Awareness of and satisfaction with existing resources

Most of the senior citizens who participated in the focus groups were recruited through a senior program; therefore, the senior citizens in these groups were at least aware of their local senior program. As evidenced in the *Satisfaction and Awareness Survey* results most seniors are aware of most community resources. However, the results show that many seniors do not utilize the resources available.

Introduction

Purpose

Four focus groups were conducted with senior citizens as part of the United Way of Knox County's 2004-05 community assessment. The findings of the overall assessment will be used by United Way to guide fund distribution and strategic planning, and by local social service providers and government agencies for planning and grant writing.

The community assessment relies upon several different sources of information, including surveys of the general public and special groups, interviews with service providers, existing statistics, and focus groups. In addition to the senior groups, three focus groups were held with parents of young children and four were held with youth.

The goals of these focus groups are to:

- Identify community strengths, needs, and unmet needs
- Prioritize needs
- Assess awareness of, satisfaction with, and barriers to existing services
- Hear from groups who may not be well-represented in the household survey or other research

Methods

Recruitment. Senior citizens were recruited from several social service agencies that work with senior citizens in Knox County including, Sanctuary Community Action, Interchurch Social Services, Fredericktown Senior Center, The Station Break, Kno-Ho-Co Community Action R.S.V.P. and Foster Grandparent Programs, and Centerburg Senior Services.

Process. The length of each focus group ranged from one hour and thirty minutes to two hours. All sessions were tape recorded and notes were taken. Informed consent was obtained from each participant. A professor from Mount Vernon Nazarene University facilitated the four groups and the United Way Executive Director assisted with the groups.

Participant characteristics

Demographic characteristics. Tables 52-54 display the demographic characteristics of the senior focus group participants. A total of 28 senior citizens participated in four separate groups. The average age was 73.1 years old with the ages ranging from 55-87. Seventy-five percent of participants were female. Most participants were independent; 50% reported living by themselves, 78.6% of participants live in their own home, and 71.4% drive their own car. Most of the participants were white (89.3%).

Group differences. The Mount Vernon/Howard group was different in that it was the only group where the majority of participants were male. The only other significant group difference was in group size; the Centerburg group had 12 participants while the other groups had five or six participants each.

Table 52: Demographic characteristics of youth focus group participants

	Total	Group 1: Center- Burg	Group 2: Frederick- town	Group 3: Danville	Group 4: Mount Vernon/ Howard
Number of participants	28	12	5	6	5
Age (in years)					
Age range	55-87				
Average age	73	73	75	73	72
Percent female	75%	83%	100%	83%	20%
People in Household					
One	50%	42%	60%	50%	60%
Two	43%	50%	20%	50%	40%
Three	7%	8%	20%	0	0
Marital Status					
Married	54%	58%	60%	33%	60%
Widowed	43%	33%	40%	67%	40%
Never Married	4%	8%	0	0	0
Where do you live?					
My own home	79%	83%	100%	83%	40%
Home of a relative	7%	0	0	17 %	20%
Other	14%	17%	0	0	40%
Transportation (percentage that answered "yes" to using each type of transportation)					
My own car	71%	58%	60%	100%	80%
Drive someone else's car	0	0	0	0	0
Get a ride from a spouse, friend, or relative	18%	33%	20%	0	0
MOTA	4%	0	0	0	20%
Transportation Program (e.g. FISH/Station Break)	4%	8%	0	0	0
Other	11%	22%	0	0	25%
Annual Household Income					
\$5,000-9,999	19%	14%	0	25%	19%
\$10,000-14,999	19%	29%	0	50%	19%
\$15,000-19,999	5%	0	20%	0	5%
\$20,000-24,999	29%	43%	40%	25%	29%
\$25,000-34,999	5%	0	20%	0	5%
\$35,000-49,999	10%	0	20%	0	10%
\$50,000 or above	14%	14%	0	0	14%

Source: Senior Citizen Focus Group Participant Information form, 2004-05

Table 53: Town of residence (n=28)

Zip code/ Town	Percent
Mount Vernon	18%
Howard	7%
Fredericktown	18%
Danville	4%
Centerburg	39%
Other (2=Bladensburg; 2=Brinkhaven)	14%

Source: Senior Citizen Focus Group Participant Information form, 2004-05

Table 54: Race/ethnicity (n=28)

Race	Number
White	25
Black or African American	0
American Indian or Alaska Naive	2
Asian or Pacific Islander	1
Other	0
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino	1

Source: Senior Citizen Focus Group Participant Information form, 2004-05

Community strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

Senior citizens in each group agreed that Knox County is a good place to live. Many of the seniors have lived in Knox County their entire life, while others have moved to the area in retirement. Participants reported liking the safety and friendliness of a small town.

“I walk at night, I walk my dog, and I go out at 10:00 at night. People have asked me if I’m afraid and I’ve said, ‘there’s nothing to be afraid of’.”

In each group participants talked about how much there is to do in Knox County. Each group listed active churches as one of Knox County’s strengths. Each group also spent time talking about senior organizations, clubs (i.e. garden clubs, Eastern Star, Grange, VFW, Women’s Auxiliary), and community events (i.e. Turkey Festival, Tomato Show, Dan Emmett Festival).

“If you’re bored [in Knox County] you’re not looking very hard because there is a lot to do.”

Two of the groups shared that they liked the many volunteer opportunities Knox County has to offer. In addition, every group identified “people willing to help” or “people care” as one of Knox County’s strengths.

“I think the overall participation as far as the volunteers go [is a good thing]. Coming from a big town, like Columbus, you don’t really see that. There seems to be a lot of people interested in volunteering.”

Weaknesses

Transportation was the primary complaint about being a senior in Knox County. This was a consistent theme in all four groups. Seniors shared that there are limited options for residents who cannot drive.

“I just hate to think of the day that I can’t drive. My sister-in-law didn’t drive and it was a big problem for her.”

“...Right now they rely on volunteers to drive but it’s hard to get people to drive people to the doctor’s and whatnot.”

“MOTA’s for Mount Vernon but we need some local transportation here [Fredericktown].”

Although each group identified that there is a lot to do (as a strength), three of the groups also shared that they are worried that there is not a lot for youth to do. Two of the groups reminisced about their teenage years in Knox County and how much more there was for youth to do at that time.

“When we were younger we had a theater here and we had a restaurant in town where we could go get ice cream – we didn’t have much money but we could go and see a picture show on Saturday afternoon. There isn’t anything [for youth] here [now].”

Other problems mentioned by the seniors included: outlying areas (Centerburg, Danville, Fredericktown) are disconnected from the county, a lack of local control over money/resources, no one to help with home repairs/chores, poor employment opportunities, not enough funding for local social services, empty downtown, limited affordable housing, and lack of health fairs.

High-priority issues

Each group identified their top three issues for more detailed discussion. Each group seemed to have specific concerns according to their residency and interests. While there was some overlap, there was not much consensus among the four groups when prioritizing the importance of issues. The only issue identified as high priority by all four groups was transportation. After transportation, there was no overlap in issues identified as high priority. Although there was no overlap in high priority issues there were some consistent themes discussed in the four groups. Overall, the issues that seniors talked about most were:

- Transportation
- Need for more local control/being excluded from the county seat/feeling left out

- Nothing for youth to do
- Health care
- Public awareness of volunteer needs/opportunities

Transportation

Current transportation options

Most of the participating seniors reported that they drive; however, all the seniors seemed to know someone that could not drive herself and the thought of someday not driving was a concern for all the seniors.

“I have macular degeneration and my wife has Parkinsons so it’s going to be rough in the future for us to get around, I think. I almost didn’t get my license for nighttime driving but I got my glasses changed and it was OK. But I don’t drive at night now, unless I can’t avoid it.”

After self, friends and family topped the list of existing transportation resources. Each group listed MOTA as an existing community resource; however, only one participant reported using MOTA. In two of the groups, the seniors had questions about the services provided by MOTA. Three groups mentioned that The Station Break gives seniors a ride to The Station Break and then to Wal-Mart, Kroger, or Aldi. Again, participants were unclear on the exact services provided by The Station Break. The Mount Vernon group had a particular interest in the FISH program, a program through Interchurch Social Services where volunteers give seniors rides to and from doctor’s appointments. Many of the Mount Vernon participants are volunteers with this program. The Centerburg group also listed volunteers as an existing resource. It should be noted that the volunteer programs only offer transportation to and from medical appointments.

Problems with existing resources

Seniors were most concerned with MOTA. There were complaints that MOTA is too expensive (at certain times of the day), has no set route, is not available at night and on the weekends, and needs 24-hour notice. The three groups outside of Mount Vernon also seemed to feel that MOTA was more for Mount Vernon than for their area of the county.

“MOTA is for Mount Vernon but we need some local transportation here [in Fredericktown].”

Participants of the Fredericktown group reported that they would like a ride to the store sometimes, however, to get a ride to the store from The Station Break one has to go to lunch at The Station Break. The Mount Vernon group was concerned that there are not enough volunteers for the FISH program, and that too often those in need of transportation to doctor’s appointments are turned away.

“I know sometimes I feel bad that I can’t help Shirley (Interchurch receptionist coordinating volunteer FISH drivers) out on a particular day, but that’s just the way it is, she moves on. But sometimes she doesn’t have anyone, she has to call the client and say, ‘I’m sorry we don’t have anyone to drive you to Columbus for your doctor’s appointment’.”

Unmet needs and desired resources

Three of the four focus groups were asked to generate a “wish list” of transportation services they would like to have in Knox County. There were many new ideas offered by each group, however, much of the focus was on how to improve existing resources. There were many suggestions on how to improve MOTA. Table 55 is a list of ideas generated by seniors.

The three groups outside of Mount Vernon were concerned about how to connect the county. Fredericktown suggested that MOTA have a set route –almost like a bus system, while Danville did suggest a bus system “to connect the county.”

Table 55: Senior Citizen Transportation Wish List

Desired resources*
MOTA be available evenings and weekends
Better response time from MOTA
MOTA card for seniors (discount card)
Bus line to connect county (the group suggested that school busses no longer being utilized by school districts be used for this service)
Have a bus in Danville funded by donations with a volunteer driver
A bus for Centerburg Senior Services to serve seniors in Centerburg
Expand the FISH program (medical transportation)
Provide better reimbursement to volunteer drivers
The Station Break provide rides to stores without seniors having to go to lunch at The Station Break

* Participants did not vote
 Source: Senior focus groups, 2004-05

More local control/Feeling excluded from the county

The Centerburg senior group was most concerned about not having enough local control of their resources, including the portion of tax monies they generate for the senior citizen levy. They also reported feeling left out in the “corner of the county”. Although not a top priority issue for Danville and Fredericktown, they also suggested that they feel left out from the county. Centerburg had the following to say about not receiving their fair share of the senior citizen levy money:

“Centerburg’s services here needs more control of services here, of what goes on here – they know what they need here.”

“How about a fair share [of money] for the populations?”

“What tax money is paid in this area should stay in this area.”

Existing resources

Currently, senior levy monies are controlled by The Station Break in Mount Vernon. Seniors are specifically upset about how money from the senior levy is delegated. Mount Vernon receives the majority of the levy money and Centerburg seniors feel they do not get a fair share. In Centerburg, focus group participated reported that Knox County’s senior citizens who live in Centerburg do not receive a percentage of tax revenue based on the size of the senior population in that area. Currently, Centerburg Senior Center is able to provide the following services:

- Card games
- Bingo
- Crafts
- Newspapers, magazines, and a small library
- Scrapbooking (is to start soon)
- TV with cable
- One movie day per month
- Computer – and a senior citizen is volunteering to teach a class
- Meals for people that need them
- Meals or a snack at the center

Unmet needs and desired resources

There are many other services the seniors in Centerburg would like for the Senior Center to provide. Some services are available in Mount Vernon but Centerburg seniors want the services locally. For instance, if seniors need help with lawn chores they can call The Station Break in Mount Vernon and The Station Break will send someone to help them. The seniors do not understand why they cannot have the money to provide services locally. Participants reported that if there is a senior who needs lawn care or housework done she “doesn’t get it done.”

The participants created a wish list of services that they would like to see the Centerburg Senior Center provide if there was more funding.

Table 56: Centerburg Senior Center Wish List

Desired resource	Votes
Transportation: to bring seniors to the center, give rides to the doctor, for field trips, and errands, etc.	14
Kitchen at the Center: to provide better meals (Meals on Wheels) and for meals at the center	5
Household care: to help with chores around the house	3
Lawn Care	0
Care taker outings: Respite care	0

Source: Centerburg Senior focus group, 2005
Knox County Community Assessment 2004-2005

Full Report, March 2006

Nothing for youth to do

The Centerburg group chose “nothing for youth” as a high priority issue. Fredericktown also expressed concern with the lack of youth activities.

Existing Resources

When asked about what there is for youth to do seniors seemed to be at a loss. In both the Fredericktown and Centerburg group participants explained that there was a lot more for youth when they were younger. Now, in these two areas of the county, there are no movie theaters and no restaurants that serve as youth hangouts. When asked, “Where do kids hang out now?” the Fredericktown group suggested the following:

- On the street corner
- In front of the computer
- Sports
- Some of them get into trouble

Unmet needs and desired resources

The seniors feel that there need to be youth centers for teens. Moreover, they feel that parents should be volunteering at these youth centers. They talked a lot about how there have been failed attempts at creating youth centers in the past. The seniors feel that these attempts failed because there were not enough volunteers, or because they allowed students to be the volunteers. Seniors don’t really feel it is their place to volunteer, however, they do not feel that younger adults are stepping up.

“Haven’t they tried to have it [a youth center] before but it goes through because they can’t find enough volunteers?”

In response, “they had the one on Main Street but the kids tore it up because there they had no supervision.”

“They had youth volunteers... 16 and 17 year-old supervision doesn’t work.”

Health care

Danville chose health care as a high priority issue. Fredericktown also spent a lot of time discussing health care. The Danville group focused on home health care while Fredericktown was interested in having health fairs in the area. Both groups were concerned with educating seniors about health issues. Both groups were also concerned about mental health issues.

“Maybe [we should learn about] mental health. I think that a lot of seniors are depressed. It’s true that all senior citizens go through depression, because as you age your world gets smaller... my friends are all dead... we, my husband and I, haven’t played cards since they died.”

Existing resources

Fredericktown does not really have any existing resources for local health fairs. Participants did mention that there are health fairs in other parts of the county but they do not like to drive to Mount Vernon or Centerburg.

The Danville group focused more on home health care creating a list of existing resources:

- Medicare
- Expensive secondary insurance
- Knox County Health Department
- PASSPORT Home Care Services (is a long term care waiver program) participants expressed concern for losing their home if they ask for assistance
- Resource Center (The Sanctuary)

Unmet needs and desired resources

The Fredericktown seniors envisioned their community health fair with the following resources/information:

- Blood pressure, sugar, and cholesterol testing (free)
- Bone density testing (free)
- Information about mental health and information from the Health Department, the Area Agency on Aging, and the Arthritis Foundation's PACE Program

The participants said that many seniors do not get the tests they need because the tests are too expensive. They feel that a health fair could offer the tests free or at a reduced price while educating seniors about important health issues and programs available.

“It’s very expensive to go to the hospital for this [bone density testing]...they don’t charge for blood pressure or sugar but for cholesterol it’s like eight bucks or so... you have to sit and wait.”

The Danville seniors talked about the need for more than meals. They were particularly interested in having volunteers that would deliver Meals on Wheels but then sit and visit with the seniors also. They felt this socialization would help with depression. They were also interested in providing services and education. The Danville participants generated a wish list displayed in Table 57.

Table 57: Danville Health Care Wish List

Desired resource	Votes
Assistance with comprehension of medication and other medical instruction	5
Visit with seniors in their homes to increase socialization while delivering meals	4
Resource Center that would provide information	1
Free clinic/Traveling bus with services for eye glasses, dental, etc.	1
Financial support for grandparents who are taking care of grandchildren	1

Source: Danville Senior focus group, 2004

Public awareness of volunteer needs/opportunities

Participants in the Mount Vernon group all identified themselves as volunteers and had a special interest in volunteer work. Many of the general strengths and weaknesses identified by the Mount Vernon group were based on their experiences in various social service agencies. The group identified public awareness of volunteer needs and Opportunities as a high priority issue. They were concerned that there are not enough volunteers and they felt that seniors would enjoy and benefit from volunteering.

Existing resources

The group did not have an opportunity to discuss how volunteers are currently recruited or how one goes about finding a volunteer position. However, they did mention Salvation Army, Kno-Ho-Co RSVP Foster Grandparents, and Interchurch Social Services as existing volunteer opportunities.

Unmet needs and desired resources

The group was most interested in having public service announcements regarding volunteer opportunities on Channel 6, in the newspaper, and on the radio. They also liked the idea of bringing a non-volunteering friend to volunteer appreciation dinners and talking about volunteering. Participants also liked the idea of a “volunteer fair” where different agencies could come and set up booths and explain their volunteer opportunities.

Participants also thought that volunteers should be told that it is OK to set limits. The group shared that many volunteers get burnt out because they do not set limits and that others are scared of becoming volunteers because they think it will consume their lives.

When things get tough

When asked about “when things get tough” some senior citizens expressed that they are reluctant to turn to others or to community agencies for assistance. Becoming a burden to their families seems to be a big concern for seniors. Their unwillingness to rely on others leaves many seniors feeling alone and depressed.

Awareness and use of United Way member agencies

Awareness. The senior citizens were asked to complete the *United Way Agency Awareness and Satisfaction Survey*. Participants were asked a series of questions about each of the organizations funded by United Way of Knox County. Most participants had at least heard of most programs. There were only four programs that fifty percent or less of participants were aware of: South Vernon Youth League (36%), Compassionate Friends (43%), Consumer Credit Counseling Service (46%), and The Salvation Army-Centerburg Service Unit (50%) (see Table 58).

Use. The senior citizens were also asked which programs they had actually used. Very few of the seniors reported using agencies funded by the United Way. The most utilized

organizations include The Station Break (32%) and Hospice of Knox County (29%) (see Table 58).

Table 58: Awareness and use of United Way member organizations

United Way member organization	Have you ever heard of this organization?: Percent "yes"	Have you ever gotten help from this agency or participated in any of its activities?: Percent "yes"
Adult Day Care Center	89%	0%
Alcohol & Drug FREEDOM CENTER	86%	0%
The American Red Cross of Knox County	96%	22%
Arthritis Foundation - Knox County Branch	74%	14%
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Knox and Morrow Counties	96%	0%
Boy Scouts of America - Muskingum Valley Council	81%	4%
Compassionate Friends	43%	0%
Consumer Credit Counseling Service	46%	10%
Heart of Ohio Girl Scout Council	82%	17%
Hospice of Knox County	96%	32%
Knox County 4-H Center	93%	17%
Knox County Head Start	96%	8%
Mental Health Association of Knox Co.	84%	9%
Moundbuilders Guidance Center	93%	12%
New Directions: Domestic Abuse Shelter	82%	4%
The Salvation Army of Mount Vernon	89%	20%
The Salvation Army - Centerburg Service Unit	56%	6%
South Vernon Youth League	36%	0%
The Station Break	96%	36%
YMCA of Mount Vernon	96%	27%

Source: *United Way Agency Awareness and Satisfaction Survey, Senior Citizen Focus Groups, 2004-05*

Computer and Internet access

Two questions about computer and Internet access were also included on the *Awareness and Satisfaction* survey to get a sense of how useful it would be to provide information to senior citizens about activities and programs via web sites and email. Only about one fourth (28%) of respondents indicated that they have Internet access in their home and only 15 percent said they had used the internet to find information about recreational activities, health care, or social services (see Table 59).

Table 59: Computer and Internet access

	Percent "Yes"
Have you ever used the Internet to find information about recreational activities, health care, or social services?	15%
Do you have a computer with Internet access in your home?	28%

Source: *United Way Agency Awareness and Satisfaction Survey*, Senior Citizen Focus Groups, 2004-05

Discussion and conclusions

Community leaders have identified several research questions that need to be addressed by the 2004-05 community assessment. This discussion is designed to answer these overarching research questions using the results of the four senior citizen focus groups and the *United Way Agency Awareness and Satisfaction Survey*.

Question 1: What do senior citizens need? What needs are already being met, and what are the unmet needs?

Senior citizens identified many unmet needs and provided several specific suggestions for improving existing services. Overall, their highest-priority needs and suggestions were:

- Better transportation services:
 - Improve MOTA by lowering prices for senior citizens, expanding services to include evenings and weekends, and creating a set route with specific times throughout Knox County
 - Provide transportation through Centerburg Senior Services for seniors in Centerburg
 - Develop a bus line to connect the county, possibly using buses that are no longer being utilized by school districts
 - Expand the FISH program (a program through Interchurch Social Services where volunteers provide medical runs for those who cannot drive themselves to medical appointments) by recruiting more drivers
 - Provide better reimbursement for volunteers of the FISH program
- More for youth to do
 - Create a youth center for teens in the area
 - Open a movie theater, a new restaurant or other place where youth can hang out (particularly in areas outside Mount Vernon)
- Health care
 - Organize community health fairs for seniors to have their blood pressure, sugar, and cholesterol tests, and to learn about mental and physical health issues, and agencies that work with seniors
 - Create a health clinic in a traveling bus offering services for eyeglasses, dental, etc.
 - Offer more assistance with comprehension of medication and other medical instruction

Question 2: What assets do we already have to meet these needs, and which are most effective?

Seniors were able to identify several transportation options available in Knox County; however, they feel that these services do not adequately meet their needs. Most of their time was spent discussing how to improve or expand existing resources rather than on thinking about new services. Seniors in the outlying areas (Danville, Centerburg, and Fredericktown) feel that the services provided are geared more toward meeting the needs of Mount Vernon residents.

Question 3: Where are there overlaps in service or duplicated services?

The focus group results did not reveal any obvious overlaps or duplicated services; however, the seniors would like to see an increase in services that are offered and housed in the outlying parts of Knox County. For example, Centerburg residents would prefer to be offered services through their local senior center rather than having to rely on The Station Break for senior services. Seniors in Danville, Fredericktown, and Centerburg all shared that they feel that services and programs in Knox County focus on Mount Vernon residents and that they are often “forgotten.”

Question 4: Are senior citizens aware of existing resources and do they know how to access them?

Most of the senior citizens who participated in the focus groups were recruited through a senior program; therefore, the senior citizens in these groups were at least aware of their local senior program. As evidenced in the *Satisfaction and Awareness Survey* results most seniors are also aware of most other community resources. However, the results show that many seniors do not utilize the resources available. Only 28% of participants have a computer with Internet access at home and only 15% of them reported that they have used the Internet to find information about recreational activities, health care, or social services. Therefore, the Internet would not be an effective way to communicate with area senior citizens.

Question 5: What kinds of barriers do senior citizens face when trying to get help?

Isolation seems to be a barrier to seniors getting help. Some participants shared that they feel alone in tough times. Another barrier is reluctance to call on family. Many participants shared that their children either have moved away or are too busy with their own lives.

Question 6: How satisfied are senior citizens with existing services?

Needs assessment focus groups of this type are not necessarily the best way to assess customer satisfaction with a wide range of agencies. Seniors did comment about interactions they had with different services, but the facilitators did not ask consistent questions about the same set of agencies in each group.

Overall, seniors seemed satisfied with their local senior groups or other agencies that they are involved with. The only negative comments seniors had about the agencies that they are specifically involved with pertained to a lack of funding.