



Age Friendly Saco Progress Report 2017-2022: Executive Summary

The work of Age Friendly Saco (AFS) began in 2016 under the leadership of Saco's then Mayor Ron Michaud. Soon a Steering Committee was formed comprised of key stakeholders in the community, including the Headmaster of the local high school, a Pastor of local church, the Executive Director of the local United Way as well as many other community leaders.

The mission of Age Friendly Saco became ***“To promote active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, engagement, and safety while removing barriers that prevent our citizens from remaining in their homes as they age.”*** Further, ***“This will be accomplished through engagement with community organizations as well as collaboration with the City of Saco and the recruitment of community volunteers for the delivery of services that will empower residents to remain in and engaged in their community.”***

With support from AARP and the City of Saco, the Steering Committee completed a community wide needs assessment in 2016. This assessment was mailed to 1000 residents with 400 responses received back. The assessment provided the Steering Committee with the information needed to create the first Action Plan.

In 2018, Age Friendly Saco applied for and received status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The Steering Committee became the Board of Directors with bylaws adopted in April. Early success in meeting the needs of our community was thanks to a close working relationship with the City of Saco. An office was provided in the community center which has been instrumental in helping to organize all the functions related to AFS, as well as ensuring a dedicated phone line to serve the residents of Saco.



The office is currently staffed by office volunteers Monday-Friday from 10 am to 4 pm. These volunteers provide a lifeline to our older residents by answering questions, directing residents to



community resources and providing a direct line of communication with our older population to continue to identify additional needs as they arise. As our volunteer group continued to grow and the services offered expanded, an Operations Team was formed. This group of volunteers, responsible for different aspects of the work of AFS and the various programs and services that have are currently being offered, meets bi-weekly. To date the Ops Team has grown to 20 members who share stories and their experiences to show how they may have made an impact in the life of one of our residents. This key group of volunteers allowed AFS to pivot during the pandemic and continue ways to meet and serve residents during that time including many zoom meetings!

Early Successes put Age Friendly Saco on the Map:



Age Friendly Saco has made great strides in helping our community become more livable for all since its inception. One of our first successes was to make our public beach accessible.

In 2018: Age Friendly Saco was the recipient of an AARP Challenge Grant. With these funds, we were able to make Bayview Beach accessible through the placement of Mobi-mats to the high tide mark at the beach. Benches were also placed on the sand to allow anyone wishing to enjoy a day at the beach an opportunity to sit and enjoy the beauty of the sea. This grant had a domino effect with additional gifts to our community: a beach wheelchair and walker from our local Rotary Club so all can enjoy accessing one of Saco's beautiful beaches.



Another early success was our collaboration with Community Partners to provide social opportunities for our residents as well as special meal deliveries.

Through our close collaboration with our local high school, Thornton Academy, our residents received special Valentine's Day cards created by our high school students with a Valentine's Day meal provided by our other community partner Ferry Beach Retreat and Conference Center.

Age Friendly Saco Livability Goals and Activities:

Transportation



One of the challenging issues in making a community livable is access to transportation.

In 2018: Age Friendly Saco developed a Tri-Community Transportation Committee to address the unmet transportation needs of our population. This group made some progress but disbanded at the onset of the pandemic.

In 2021: With a grant from Maine Community Foundation, AFS began planning for a volunteer transportation program focused on getting Saco residents to medical appointments. Two AmeriCorps members, supported by the University of Maine's Center on Aging, were recruited to assist with the planning and to bring the program to fruition. The program quickly geared up to recruit and orient volunteer drivers who would provide rides to residents in need.

In 2022: February saw the launch of the new AFS Senior Volunteer Transportation program. By the end of the year, 6 volunteer drivers had provided 300 rides. Along the way, additional grants were received and AFS contracted with a Transportation Coordinator. A brochure was also developed for residents detailing local transportation options.

Into 2023: Grants allowed AFS to purchase the Assisted Rides software, increase the pool of volunteer drivers and total rides given rose to over 400. Also, the Tri-Community Transportation Committee was reactivated. The goal is to expand volunteer and "micro-transit" transportation options to residents in Biddeford, Saco and Old Orchard Beach. And, at the same time, increase access to other needs beyond medical appointments.

View videos about the Age Friendly Saco's Volunteer Transportation Program:

Story on News Center Maine, July 2022:

<https://bit.ly/46jUDCb>



Update on AFS' Volunteer Transportation Program, March 2023:

Age Friendly Saco Livability Goals and Activities: *Housing*



In 2017: A Handy Neighbor program was instituted with the goal of keeping residents safe by making small home repairs and modifications. To date 315 jobs have been completed with 545 volunteer hours donated.

Through the Handy Neighbors Program, AFS learned that there were many residents that needed help with using technology. A team of Tech Handy Helpers was recruited to assist. This group also produced a video in collaboration with the Saco's Communication Department called, "A Day in the Life of Alexa," demonstrating how a simple Echo Dot can function as a virtual personal assistant.



Watch the video here: <https://bit.ly/3NorY6q>

In 2018: AFS held window insert building workshops with Habitat for Humanity York County and local high school student volunteers. This continued until the pandemic.



Age Friendly Saco's Handy Neighbors Program

Do you wonder how to find someone to help you with simple home repairs - repairs that cost you nothing? Repairs that help you live comfortably and safely in your home? Age Friendly Saco can help you. Our talented, friendly, helpful handy neighbors will provide services free for residents of Saco, who are 50 or older. We will change light bulbs, install grab bars, help you move summer furniture outside, hang pictures, do touch-up painting, and more. Ask for what you need, and we'll tell you if we can do it.

In 2019: In collaboration with Biddeford Housing Authority, AFS helped promote the Comfortably Home program to local residents. And in 2022, AFS



continued its support for this program as part of a successful grant to do this work with Biddeford Housing in northern York County.

Stay in your community.
We make **minor home repairs and basic accessibility and safety improvements** for older Mainers and Mainers with disabilities.

Learn more: call (207) 282-6537 or go to bhousing.org/contact to send a message.




In 2020: A grant was obtained by AFS to provide Knox Boxes to our residents. This work continues to work with the Saco Fire



Department and key volunteers who make residents aware of this program and assist with installation. Each time a Knox Box is returned, it is redirected to another resident.



In 2021: AFS advocated for and worked with the City of Saco in creating a new Senior Property Tax Relief program .

Into 2023: AFS volunteers are currently working with the city's Planning Department to create a "how to" booklet about Accessory Dwelling Units specific to the needs of Saco. Also, we continue to work on bringing a Home Share program to Maine. AFS is currently working with local legislators to bring Nesterly, a home sharing platform, to the state. Check out Nesterly at: <https://www.nesterly.com/>

Age Friendly Saco Livability Goals and Activities: *Communication & Information / Civic Participation*

In 2016: In collaboration with our local high school, Thornton Academy, we developed our new logo as well as a Facebook page and website: agefrendlysaco.org



In 2017: The first Age Friendly Saco resource guide was created and a refrigerator magnet of important numbers was created and distributed across the community. The AFS office was opened and staffed by a full cadre of volunteers.

In 2018: The Age Friendly Saco newsletter was created and distributed to over 1,000 local households. This quarterly newsletter is sent by mail, email and posted on the AFS website. During this time, the AFS database was started. Today we have 1767 contacts in the database of which 1175 are clients of AFS.



We Need and Welcome Volunteers

AgeFriendly Saco is a volunteer organization. We welcome people of all ages to join us in our mission. Here are a few of the friendly people who are waiting for you to join them.

Call us
207-710-5029

We're waiting!

HandyNeighbor Program

Do you have trouble climbing a ladder to change a light bulb or a battery? Do you need grab bars installed in your shower or tub? Do you need help moving heavy pieces of furniture? AgeFriendly Saco's Handy Neighbors are available to help with these services and more. These are intended to be simple one-time services that do not require licensed contractors. **Services are free and are available to Saco residents 50 or older.** Even seniors who can afford to pay may be interested in requesting the services of our HandyNeighbors. It can be challenging to find contractors willing to take on small jobs. Perhaps you have a more major project or one that requires a licensed contractor. You may not know who to call nor who can be trusted to work with seniors. We are currently creating a list of contractors who will work reliably for seniors. We will make this available to you once it's ready.

Let us know if you have weatherization services-window in doors, light bulbs, carbon monoxide detectors, etc. We can give you a list of contractors to touch with Habitat



Age Friendly Saco hosted Candidate forums and hosts a table at the polls for each election.

An annual Community Wellness Fair was started with seminars on topics such as end of life planning, how to build an ADU and Property Tax Relief. The event includes free lunch and access to local vendors, all at no cost to participants.



When
November 5, 2022
9:30am - 1:30pm

Where
Thornton Academy
Atrium
438 Main St. Saco

Free Seminars
Free Lunch
Free Coffee, Donuts & Raffles!!
Vendor fair with info and giveaways!

(207) 710-5029
www.agefrendlysaco.org
Agefrendlysaco@gmail.com

SEMINARS EVERYONE WILL CHOOSE TWO TO ATTEND!

ADU Attend the ADU: influence in the City of Saco and learn about different ADU models with Beth Ann KIRA.

Don't meet with a legal professional from Saco about "Why do I need a Will" and other legal documents.

Endowed Attend the various Property Tax seminars available to all who attend the event.

Age Friendly Saco Livability Goals and Activities: Community Support & Health Services



In 2017: One of our first collaborative projects was the delivery of sand buckets to our older residents in collaboration with the Saco Public Works Department and local high school students.

Through a collaboration with University of New England's Center on Aging Excellence, AFS provided "De-Prescribing" educational sessions with local UNE Pharmacy students.



Through our participation with Wayside Food Programs and its Commodity Supplemental Food Program, our volunteers continue to provide monthly food box deliveries. And prior to the pandemic, and in collaboration with Saco Parks and Recreation, Age Friendly Saco volunteers provided monthly grocery shopping shuttles for two senior low-income congregate living facilities.

Age Friendly Saco	What you need to know about Balance
When: Thurs, Jan. 19, 2023 10-11:30 a.m. Where: 2nd floor Café meeting space Saco Mill #4 120 Main St., Saco (Beside Loxsmith Barge) This free event is limited to 15	Katherine Heller, PT, DPT Age Friendly Saco will offer its next Coffee & Conversation on Thurs, Jan. 19, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. Learn about the anatomy and physiology of your balance system, how these systems change with aging, and evidenced based interventions to improve your balance and reduce the risk of

In 2018: In conjunction with our local Rotary Club, we provided access to a medical loan closet and also created an adaptive tools display that was featured at the local library.



In 2021 and 2022: Working with community partners, AFS provided over 350 meals to our tri-communities of Biddeford, Saco and Old Orchard Beach. Community volunteers delivered these meals to residents.

In 2022: Age Friendly Saco started a monthly forum called Coffee and Conversations. Topics related to health, available community resources and aging issues have been presented.

Age Friendly Saco Livability Goals and Activities:



Outdoor Spaces

In 2018: With a grant from the Maine Community Foundation and in collaboration with Saco Parks and Recreation, AFS created an accessible garden at the local Community Center. At the end of the year a harvest dinner was hosted and enjoyed by the many generations involved in the community garden project.



This project led to the expansion of an inground garden for the school-age children to grow pumpkins and sunflowers as well as the development of a composting program. In addition, the Teenage Summer Camp held cooking classes to learn about different herbs and how to incorporate them into various dishes.



As noted in the Early Successes, Age Friendly Saco improved beach access for all with an AARP Challenge Grant and support from the local Rotary. Saco's Bayview Beach can now be visited by many more people thanks to Mobi-mats, benches, a beach wheelchair and a special walker.



In 2020: An adaptive bicycle program utilizing a Chat, a rickshaw-like transport bike, was developed. Utilizing volunteer "pilots" and safety riders, residents in three care facilities can experience the joy of a bike ride once again. Chat rides around the city are provided on a weekly basis.

View more about the Chat here:



<https://bit.ly/3CNtb2a>

Age Friendly Saco Livability Goals and Activities:

Social Participation



In 2019: Prior to the pandemic and resuming in 2023, Age Friendly Saco provided socialization opportunities for residents with bi-annual dinner dances held at the Community Center. A great jazz band, special holiday themed meals and fun filled the evening for participants.



And through the pandemic 2020-2022...We didn't stop!



We found new ways to connect with our residents. By working with our local legislative delegation, our Age Friendly volunteers called over 2,000 households to “check in” and assure our residents we were here for them.

As food insecurity was identified as the #1 issue, we sought ways to address this through a meals program as well as being a provider for the Farmers to Families Food Box program. Age Friendly Saco volunteers partnered with the Police Department and others to hand out over 3,000 - 30 lb. food boxes over 3 months. The AFS Operations Team also gathered via Zoom to continue to meet the needs of our residents.



We also partnered with the Saco Fire Department and Northern Light Healthcare to bring a Covid vaccine clinic to the community.



In 2021: Age Friendly Saco was awarded the Beacon Award by AARP Maine! The criteria was to foster bright and inclusive spaces to actively engage community members. AFS “has embodied these values with their volunteer efforts to assist the residents of Saco experiencing food insecurity issues as well as social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

community members. AFS “has embodied these values with their volunteer efforts to assist the residents of Saco experiencing food insecurity issues as well as social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.”



None of Age Friendly Saco’s work would have been possible without the help and support of many community partners, over 100 talented volunteers, an engaged Board of Directors and a wonderful leader, Jean Saunders, 2023 recipient of AARP Maine’s Andrus Award!



Our volunteers are office workers, volunteer drivers, food box deliverers, tax specialists, Medicare educators, public event coordinators, cooks, servers, bicycle riders, and many others. Every year AFS takes time to recognize our volunteers with a special BBQ and presentation to review the accomplishments of

the past year. The most recent volunteer recognition event in 2022 acknowledged how far we have come in the past 5 years!

Age Friendly Saco and Plans for the Future



In October 2022, an ad hoc Planning Committee was formed. This group was charged with creating the draft of Age Friendly Saco's Action Plan for 2023-2025. As part of their work, they created and distributed a survey to local residents to understand more about current community needs and services provided past, present and future by AFS:

1. What do you think are the **MOST VALUABLE** current activities and services that Age Friendly Saco is offering to older residents.
2. Which of the following activities and services **NO longer** offered by Age Friendly Saco, would you like to **see brought back**?
3. What **NEW** activities and services would you like to see Age Friendly Saco offer over the next 3 years?

Survey results (with 22% returned) identified the following as high priorities: Rides to medical appointments (62%) and non-medical appointments (50%); Handy Neighbors (58%); Home weatherization (62%); Improved sidewalk safety (43%); Transportation to senior activities (41%) and Community meals (40%).

As a result, the new Action Plan focuses on Transportation, Housing Community Activities and Organizational Sustainability. Some immediate results include:

- ◆ AFS remains interested in trying to create a regional approach relative to transportation needs and plan to expand the current on-demand transportation program to our surrounding communities. Also, exploration of a "mini micro" transit model providing shuttles to transport residents to other places (besides medical appointments) is a high priority.
- ◆ With the support of new grants, AFS will start providing a monthly luncheon to older residents in the tri-community area with transportation provided by volunteers for any resident wishing to attend the luncheons.
- ◆ AFS is addressing succession planning at the Board level with discussion about what the organization may look like in the future.

Challenges Along the Way:

- ◇ Many changes in leadership in City management:
 - ◇ The Director of Parks and Recreation changed.
 - ◇ AFS has experienced 3 new Mayors in 6 years and 2 City Administrators with a new one arriving in 2023.
 - ◇ City Council members have changed as well
 - ◇

At the same time, AFS is fortunate to receive financial support from the City. Each year a member of AFS goes before the Council during the budget process to request continued funding and sharing a year in review of accomplishments and how the City's money has been utilized to support residents.

We thank our many community partners, funders, sponsors, donors, key leaders and members of the community for their ongoing support of Age Friendly Saco!

Age Friendly Saco will continue ***"To promote active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, engagement, and safety while removing barriers that prevent our citizens from remaining in their homes as they age."***