

AAWGT's first 2014 Educational Session, "Changing Demographics: Opportunities and Untapped Resources," was held at Kneseth Israel on February 12. More than 80 people attended and heard from five panelists, including Marci Kennai, Director, Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services; Pam Jordan, Director, Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities; Maria Casasco, Community Support Grants Administrator, Anne Arundel County; Tricia Wilson, Assistant Director, Heyman Interages Center of the Jewish Council for the Aging; and Fay Mauro, Executive Director, Volunteer Center of Anne Arundel County.

With the guidance of moderator Christine Poulsen, Program Manager, Community Initiatives, Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services and fellow AAWGT member, the panel spoke on the County's changing population, with a specific focus on the 60+ and the Hispanic/Latino community.

"It is fitting that we start off 2014 with the first in a series of education sessions designed to make us informed decision makers", remarked AAWGT President Karen Smith as she kicked off the meeting.

Maria Casasco spoke on the Hispanic/Latino population in the County. She explained that the County has evolved in its delivery of services to the Hispanic/Latino population in the county since the 1970s. The County now has a comprehensive approach addressing the entire family unit, including housing, transportation, jobs, and other issues. She emphasized the importance of realizing we have mostly first generation immigrants in Anne Arundel County. It is a young population with an average age of 25. She explained that the greatest need is to get services to the adults. She explained that the school system does a good job of addressing the needs of the children, but due to cultural and language barriers, there are not enough services delivered to the adults.

Pam Jordan spoke on the 60+ population in the County. She explained that Government funds have been cut tremendously for Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities and they are now competing for dollars in the community. She provided multiple examples of how the agency is doing more with less, including working with University of Maryland Medical School nurses, which save the agency over \$100,000 a year through their assistance with case management. By 2020 half of the population of Anne Arundel County will be over 55. The needs of the 60+ population will continue to increase, and her agency is developing a strategic plan to work to address those needs.

Marci Kennai, Director, Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services, explained that 90 percent of the budget for her Department comes from the state, and much of that funding has very specific uses, such as use for food stamps. With the aging population growing and living longer, the need for services is rising exponentially. Over 20,000 households in the community receive food stamps from her agency and the number is growing. From Marci's perspective, some of the biggest problems for low-income people in the County include homelessness, access to transportation, and affordable housing. When asked what gaps in services she could identify - what needs are out there for which there is no public funding at this point in time, Marci had several examples of unmet needs in the county: volunteer mentors for disabled adults, services for previously incarcerated individuals, programs for the very young child (younger than three), and educating parents in good parenting practices.

Tricia Wilson enlightened attendees on a signature project in Montgomery County - Intergenerational Bridges. The Montgomery County Public School District is the 17th largest school district in the U.S. Intergenerational Bridges was started almost thirty years ago, when the need to help recent immigrant children adjust to life in the United States emerged for significant numbers of school-aged children. The needs of the children over the existence of the program have changed. The program initially helped children adjust to U.S. culture. Now, many students were born in the United States, and need help with their conversational English language skills. Retired individuals volunteer to come in once a week to mentor students after school. They have conversations, play games and foster friendships.

Fay Mauro, Director of Anne Arundel County's Volunteer Center, wrapped up the session with a call to action to volunteer in the County. Board member and community volunteer Bruce Morgenstern described many of the opportunities and reminded attendees that "Volunteering is good for the soul. It makes you smile."

AAWGT's educational programs are intended to help AAWGT members make more informed decisions in the grant making process, and to provide a public forum for learning and discussion on issues affecting the well-being of women and families in Anne Arundel County.