

LISTENING TO TOP CONCERNS OF OLDER ADULTS

By Susan Evans, Mason County Senior Services

Results of the first Mason County Senior Services Survey indicate many seniors face familiar challenges, mainly related to finding programs and services that allow them to continue living independently.

Earlier this year, a postcard invitation was sent to all Mason County households with one or more senior aged 60 and over inviting them to complete a senior survey online. A random sample of paper surveys was sent to those who did not respond to the postcard to complete it online. There were 1,142 responses received. This survey was conducted by Emma White Research and was funded by the Mason County Board of Commissioners with Senior Millage funds. It was developed with input from focus groups of seniors and from the Mason County Senior Coalition, which is an informal group of representatives from non-profit organizations that serve older adults in Mason County. The last two Community Needs Assessments from the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM) conducted in 2019 and 2023 indicate the top five issues of greatest concern for seniors in Mason County are falling, dementia, ability to age in place, money for retirement, and home repairs. However, the number of responses received from Mason County seniors for the AAAWM 2023 assessment was less than 150 individuals.

According to County Administrator Kaitlyn Szczyпка, "Our senior needs assessment was a more focused effort than regional assessments conducted by our Area Agency on

Aging. Collecting data that is specific to Mason County can support grant applications as well as programming and funding decisions."

Survey results indicate the most assistance is needed with home repairs, indoor/outdoor chores, and help with legal documents. Additionally, 52%

are not familiar with senior services in general, and 17% need help paying for everyday items. Caregivers and those who live alone were more likely to have used senior millage-funded programs, and are more likely to have needs. Thirty-four percent report using at least one of the millage programs. Seven percent of respondents say they are interested in receiving mental health counseling.

Other trends as indicated in the open-ended responses suggest a need for better transportation options, especially for rides to and from medical appointments.

If you have questions about resources for seniors, email Susan Evans at sevans@masoncountymi.gov. Seniors who need help finding programs and services can also contact AAAWM at 888-456-5664 Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or one of the four senior centers in Mason County. Another helpful resource is the **Active for Life** publication for seniors available at senior centers, at various locations throughout the community, and online at www.scottvilleareaseniorcenter.com.

Listening to Top Concerns of Older Adults in Mason County: Senior Services Survey Results "...indicate many seniors face familiar challenges, mainly related to finding programs and services that allow them to continue living independently."



(This is the first installment of a regularly recurring column by Susan Evans, Mason County Senior Services Coordinator, on topics for older adults residing in Mason County.)