



## Growing old but not leaving home

*More groups look at ways to help seniors age at home*

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As a silver tsunami hits north Baltimore, more communities are investigating ways to help seniors age in place.

The latest is the Village of Cross Keys, where seniors are considering an aging-in-place model presented at a meeting last week by the Anne Arundel County-based organization Partners in Care.

It's one of several models under consideration or in place throughout Baltimore that are designed to allow seniors to live in their own homes longer.

At Cross Keys, seniors are considering a plan they call "neighbors helping neighbors," which would provide services to seniors without a fee.

The system is based on a concept called "hour banking." It allows for people older than 50 to accumulate hours by performing various services such as driving an elderly person to a doctor's appointment or helping a senior with yard work.

As those volunteers age, they can trade in the accumulated hours for services they need.

The services would be limited to something "a neighbor would do," Barbara Houston, director of Partners in Care, told a group of 30 interested seniors in a meeting at the Cross Keys clubhouse Jan. 13. The model would not apply if, for example, someone needed help injecting themselves with insulin, Houston said.

Sherman Miller, a Cross Keys resident who arranged for Partners in Care to make the presentation, said he is unsure the "neighbors helping neighbors" concept would work in his neighborhood, but is excited about its possibilities.

"I think it's a great idea," Miller said.

The model used by Partners in Care has already been implemented in north Baltimore. The Govans Ecumenical Development Corporation started it last fall at Stadium Place, an apartment complex on the site of the old Memorial Stadium.

Although the apartments aren't part of Partners in Care's larger network, GEDCO has contracted with the group to help maintain software to track volunteer hours.

Ted Gross, GEDCO's director of senior services, said the program has been warmly received at Stadium Place. So far, 40 people are signed up and participating, he said.

"They're really excited about it," Gross said.

He said the idea of helping people age in their community is about more than just providing services.

"We're trying to build a community," Gross said.

GEDCO, a faith-based housing developer, wants to take the idea to other properties it owns and to churches involved with GEDCO, Gross said.

A model that is being explored in the Roland Park area is the "village at home" concept. It's based on a model pioneered in Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood.

This concept includes volunteers as well but it also involves pooling a neighborhood's purchasing power to buy services from vendors, often at discounted rates.

Roland Park resident Susan Newhouse has formed a 501(c)3 non-profit group to help begin to organize a

village concept in Roland Park and surrounding neighborhoods.

She said she prefers this concept because it isn't as precise in its hour banking and is more about building community.

She said hour banking is "an option, but it's not the only option we need."

The aging baby boomer generation is used to having options and will want to have options about where and how they grow old, Newhouse said.

Right now, society isn't prepared to offer all of the needed options, but different ways of aging in place will be attractive to boomers, she said.

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