Membership Application

To join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities

- If you have questions while completing this form, please email livable@aarp.org
- If you need additional space for answering the questions you may add an additional sheet of paper

Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: 12/23/19

NAME OF THE COMMUNITY: Liberty

STATE: Maine

POPULATION SIZE: 964

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 19% (est)

NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT: Melinda Steeves, First Selectman

OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER: PO Box 116, 7 Water Street, Liberty, ME 04949

Section 2: COMMUNITY CONTACT for the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

- The community contact is the local staff member or volunteer who is primarily responsible for carrying out the community-level work — it is not the responsible AARP staff member.

NAME: Kenneth Ortmann

POSITION: Town Administrator

EMAIL ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]

Please describe the named person’s role in the city or community’s age-friendly initiative:

The Town Administrator is the individual responsible for acting as a conduit for information among the various entities involved with this effort. This includes, but is not limited to, the Liberty Selectboard, Aging Well in Waldo County representatives, and the Waldo County Commissioners.

The person named above agrees to be subscribed to the AARP Livable Communities Weekly e-Newsletter, which is one of the primary ways we share useful news and resources. To add additional subscribers, type their names and email addresses into below. Once this application is processed, a subscription confirmation message will be sent so the individual can confirm that they want to subscribe. To subscribe today, follow the link above or visit AARP.org/Livable-Subscribe.
Section 3: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS and COLLABORATIONS

1) Please provide a brief summary of the community policies, programs and services that are targeted toward older people and how the community plans to become more age-friendly.

Thanks to an AARP Livable Communities Challenge Grant awarded to Aging Well in Waldo County in the Spring of 2019, the Liberty Library was able to replace their outside lights with more energy efficient and brighter ones making it easier for people to enter and exit the library safely at night.

The Library recently created an age-friendly outdoor public space with a granite bench and table with chess/checkerboard engraved atop. The money from the AARP Livable Communities Grant was also used to buy planters and colorful plants to create an attractive space for people to relax and chat with friends. The “Old Coots” gave advice to passersby on Saturday mornings throughout the summer in this outdoor space. These were volunteers over 60 years old, and every one of them enjoyed the “Old Coots Giving Free Advice – It may be bad advice but it’s free!” The Old Coots also gave out free coffee and donuts.

Another grant from the Maine Communities Foundation for rural libraries enabled the Library to arrange for an octogenarian woodworker to build a Little Free Library that was placed outside the library.

This grant also provided funds for purchasing multiple copies of the book WOMEN ROWING NORTH: NAVIGATING LIFE’S CURRENTS AND FLOURISHING AS WE AGE by Mary Pipher. This Book Club Set was read and discussed by patrons in a book discussion group.

An Aging Well group meets monthly at the library to share lunch, socialize, and have opportunities to hear and question speakers on topics of interest.

Many volunteers in the various organizations in Liberty are retirees. Most of the volunteers at the Liberty Library are over 60 and the library would not be open 29 hours a week without the commitment of these volunteers.

Elderly people in Liberty, especially those living alone, can participate in the Waldo County’s “Friendly Caller program”. Every morning participants call the dispatcher for a well being check. If they don’t call, someone will call them. If still no response, a sheriff’s deputy will check on them.

2) How will the community engage and involve older people in the process of becoming a more age-friendly?

Aging Well in Waldo County (AWWC) https://agingwellinwaldocounty.org completed an Assets and Need Assessment in 2017. The surveys findings indicated that the greatest reported needs were transportation, social isolation, and housing. In 2018, Waldo County Commissioners joined the AARP/World Health Organization’s network of age-friendly communities, making Waldo County the only county-based age-friendly initiative in the State of Maine.

A Steering Committee/Board of Directors/Leadership Core (the structure is yet to be determined) will be created to focus on efforts in Liberty. This group will be primarily comprised of citizens over 50.

3) Briefly describe the mechanisms the community has or is planning to put in place to facilitate collaborative planning and implementation between different agencies and departments.

Liberty representatives from Aging Well in Waldo County (AWWC), the Library Director, the Sheriff Department, and Selectboard have committed to working together to support Liberty being an Age-Friendly/Livable Community.

The AWWC has been awarded a grant from Maine Community Foundation for $9,040 to begin an all-volunteer transportation program in Waldo County. They plan to start small in Belfast and Liberty/Montville, with hopes of expanding within the 12-month grant period.

The library is applying for a $2,500 “The Lifelong Community Mini-Grant” for a yoga instructor to instruct weekly programs that will focus on strength, flexibility, mobility, and balance, which is critical to help seniors remain in their homes. The sessions will include gentle stretching, whole body movements, yoga poses, breathing practices, and relaxation techniques. It will also address the mind and cognitive function as well as easing stress and improving overall health and well-being into the older years. The grant awards will be announced in mid-March 2020.
Section 4: NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

- Your answers to the following questions will help us complete your membership in the global age-friendly network and better enable us to understand how to support the network.

4) How do you hope to contribute to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

The AWWC-Waldo-County survey indicated that about 80% of responders own their own homes. Furthermore, people love where they live. An overall sense of satisfaction with living circumstances might be on account of respondents loving their home and their community. According to the Athens Village, "Research, including that of insurance companies, has shown that people are much better off in their own homes than in assisted living facilities." [http://theathensvillage.org/index.html]

The Athens Village is a group of neighbors working together to help each other age gracefully in their own homes. As a first initiative, we are considering developing a similar model, especially regarding home maintenance, where residents pay annual dues in order to support a "handy-person" to provide assistance when needed. We will be willing to share this model and our experience with other communities. This information will be provided on our Town website [http://www.libertymaine.us]

5) What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities and the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities?

The Waldo County Commissioners encouraged the Selectboard to apply. Waldo County recognizes the importance of encouraging and promoting age-friendly planning and policies to address changing demographics and to enhance independent living, and is committed to a process of continual improvement to support active and healthy aging. The Liberty Selectboard is interested in applying for an AARP Planning Grant to jumpstart a program to hire a person to implement the program described above to help residents over 60 so they can safely age in their own homes.

6) Provide a digital file or link of a logo or other image that represents your community and for which you have reprint rights. The image resolution should be at least 72 dpi. As an example of an image, here’s ours:
January 02, 2020

Lori Parham
AARP Maine State Director
53 Baster Blvd
Portland ME 04101

Dear Ms. Parham,

On behalf of the Town of Liberty, I am pleased to submit this letter of interest and commitment in the AARP/World Health Organization Network of Age-Friendly Communities. The Town of Liberty recognizes the importance of encouraging and promoting age-friendly planning and policies to address changing demographics and to enhance independent living, and is committed to a process of continual improvement to support active and healthy aging.

As part of our involvement and commitment we have worked with Aging Well in Waldo County to conduct a base assessment of the community’s age-friendliness and have participated in development of their community action plan, which was based on the findings of the assessment.

The Town of Liberty library has started a few social programs to encourage older people to get out and spend time with others. We have also started a monthly lunch social at a local restaurant and are working with Aging Well in Waldo County on their new transportation initiative.

Although we are involved in the wider age-friendly work in our region, in Liberty, we will involve older residents deeply in the ongoing planning process and we commit to monitoring progress toward implementing the action plan.

Sincerely,

Melinda Steeves
First Selectman
Town of Liberty, Maine