State: Iowa
Community Name: Johnson County
Population Size: 152322
Percentage of Residents Above Age 60: 15
Community Structure: County
Other:
Community Type: Urban, Small Town, Rural
Elected Official Signing the Letter of Commitment
Name: Pat Heiden
Title: Chairperson, Johnson County Board of Supervisors
Office Mailing Address: 913 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City, IA 52240
Community Contact Name: Jeff Kellbach
Email: [redacted]
Position: Aging Specialist
Telephone: [redacted]
Role: Jeff is the Aging Specialist for Johnson County. He is the contact for seniors looking for information on services. He publishes the newsletter each month with great information for seniors in the county. He serves on the Johnson County Livable Community Policy Board for Successful Aging. He is a member of all of the Action Teams under the board. The action teams are Housing, Communication, Transportation, Falls Prevention and Caregivers. He works with older adults & caregivers in order to identify their needs and connect them with the appropriate services. He also provides outreach and educational services. Jeff can provide seniors with information on services available for in-home providers, medical care, homemaker services, adult day services, independent living for seniors, assisted living, nursing facilities, hospice services, and more. Jeff also maintains the extensive online directory of provider services on the Johnson County website.

Older Adult Involvement: In 2004 with the help of Dr. Brian Kaskie, College of Public Health at the University of Iowa, we identified the major areas that impact seniors in Johnson County. The four areas identified were: Health, Housing, Transportation and Successful Aging. This later category covered Educational,
Leisure Opportunities, Faith-Based Opportunities, and Employment and Volunteer Opportunities. We formed the Johnson County Elderly Consortium on Successful Aging composed of the leaders in the various fields identified plus interested citizens. This group developed a survey for each area. We mailed a survey to 25% of the citizens over 60 years of age on the counties voter’s registration list, with a cover letter signed by Willard Boyd, former University of Iowa president and well-known local advocate, and his wife. The citizen response was tremendous. Based on this information, the Consortium produced the document: Successful Aging in Johnson County - Market Analysis in June 2005. The Area Agency on Aging and AARP Iowa covered the cost of publication. One of the recommendations in this document was to produce four studies to identify best practices and viable responses. These reports were prepared and published by the Consortium in September 2006. AARP Iowa underwrote the printing cost. We held a community forum where we invited the governmental, educational and agency leaders of the county. The leader was from the State AARP. She stated that we had accomplished more in an hour than is accomplished in several months in most locations. The goals set by over 250 citizens helped set our direction. Funding from the State of Iowa helped us get started. Johnson County Livable Community Policy Board has expanded on how we are involving seniors. Our website offers all sorts of opportunities for seniors like congregate meals, educational programs, volunteer opportunities, and more. Our newsletter includes information for online live presentations for seniors and hopefully in person ones soon.

Increasing Collaboration and Coordination:

Johnson County Livable Community Policy Board for Successful Aging is working very hard on making our presence known. We have updated our strategic plan in the last year and make sure to align all our meetings with the new priorities identified in the strategic plan. We have several action teams that report to the board. The Housing Action Team developed a series of Lunch and Learns on topics to help seniors remain in their homes as long as possible. This was developed with the help of the Iowa City Association of Realtors and The Greater Iowa City Area Association of Home Builders. Many of the programs were held virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic and also recorded for future use/reference. They have been well received and are even available on various community access cable channels. The first year of presenting these sessions the JCLC won a National Home Builders Award for Community Service. In the last 5 years developers have been adding many senior housing developments to Johnson County. The Housing Action team has given input to the Iowa City Planning and Zoning Department. The board recently invited the Iowa City planners to a board meeting to discuss the concept of successful aging in our communities. We hope to meet with the other cities in Johnson County for this same conversation as well. We are currently trying to schedule a meeting with the North Liberty Zoning Commission. Our board is comprised of representatives from businesses in the senior community, health professionals, rural and city community members, and people representing local organizations. Our local Home Builders Association has applied and received grant money to help build ramps or needed items for senior’s home. The JCLC has hosted Certified Aging in Place classes to further educate builders and the community. AARP has also been helping through the Fraud Watch presentations and the HomeFit presentations. We have received grant money in the past for different projects. The Iowa City Area Association of Realtors has created a form to show if a home that is on the market has accessibility features. The Johnson County Elderly Consortium has monthly meetings with a program highlighting a local business or service. It provides a great way to network through the different organizations and services that members provide. Programs range
Networking is so useful for growing programs. We have done some networking with Agencies in Linn County. Linn County Triad did a program on “Gadget for Seniors”. They also offer a lot of other programs similar to ones we have, but we have a few here they don’t have. TRAIL is another organization in our community that is part of an International Organization that the concept is starting to catch on with other Midwest communities. By networking we can expand programs and adjust programs we already have in place. Heritage Council on Aging in Linn County and Horizons (Elder Services) in Johnson County joined together to improve services and share resources. 55+ RSVP with United Way of Johnson County joined with Washington County to share resources and improve services. Being able to network with Livable Community Boards all over and share info on what works and what doesn’t, expand on grant opportunities, share our online resources and programming, and mostly sharing our passion for living your best life in your second chapter with other like-minded advocates will be amazing!