AARP Membership Application to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States & Communities

NOTE: This document is a re-creation of the electronic application to submitted to AARP.

Section 1: COMMUNITY DETAILS

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE: August 20, 2021

State: NY

NAME OF THE COMMUNITY: Herkimer County

STATE: NY

Total Population: 63,000

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS ABOVE THE AGE OF 60: 26%

Community Governance Structure: County

Community Type: Rural

NAME AND TITLE OF THE ELECTED OFFICIAL SIGNING THE OFFICIAL COMMITMENT: Herkimer County Chairman of the Legislature Vincent J. Bono

OFFICE ADDRESS OF THE SIGNER:

109 Mary Street Suite 1101

Herkimer, NY 13350

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

NAME: Kathy Fox

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (315) 867-1121

Please describe the named person’s role in the City or Community’s age-friendly initiative (100 words minimum):

Herkimer County Office for the Aging Director, Kathy Fox will be a part of the key personnel to work on this project. Director Fox has worked for the Office for the Aging since 2009 and has been the Director since 2012. She has conducted several needs assessments and understands the needs of older adults as well as how to engage them in the planning process. Director Fox is the President of Herkimer County HealthNet Board of Directors and has worked collaboratively with community partners and funders. She has collaborated with Little Falls Hospital and Public Health on a needs assessment in an effort to develop a comprehensive plan to address the Herkimer County’s Prevention Agenda. Herkimer County HealthNet is a sub-contractor for the Age Friendly Initiative for Herkimer County. HealthNet’s mission is
to improve the health and well-being of individuals who live, work, play, and learn in Herkimer County. HealthNet has experience with enacting Age Friendly initiatives in municipalities throughout the county.

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 e-mail 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 2: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, ENGAGEMENTS and COLLABORATIONS

Briefly describe your existing community policies, programs and services that are targeted toward older people. Please identify how your community plans to become more age-friendly. (250-300 words required)

Herkimer County Office for the Aging (OFA)/NY Connects plans, funds, and delivers services to people 60 years of age and older. The goal is to allow older adults to remain in their homes, independently, while giving priority to those with the greatest economic and social needs. Our partnerships are integral in developing the Age Friendly Initiative. The first step was obtaining county government to support this an make it a priority. The next step is conducting a Needs Assessment to develop an action plan and implement it. Herkimer County plans to build on current programs that promote an Age Friendly Community and will identify priorities to work toward.

Sub-contractor Herkimer County HealthNet (HCHN) continually hosts Living Well Series Programs virtually through virtual workshops and tele-conference support. Classes include Fresh Start Smoking Cessation, Chronic Disease Self-Management, Diabetes Self-Management, Chronic Pain Self-Management, and the National Diabetes Prevention programs. HCHN is instrumental in working with communities on better health and mobility for all ages and abilities in Herkimer County communities. Complete Streets policies were implemented in multiple villages and towns in Herkimer County as well as organized safe walking routes for all ages and abilities as highlighted in Herkimer County’s Mohawk Valley Mile.

Community partner Catholic Charities of Herkimer County has a Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of which affords 55 years and older, the opportunity to share their talents, interests, and compassion through direct service. The RSVP program has over 200 volunteers operating 25 volunteer stations. They include dispatchers, data entry assistants, tutors, program coordinators, Medicare counselors, transporters, food pantry workers, friendly visitors, store clerks, clerical assistants, crafters, council and agency advisors. This program addresses critical community needs and enhancing the quality of life of residents. Its wellness program provides Senior Education classes, wellness activities and promotes the health benefits of volunteering.

How will older adults be involved in the community’s efforts to become more age-friendly? (250-300 words required)

Gathering information from all facets of stakeholders, especially older adults is integral in the age-planning process for Herkimer County. In an effort to involve older adults in our community’s efforts to become more age-friendly, we have and plan to include older adults in multiple facets of the planning, implementation and evaluation stages. We have incorporated older adults in our planning process and
have recruited them to participate in coalition planning meetings. In our assessment process, we are utilizing older adults and are surveying them to identify community needs as well as seeking their assistance during the post-assessment stages. Surveys have been conducted in multiple senior housing facilities located in multiple communities in Herkimer County, where we also distributed farmers’ market coupons. Senior volunteers are also assisting us with distributing the surveys in their communities.

Focus groups and brainstorming sessions will be formed and will have older adult member representation to review results of the survey. They will be encouraged to offer feedback; ask questions, provide concerns, support and challenge results as necessary. Their input is necessary to help support the written/online survey assessment. Older adults will continue to serve on our coalition team, guide us through the post assessment process, developing an action plan, and throughout the implementation and evaluation of programs.

Herkimer County Office for the Aging’s Advisory Board which is comprised of older adults, will assist us throughout the Network of Age-Friendly Communities Program Cycle. Herkimer County HealthNet will continue to recruit older adults from its wellness classes and participation other activities and coalitions to assist in this process. Assistance from other partner organizations will also be recruited.

How will the efforts to become more age-friendly increase collaboration and coordination among relevant community agencies and departments? (250-300 words required)

Herkimer County Office for the Aging is collaborating with numerous partners in Herkimer County to improve the health and well-being of its residents. We sub-contracted with Herkimer County HealthNet in the New York State Age-Friendly Grant Program who will help us in carrying out collaborative planning. So far, we have a broad range of support from community partners who have committed to support this initiative. They include Arc Herkimer, Catholic Charities of Herkimer County, Herkimer County Government, Herkimer County Chamber of Commerce, Herkimer College, Herkimer County IDA, Herkimer County Department of Social Services, Herkimer County Public Health & Mental Health, Herkimer County Youth Bureau, Resource Center for Independent Living, and Working Solutions of Herkimer County.

The Age Friendly Initiative will also bring together the many coalitions that have already been established in the county, many of which supports portions of the 8 Domains of Livability and Smart Growth Principles. This Initiative will assist us with communicating needs in Herkimer County as well as assess what resources are available to implement our Age Friendly action plan.

As we move forward with the survey assessment and post assessment stages, we will seek the talents and expertise of our partners with assistance with the Age-Friendly Initiative process. For instance, Herkimer College provided the coalition a senior intern, who was also able to receive college credit, to design the Herkimer County Age-Friendly Logo. As we move forward through the Age-Friendly Communities Age-Friendly Program Cycle, we will continue to look further and utilize these strengths of other organizations.
Section 3: NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

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

1-a What motivated your community to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities? (100 words minimum)

Our community understands the importance of older adults living in their homes as they age. In order for them to successfully do so, it is important that we continue to enhance our community to ensure that older adults can remain living independently in the community. We are motivated to learn from AARP and other communities to take the necessary steps in moving forward to becoming an age-friendly community. We will build on our current programs and utilize the information from our Community Needs Assessment to determine what are the most pressing changes need to be made. We will also look within our coalition at low and no cost resources and solutions to needs that exist.

1-b If you have consulted with an AARP State office or the national AARP Livable Communities team to discuss enrollment, please provide that person’s name, title and e-mail address or phone number.

Diane Kolack from the New York Academy of Medicine is assisting us with finding the new AARP representative for our area.

What aspect of your community’s current or intended age-friendly work could be useful to other communities in the network? (100 words minimum)

Herkimer County is a small rural county in Upstate NY that has strong community partnerships. Our county has a county planning process that involves representatives from each county Department to ensure that we are collaborating on programing for all county residents of all ages. Herkimer County also supports and collaborates with many community organizations in order to meet the needs of the individuals that reside in our county. These collaborations will be a pivotal part of enacting change in our community. Herkimer County was chosen by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to participate Rural Impact County Challenge. Our county worked with a Mentor and other rural counties across the country to find strategies to improve population health. During this year we developed valuable skills that can be used to make progress on our age-friendly work.

Section 4: REQUIRED MATERIALS

1-a Letter of Commitment

Attachment provided in the same PDF with Herkimer County Resolution

1-b Resolution or Proclamation (Optional)

If your community issued either document in addition to the commitment letter, provide a digital file (PDF preferred) here.

Attachment provided in the same PDF with Letter of Commitment
2. Logo or Image
Provide a digital file (JPG preferred) and/or a link to a downloadable logo or other image that represents your community and for which you have reprint rights and permission to provide for use by AARP and the World Health Organization.

Age Friendly Herkimer County
A Community For All Ages

Website URL

Section 5: SOCIAL MEDIA
Provide the most applicable Twitter handle(s) and Facebook account(s) for your community (i.e. an age-friendly coalition, the local government, key elected officials and/or local partners).

https://www.facebook.com/Age-Friendly-Herkimer-County-A-Community-for-All-Ages-110135754658818 - Facebook

Section 6: AGREEMENT
I have read and understand the requirements for my community to become a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, including the need to conduct a community assessment; development and acquire approval of an action plan; implement the plan; submit an annual best practice and provide periodic updates, including a five-year progress report.

Kathy Fox, Director
Herkimer County Office for the Aging