State: California
Community Name: County of Placer
Population Size: 416326
Percentage of Residents Above Age 60: 25
Community Structure: County
Other:
Community Type: Suburban (mostly residential)
Elected Official Signing the Letter of Commitment
Name: Cindy Gustafson
Title: Chair, Placer County Board of Supervisors
Office Mailing Address: 175 Fulweiler Ave., Auburn, CA 95603
Community Contact Name: Colby Hytoff
Email: [omitted]
Position: Health & Human Services Program Manager
Telephone: [omitted]
Role: Colby Hytoff is the program manager for the Placer County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), Adult System of Care, Older Adult Services programs. Colby is also an executive member of the Placer County Older Adult Advisory Commission (OAAC), which acts as the voice of older adults in Placer County and informs the Placer County Board of Supervisors. In collaboration with the OAAC, Placer County HHS developed a Five-Year Plan to Meet the Needs of a Growing Senior Population to make the community more livable for older adults. In his dual role with HHS and the OAAC, Colby championed the implementation of the Plan. Colby capitalized on his numerous relationships with local government programs, advocacy groups, and non-profit community-based organizations to support the work of making Placer County an age-friendly community.

Older Adult Involvement: Older adults were involved in every facet of Placer County’s Five-Year Plan. HHS held focus group conversations with community groups including Placer Consortium on Housing and Homelessness, Placer County Substance Use Services Provider Meeting, Placer County Visually Impaired Group, Community Agency Multi-Disciplinary Elder Team (CAMET) and the Foresthill, Weimar-Applegate-Colfax, North Auburn, Newcastle-Ophir, and Meadow Vista Municipal Advisory Committees, to gather input from the communities. Over 200 people participated in these discussions.
from all areas of the county. While all age groups were represented, most of the responses were from older adults aged 60 years and over. The older adults from these community groups shared their understanding of the needs and existing resources for older adults and made suggestions for improvements.

Conversations with older adults in the community continued throughout the duration of the Five-Year Plan. Placer County HHS took an active role in the Agency on Aging/Area 4 Community Centered planning approach. HHS gathered information regarding community needs and existing resources and services by participating in town hall meetings with three of the largest cities in the county: Auburn, Truckee, and Roseville. The town hall meetings attracted many older adults who shared their thoughts about needed resources and gaps in services. The Agency on Aging also conducted a county-wide online and paper survey-based needs assessment for older adults, caregivers, family members and service providers. Over 400 surveys were completed. The data from these surveys was compiled, reviewed, and incorporated into the Five-Year Plan.

Increasing Collaboration and Coordination:

The Five-Year Plan significantly increased collaboration and coordination among the County’s community agencies and local government. As an Executive Committee member, HHS collaborated extensively with the Placer County OAAC to develop and implement the Five-Year Plan. The OAAC is comprised of 23 members, primarily older adults aged 60 years and over. The membership’s involvement with other organizations and services impacting the life of older adults in Placer County is diverse and abundant. Members bring expertise from legal services, housing and homeless services, caregiving resource services, independent living services, mental health services, Alzheimer’s dementia services, the local caregiver union, senior services, and more. To inform the Plan, OAAC membership were each assigned to one of the World Health Organization’s eight domains of livability that influence the quality of life for older adults. On a continual basis, the members focused their efforts on needs assessment looking for gaps in services and resources, while advocating for innovative solutions. This required their attendance and participation at Municipal Advisory Committee meetings, town halls, the Placer County Housing and Homeless Continuum of Care, the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency, the Agency on Aging/Area 4 Board meetings, Aging and Disability Resource Connections meetings, Placer County Public Health meetings, and many more.

The Five-Year Plan not only increased collaboration and coordination between community agencies and government departments, but it also increased between Placer County HHS’s internal divisions and programs. Placer County HHS employs a system of care model, which coordinates services between programs thereby providing a continuum of care for its clients. As a champion of the Five-Year Plan and manager of the Older Adult Services programs within the HHS Adult System of Care, Colby Hytoff collaborated with several other Adult System of Care programs to improve services for older adults. He worked with the
Mental Health program and advocated for a dedicated Client Services Practitioner to provide mental health services specifically to older adults. He worked with the Housing and Homeless Services program to support a Senior Home Share program that was established in collaboration with the local Agency on Aging. He also participated in the Public Health program’s Placer County Healthy Brain Initiative Advisory Committee to conduct a Community Needs Assessment and Community Action Plan addressing the needs of those living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. The work of this committee led to improvements with Alzheimer’s early detection and referral, community education and engagement, public safety and emergency preparedness, and public transportation.

AARP Team Member Contact Info: Rafi Nazarians, AARP Interim Advocacy Director

Most Instructive Area of Work: There is much that Placer County can share to the benefit of other communities in the network, based on its extensive work on the Five-Year Plan. In fact, Placer County was recently asked to join a recurring regional meeting of neighboring AARP Age-Friendly Network communities. The meeting was led by the Age Friendly Sacramento County core team and included Network member City of Roseville. These meetings allow the age-friendly communities to get acquainted with each other and share information, expertise, and technical assistance. This regional collaboration furthers Placer County’s commitment to maintaining a livable, age-friendly community for older adults. Some of the recent age-friendly work in Placer County would fall into the WHO Communication & Information, Housing, and Community & Health Services domains. Placer County implemented a 211 information and referral system that provides a free, confidential, multilingual information line and website that connects older adults to services and resources. Placer also has an emerging Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) that brings together county and community partners to streamline access to services for people with disabilities, older adults, family members and caregivers. In the Housing domain, Placer County recently established an innovative senior shared-housing program designed to alleviate the affordability housing problem by capitalizing on the numerous unoccupied bedrooms in homes throughout the county. In the Community & Health Services domain, Placer County recently contracted with a local mental health nonprofit organization to operate its Senior Peer Counseling program. Senior Peer Counseling provides confidential, short-term, in-home, or virtual peer counseling free to county residents aged 55 years and older. This program has proven to be invaluable considering how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the social isolation and loneliness older adults commonly face, which can negatively affect their mental and physical health. These are just some of Placer County’s recent accomplishments that could be useful to other communities in the AARP Age-Friendly Network.