October 12, 2015

Jeff Johnson
State Director
AARP Florida
jpjohnson@aarp.org

Dear Mr. Johnson:

On behalf of the City of Winter Haven, we are excited to join the AARP/WHO Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Winter Haven is committed to making connections, initiating changes, and promoting policies that will help us better serve our local aging population and be more accommodating to the needs of the elderly. As a community, we are honored to have the opportunity to join other cities across the nation in this endeavor.

Winter Haven is located along the I-4 corridor, which holds the highest concentration of retired veterans in the country. Our community has a large influx of retirees in the winter months, coming into our community to enjoy the mild winter weather. Many of those “snow birds” permanently move to our community, eliminating the migration every year.

Because of our demographics, we recognize the importance of creating an age-friendly community that fosters healthy aging and supports the needs of our elderly. To address these issues, our community recently created the Winter Haven Council on Quality Aging. It is a collaboration of city and county employees, private businesses, and not-for-profit organizations working to identify areas of need for our local seniors and partnering to create solutions that help Winter Haven better serve the needs of our aging population become a more intergenerational community.

As a member of the Network of Age-Friendly Communities, Winter Haven will:

- Engage our older population in the Council on Quality Aging to give direction and feedback on our initiative.
- Secure a resolution from the City Commissioners to support age-friendly policies and funding
- Create an Action Plan with solutions to areas of need identified by our local seniors.
- Implement this plan, measure and review outcomes, and adjust the Action Plan as needed to continually improve and be ever more age-friendly.

We thank you for this opportunity to join the Network of Age-Friendly Communities and look forward to working with the AARP Florida staff to ensure we are doing our best to achieve a community of that fosters aging with dignity.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel J. Birdsong, Jr
Mayor of the City of Winter Haven