

Introduction

The Civic Enterprise: Advancing Civic Engagement Opportunities in Later Life

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Gerontologists long have extolled the advantages of staying active in old age (Taylor & Bengtson, 2001). From disengagement theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961) and activity theory (Havighurst, 1963), to paradigms of successful aging and productive aging (Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Butler & Gleason, 1985), to continuity and socioemotional selectivity theories (Atchley, 1971; Carstensen, 1992), gerontologists have argued that active engagement in society is related to well-being in later life. They have promoted various forms of activity and engagement—social, productive, religious, educational, and intergenerational. Today, as the demographic, economic, and social realities of our world shift, another type of active engagement is gaining attention: civic engagement. The confluence of increasingly complex social problems and the burgeoning numbers of people who can expect to live 20 or 30 years past retirement calls us to consider the possibilities of a civically engaged older population. Engaging older adults in activities aimed at the social good is a win-win scenario that has captured the imagination of government and nonprofit leaders, policymakers, and gerontologists.

Civic Enterprises

Over the past decade, a network of organizations from across the country has emerged with a common vision of aging that focuses on the older adult population as an untapped national asset. This network of private, public, and nonprofit organizations (see Figure) advances opportunities for employment, lifelong learning, volunteering, advocacy, and public service in later life.

The federal government currently supports a variety of volunteer programs that target older adults. Most prominent are the three national Senior Corps programs: the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. Together, these programs engage over half a million older Americans in community service each year (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009). Although Senior Corps programs operate

through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)—an independent federal agency established in 1993 to coordinate federal and state volunteer efforts—additional service and volunteer programs for older adults operate through other federal agencies. Among these are the Department of Labor's Senior Community Service Employment Program, the Small Business Administration's SCORE program (formerly known as Service Corps of Retired Executives), the Department of Education and Department of Defense's Troops to Teachers program, and the Environmental Protection Agency's Senior Environmental Employment Program.

Recent years also have seen the rise of a new generation of nonprofit organizations and social entrepreneurs committed to creating meaningful work and volunteer opportunities for older Americans. Across the country, innovative programs have developed to serve community needs (e.g., Experience Corps); new businesses have launched, such as staffing firms that specialize in supplying older workers and online volunteer match sites (e.g., VolunteerMatch.org); and organizations have been founded that specifically focus on recruiting "high-skills" volunteers to work in the nonprofit sector (e.g., Taproot Foundation, ReServe). With the support of charitable foundations, especially The Atlantic Philanthropies, new media (e.g., NextAvenue.org) and public policy (e.g., Age4Action.org) initiatives have begun. In addition, all three of the major nonprofit national professional associations in aging—the American Society on Aging, The Gerontological Society of America, and the National Council on Aging—have made civic engagement a focus of their programmatic, research, and policy efforts.

Political Momentum

Political interest in the civic engagement of older Americans has increased considerably within the last five years. Prompted by evidence that volunteering produces advantages for older adults and that the country can benefit from tapping this pool of human capital, policymakers have stepped up their efforts to mobilize older adults for volunteer work.

In 2005, the fifth White House Conference on Aging included civic engagement as a focus area. Among the

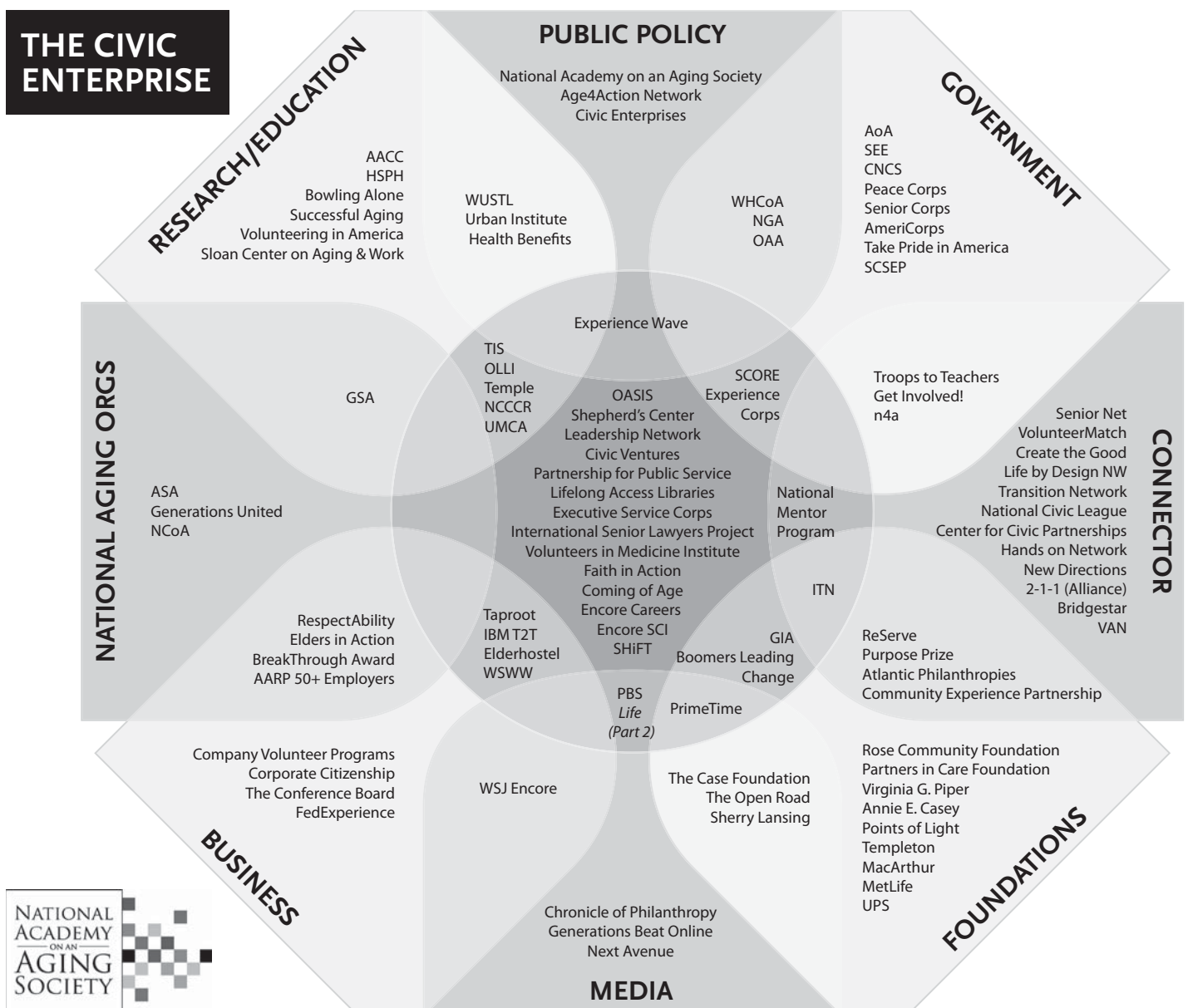
50 policy recommendations that the delegates presented to the President and Congress, two related to civic engagement: the first called for a national strategy to promote meaningful volunteer activities for older Americans; the second called for renewal of the laws that authorize national service programs (O'Neill, 2007). One of these major policy goals was achieved in late 2006 when President George W. Bush signed into law the five-year reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (H. R. 6197). The law included a definition of civic engagement, required the

Assistant Secretary for Aging to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for engaging older adults in meeting critical community needs, and authorized a new program of demonstration, support, and research grants for projects that engage older adults in multigenerational and civic engagement activities.

In his first 100 days in the White House, President Barack Obama signed into law the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009—the largest expansion of national

Figure. The Civic Enterprise: A New Network for Civic Engagement in Later Life

A growing network of organizations—in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors—are working with the business, media, and philanthropic communities to define a new vision of aging that focuses on the older adult population as an untapped asset.



Source. Greg O'Neill. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.civicengagement.org>

Figure. The Civic Enterprise (continued): Index and Websites

- 2-1-1 (Alliance)** • www.211.us.org
AACC: American Association of Community Colleges • www.aacc.nche.edu
AARP 50+ Employers • www.aarp.org/money/work/best_employers/
Age4Action Network • www.age4action.org
AmeriCorps • www.americorps.gov
Annie E. Casey Foundation • www.aecf.org
AoA: Administration on Aging • www.aoa.gov
ASA: American Society on Aging • www.asaging.org
The Atlantic Philanthropies • www.atlanticphilanthropies.org
Boomers Leading Change • www.rcfdenver.org/initiatives_blc.htm
Bowling Alone • www.bowlingalone.com
BreakThrough Award • www.civicventures.org/breakthrough
Bridgestar • www.bridgestar.org
The Case Foundation • www.casefoundation.org
Center for Civic Partnerships • www.civicpartnerships.org
Chronicle of Philanthropy • http://philanthropy.com/free/articles/v20/i13/regeneration_resources.htm#guides
Civic Enterprises • www.civicenterprises.net
Civic Ventures • www.civicventures.org
CNSC: Corporation for National and Community Service • www.cns.gov
Coming of Age • <http://comingofage.org>
Community Experience Partnership • www.ceplearning.org
Company Volunteer Programs • www.bccccc.net/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.showFeature&FeatureID=197
The Conference Board • www.conference-board.org/utilities/pressDetail.cfm?press_ID=2894
Corporate Citizenship: Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship • www.bccccc.net
Create the Good • www.createthegood.org
Elderhostel • www.elderhostel.org
Elders in Action • www.eldersinaction.org
Encore Careers • www.encore.org
Encore SCI: Encore Service Corps International • www.encoreservicecorps.org
Executive Service Corps Affiliate Network • www.escus.org
Experience Corps • www.experiencecorps.org
Experience Wave • www.experiencewave.org
Faith in Action • www.fianationalnetwork.org
FedExperience • www.ibm.com/ibm/greateribm/connections/connections_article20.shtml
Generations Beat Online • <http://network.newamericamedia.org/gbo>
Generations United • www.gu.org
Get Involved! • www.getinvolved.gov
GIA: Grantmakers In Aging EngAGement • www.giaging.org/programs/index.asp?id=166
GSA: The Gerontological Society of America • www.geron.org
Hands on Network • www.handsonnetwork.org
Health Benefits • www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=687
HSPH: Harvard School of Public Health—MetLife Foundation Initiative on Retirement & Civic Engagement • www.hsph.harvard.edu/chc/reinventingaging
IBM T2T: IBM Transition to Teaching • www-01.ibm.com/ibm/transitiontoteaching
International Senior Lawyers Project • www.islp.org
ITN: ITNAmerica • www.itnamerica.org
Leadership Network • www.leadnet.org/LC_EncoGeneration.asp
Life by Design Northwest • www.lifebydesignnw.org
Lifelong Access Libraries • www.lifelonglibraries.org
MacArthur Foundation • www.macfound.org/site/c.lkLXJ8MQkRH/b.3599935/
MetLife Foundation • www.metlife.com/about/
n4a: National Association of Area Agencies on Aging • www.n4a.org
National Academy on an Aging Society • www.agingsociety.org
National Civic League • www.ncl.org
National Mentor Program • www.mentoring.org
NCCCR: North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement • www.unca.edu/ncccr
NCoA: National Council on Aging • www.ncoa.org
New Directions • www.newdirections.com
Next Avenue • <http://nextavenue.org>
NGA: National Governors Association • www.nga.org
OAA: Older Americans Act • www.agingsociety.org/agingsociety/Civic%20Engagement/OAA_2006_CE_provisions.pdf
OASIS • www.oasisnet.org
OLLI: Osher Lifelong Learning Institute • <http://usm.maine.edu/olli/national>
The Open Road • www.shoppbs.org/product/index.jsp?productId=2090333
Partners in Care Foundation • www.picf.org
Partnership for Public Service • www.ourpublicservice.org/OPS
PBS Life (Part 2) • www.pbs.org/lifepart2
Peace Corps • www.peacecorps.gov
Points of Light Institute • www.pointsoflight.org
Prime Time • www.civicventures.org/publications/books/primetime.cfm
Purpose Prize • www.purposeprize.org/prize
ReServe • www.reserveinc.org
RespectAbility • www.respectability.org
Rose Community Foundation • www.rcfdenver.org
SCORE: Service Corps of Retired Executives • www.score.org
SCSEP: Senior Community Service Employment Program • www.doleta.gov/SENIORS
SEE: Senior Environmental Employment Program • www.epa.gov/epahrist/see/brochure
Senior Corps • www.seniorcorps.org
Senior Net • www.seniornet.org/jsnet/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1
Shepherd's Center • www.shepherdcenters.org
Sherry Lansing Foundation • www.sherrylansingfoundation.org
SHIFT • www.shiftonline.org
Sloan Center on Aging & Work • www.bc.edu/research/agingandwork/
Successful Aging • www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780440508632
Take Pride in America • www.takepride.gov
Taproot Foundation • www.taprootfoundation.org
Temple: Temple University Center for Intergenerational Learning • www.templecil.org
Templeton: The John Templeton Foundation • www.templeton.org
TIS: The Intergenerational School • www.tisonline.org
Transition Network • www.thetransitionnetwork.org
Troops to Teachers • www.proudtoserveagain.com
UMCA: University of Maryland Center on Aging (www.sph.umd.edu/hlsa/AGING/index.cfm)
UPS Foundation • www.sustainability.ups.com
Urban Institute • www.urban.org/toolkit/issues/retirementproject/civic-engagement.cfm
VAN: Vital Aging Network • www.vital-aging-network.org
Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust • www.pipertrust.org
Volunteering in America • www.volunteeringinamerica.gov
VolunteerMatch • www.volunteermatch.org
Volunteers in Medicine Institute • www.volunteersinmedicine.org
WHCoA: White House Conference on Aging • www.whcoa.gov
WSJ Encore: Wall Street Journal Encore Section • <http://online.wsj.com>
WSWW: Wall Street Without Walls • www.wallstreetwithoutwalls.com
WUSSL: Washington University in St. Louis Center for Social Development • <http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/csd/service>

service programs since the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps (Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act [Pub. L. No. 111-13], 2009). The Act included several provisions that specifically benefit midlife and older adults: it established an Encore Fellowship program for individuals aged 55 years or older to serve in leadership or management positions in public and private nonprofit organizations for one year; it required 10 percent of AmeriCorps funding to be targeted toward organizations that enroll adults aged 55 years and older; and it created Silver Scholarships that provide a \$1,000 higher education award—transferable to children, foster children, and grandchildren—to older volunteers who contribute at least 350 hours of service per year. The law also expanded service options for older Americans by lowering the age requirement for the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs from 60 years of age to 55 years and increasing hourly stipend eligibility for the programs from 125 percent of the federal poverty level to 200 percent.

In addition to the ongoing reporting required by Congress, the Serve America Act requires regular program evaluations of all national service programs under the umbrella of the CNCS and it increases competition in the funding of the Senior Corps programs. Consistent performance measures for the Senior Corps programs will help facilitate comparative analyses of program implementation strategies and may provide opportunities to compare different forms of volunteer engagement. Additionally, the emergence of a more evidence-based implementation style will enhance the availability and consistency of data related to the impacts of volunteer engagement on volunteers, service recipients, and communities. Lastly, the shift to competitive funding, supported by uniform performance measures, will enhance the quality and consistency of these national programs that engage older adults in service. These new evaluation standards—if transferred to and adopted by volunteer programs outside those administered by the CNCS—would advance significantly efforts to improve program effectiveness while enhancing research on how volunteering supports the well-being of individuals and communities.

Research

Decades of gerontological research focused on the civic engagement of older adults has influenced and will continue to influence policy and practice. This publication compiles key research on older adult civic engagement that has been published in the peer-reviewed journals of The Gerontological Society of America: *The Gerontologist*,

The Journals of Gerontology Series A: Biological and Medical Sciences, and *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological and Social Sciences*. These chapters present original essays authored by leading gerontologists that address issues of concern and outline future research directions; foundational articles selected by the authors and discussion questions complement the essays to promote a deeper understanding of the issues.

In Chapter 1, Emily A. Greenfield, PhD, examines similarities and differences in ways researchers have defined civic engagement, and she describes how these definitions affect research, practice, and policy. In Chapter 2, James E. Hinterlong, PhD, traces the conceptual developments of civic engagement in later life as driven by three main forces: theory creation in social gerontology, collection and public availability of data to test ideas about engagement, and evidence gathered from program innovations and required by policymakers. In Chapter 3, Jeffrey A. Burr, PhD, profiles the current state of older adult civic engagement; he identifies how older adults are involved and estimates the direct and indirect value of their societal contributions. In Chapter 4, Nancy Morrow-Howell, PhD, summarizes the effects of civic engagement on older adults, and points to future research directions. Finally, in Chapter 5, Robert B. Hudson, PhD, presents a critical perspective of later life civic engagement, citing questions about the role, purpose, and inclusiveness of the elder civic engagement movement.

We hope this collection of articles provides a solid knowledge base for current and future scholars of older adult civic engagement. Additionally, we hope this publication guides researchers in selecting future study topics that will advance the science on later life civic engagement as well as strengthen policies and programs that encourage and support older adults' civic engagement.

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