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Broome County Senior Centers: Addressing Issues of Utilization

Lucia Esposito

University of Economics in Bratislava

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BROOME COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UTILIZATION

BY

LUCIA ESPOSITO

MA, University of Economics, Bratislava, Slovakia
International Relations, 2004

CAPSTONE PROJECT

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for the degree of Masters in Public Administration
in the Graduate School of Binghamton University
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2012

BROOME COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UTILIZATION

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BROOME COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UTILIZATION

Accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters in Public Administration
in the Graduate School of
Binghamton University
State University of New York
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Kristina Lambright
Assistant Professor; Director of Graduate Studies
May 19, 2012

Pamela Mischen
Associate Professor
Department of Public Administration
May 19, 2012

Margaret-Mae Bouren Squire, MSW
Aging Services Program Coordinator
Broome County Office for Aging
Binghamton, NY
May 19, 2012

Executive Summary

Broome County senior centers serve as an access point for information and assistance, provide opportunities for socialization, offer a variety of activities as well as nutritious meals. They also help seniors to maintain their independence and enable them to stay in the community longer. While the 2010 Census data shows an increase in the aging population in Broome County, there has been a decrease in overall attendance and the number of meals served at the local senior centers. Some older adults are frequently utilizing senior centers for their various activities but are not using them to obtain a meal. As part of the funding used to run senior centers is tied to the number of meals served, a decrease in the utilization of the meal program as well as an overall decrease in senior centers' attendance challenges their future operation.

This study analyzes qualitative data collected from 55 older adults and nine senior centers' supervisors. It specifically focuses on examining some of the reasons why older adults do not utilize or under-utilize senior centers, learning about how they perceive senior centers and what programs and services would attract them to utilize their local senior centers. Additionally, it explores how older adults prefer to find out about activities of interest offered at the local senior centers.

Findings of this study highlight the need to offer quality activities of interest to both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers. Additionally, OFA should focus on improving the quality of food offered at the senior centers, as well as expanding the "no reservation" meal program. Lastly, both current and new advertising methods, as well as creative marketing strategies need to be utilized to increase the awareness about senior centers' programs and services, address negative perceptions and improve the overall image of senior centers.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my wonderful husband Michael and my equally wonderful son Dominic. I could not have gotten through the last three years without your love, support, patience and never-ending encouragement. Thank you for putting up with me. Michael, you inspire me every day to be a better person and to never give up. I love you and hope that you are as proud of me as I am proud of your accomplishments. Dominic, the first time I felt you move was in my Policy Process class. I will always remember that moment. Leaving you at home to go to class was the hardest thing I had to do. I knew you would understand that mama is doing this for you and our family. I love you so much.

I would also like to thank my parents for inspiring me to strive to be the best I can be. You taught me to work hard, never give up and keep on learning. I love you both.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mike's family for always being there for us when we needed you. You made me feel so welcomed! Big thanks to my wonderful mother-in-law for watching Dominic for us when we both had classes.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Kristina Lambright for all the time you devoted to addressing my questions and concerns throughout the Capstone seminar. You helped me to think outside of the box and push myself to limits I never thought I would reach. Because of all your help, I feel proud of what I have accomplished and confident that this study will have a real value to the Broome County Office for Aging.

Thank you to Kathy Bunnell, Lucy Dirlam, Donna Bates and Peg Squire at the Broome County Office for Aging for all the time you spent answering my questions and supporting me through this process. I feel very lucky to have such wonderful mentors in my life and to work at a place that encourages its staff to grow. Thank you to Janet McCarthy for always being there for me.

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Problem Statement

One of the essential public purposes of governments is to support people who are unable to care for themselves, such as the elderly and other vulnerable populations (Johnson, 2009). The goal of supporting the elderly encompasses such tasks as promoting their dignity and independence, providing comprehensive and coordinated services, and increasing public awareness of the value and contribution of older persons to their communities (Annual Report, 2010). The Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965, amended in 2000, was the first federal initiative aimed at improving the lives of older adults. To achieve this goal, OAA created the Administration on Aging at the federal level, as well as State Units on Aging at the state level and Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) at the local level.

The Broome County Office for Aging (OFA), a local government agency and one of 56 New York State AAAs, provides various programs and services with the ultimate goal to improve and enrich the quality of life for all older persons in Broome County. OFA not only serves the elderly directly, but also has contractual agreements with 23 community agencies and coordinates with other service providers (Annual Report, 2010). The majority of OFA programs serve clients 60 and older.

According to the 2010 Census, Broome County is aging faster than the nation or New York State (NYS). In 2010, 22% of Broome County residents were age 60 or older compared to 18% of the nation's population and 19 % of NYS population (Annual Report, 2010). The total number of Broome County residents 60 and older rose from 41,542 in 2000 to 44,485 in 2010 (Annual Report, 2010). This represents an increase of 7.1%.

While the 2010 Census data shows an increase in the aging population in Broome County, there has been a decrease in overall attendance and the number of meals served at the

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local senior centers. OFA currently supports eleven senior centers throughout the county and directly operates seven out of the eleven senior centers (Draft Plan for Services, 2012). Senior centers serve as an access point for information and assistance and provide opportunities for socialization, wellness activities as well as nutritious meals. They also help seniors to maintain their independence and enable them to stay in the community longer. Senior centers are therefore an essential component in the process of OFA meeting its goal to enrich and improve the lives of all older adults in Broome County.

As the table below details, the number of unduplicated participants gradually decreased by 4.6% between 2008 and 2010. A larger change can be seen in the number of meals served at the local senior centers between 2008 and 2010, which constitutes a 10.9% decrease over the period of three years.

Table 1: Attendance at Broome County Senior Centers 2008 - 2010

	Unduplicated Participants	Number of Meals Served
2008	3,655	117,746
2009	3,678	115,530
2010	3,488	104,905

Source: OFA Annual Reports 2008, 2009 & 2010

Additionally, the way senior centers are being used has changed as some older adults utilize senior centers' for their activities only and do not come for the meal program. In 2011, OFA conducted a senior utilization study over a period of two months and learned that 31% of attendees came for activities only (Advisory Council Meeting Minutes, 2011).

A decrease in senior centers attendance jeopardizes their future operation. This is mainly because some of funding (specifically funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture) is

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directly connected to the number of meals served. An overall decrease in senior center attendance and therefore a decrease in meals could also potentially impact other funding streams received from federal, state and local sources. The nutrition services funding represents 40.71% of the total OFA budget (Draft Plan for Services, 2012 - 2016).

A decrease in senior centers attendance and number of meals served also affects total private contributions collected from participants, which constitute another funding source used to operate the nutrition programs at OFA. As OFA directly purchases its meals from Broome County Central Foods (BCCF), a decrease in participation and in number of meals served increases total meal costs as these are spread over a smaller group of senior center participants. Senior center participants who order a meal are asked for a suggested contribution of \$3/meal, which offsets some of the costs associated with the purchase of meals from BCCF.

Finding ways to increase attendance at the local senior centers and improve the utilization of their services is important for the sustainability of their operation in the future. Further, exploration of this problem is important to the field of public administration because it focuses on such core values as efficiency and effectiveness of publicly funded programs and services. Public administrators need to analyze any existing deficiencies of public programs and find ways to improve them and to meet the needs of the target population. Recommendations defined in this Capstone will not only be helpful to OFA in addressing the problem defined above, but might also assist other AAAs dealing with decreasing senior center participation. This Capstone will therefore focus on answering the following questions:

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- What can OFA do to attract individuals who currently do not utilize local senior centers to participate in their programs and services?
- What can OFA do to attract individuals who currently under-utilize senior centers to participate in more programs and services?

Literature Review

The growing aging U.S. population poses a challenge to the existing network of programs and services offered to the elderly. Anticipated demographic changes and increased ethnic, economic and social diversity among the elderly will affect senior centers' ability to attract and retain new participants and therefore accomplish their mission of providing comprehensive services to older adults (Jellinek, Pardasani & Sackman, 2010). Using scholarly and professional literature, this review details senior centers' characteristics, senior centers' services and their benefits, variables affecting senior centers' utilization and future challenges.

Senior Centers Characteristics, Services and Their Value

Today's senior centers are one of the most widely used services by older Americans. According to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), there are nearly 11,000 senior centers serving 1 million older adults every day (NCOA, 2012). The enactment of the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1965 provided federal funding to existing senior centers and therefore accelerated their growth nationwide (Krout, 1984). The OAA amendment in 1978 designated senior centers as "focal points" for delivery of centralized programs and services (Miltiades & Grove, 2003; Dal Santo, 2009).

The growth in the number of senior centers also resulted in broader programming for the elderly. While some of the existing senior centers offer limited services such as meals, the majority delivers a broad spectrum of nutritional, social, educational, recreational programs and

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services and are therefore designated to be “multipurpose” (Krout, 1989; Pardasani, 2004). In Taietz’s two basic models of senior centers, financial assistance, case management and nutrition are provided in the *social service agency model*, while access to social and recreational opportunities are provided in the *voluntary agency model* (Taietz, 1976). A survey of 219 New York State (NYS) senior centers found that 36.5% of the sample used the social agency model, 37.4% used the voluntary agency model and the remaining centers used a mix of the two models (Pardasani, 2004).

Key components of successful aging include good health, engagement in mental and physical activities, quality social connections, emotional support, and overall positive mental attitude (Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Beisgen & Kraitchman, 2003). The multipurpose character of senior centers and the wide variety of programs and services provide participants with numerous benefits all of which promote successful aging. These benefits include access to nutritious meals, vital information, improved physical and mental health, as well as social, emotional and economic well-being (NCOAA, 2010, Turner, 2004).

Variables Affecting Senior Centers’ Utilization

In addition to reviewing literature detailing senior centers’ characteristics, services and their value, exploring the variables affecting senior centers’ utilization provides further insight into the problem defined in this Capstone. As the use of senior centers is decreasing nationwide, successful operation and future sustainability of senior centers involve discussions about what variables affect senior center utilization (MaloneBeach & Langeland, 2011). In the 1970s, most of the early research on senior centers focused on the actual benefits of senior center participation, while in the 1980s and 1990s researchers attempted to understand the individual characteristics of senior center participants and their impact on senior centers’ utilization

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(Miltiades & Grove, 2003). While the issue of participation and non-participation is the most frequently debated topic in the senior center literature, past research has not produced consistent results (Krout et al., 1990; Calsyn & Winter, 1999). This can largely be attributed to the varying conceptualizations of basic terms such as *participation* and *attendance*, and use of different theoretical frameworks to examine variables affecting utilization of senior centers. Some scholars have focused on simple comparisons of users versus non-users (Daum, 1982; Hansen et al., 1978; Krout, 1983; Taietz, 1976; Trela & Simmons, 1971). Others used a multi-dimensional approach in which they differentiated between *attendance* and *participation*, and further explored the frequency and duration of attendance and the number of different activities involved (Krout, 1991; Ralston, 2001; Ferraro & Cobb, 1987).

Theoretical Frameworks and Concepts

Two key theoretical frameworks have been used to explain senior center utilization: the *behavioral model of service utilization* created by Andersen, Kravitz & Anderson in 1975 and the *social agency* and *voluntary organization* models of senior centers defined by Taietz in 1976. The first theoretical framework model differentiates between three groups of predictor variables related to senior center utilization *predisposing* (demographics, attitudes, beliefs), *enabling* (income, transportation, insurance coverage, social support), and *need* (health, functioning level, morale and unmet service needs) (Andersen, Kravitz & Anderson, 1975). Several scholars have expanded this theoretical model to include an additional predictor variable – *linkage to service system* (Calsyn, Bruger & Roades, 1996; Calsyn & Winter, 1999).

In the second theoretical framework two models are used to predict utilization based on the characteristics of senior center users and the types of service needs these senior centers fulfill. In the *social agency* model, older adults use the senior center as a social agency where

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they can find help with coping with everyday life whereas the *voluntary organization model* provides them with opportunities for self-expression and emphasizes collective action (Taietz, 1976).

Research Findings on Senior Center Utilization

When evaluating its findings, reviewed research can be placed into two categories:

1) research that focuses on exploring how individual characteristics of older people affect the utilization of senior centers and 2) research that questions the impact of individual characteristics on senior center utilization.

According to some scholars, senior center participants are more likely to be white, be single or widowed, be older, be female, be low income, be in better mental health, have less physical needs than non-users, be aware of existing service providers, and live in rural areas (Calsyn et al., 1999; Calsyn & Winter, 1996, Krout et al., 1990; Pardasani, 2004; Turner, 2004).

A decrease in senior center utilization was correlated with health problems and lack of transportation options (Pardasani, 2004; Walker et al., 2004). On the other hand, a greater need for companionship and higher quality of senior center programs were linked to increased utilization (Pardasani, 2004; Turner, 2004; Walker et al., 2004). Additionally, those who live closer, eat there regularly, find the meal important for daily food intake, are in poorer health, and use the senior center as a *social agency*, are likely to attend more frequently (Ralston, 1991; Ferraro & Cobb, 1987). Those who are older, have higher levels of life satisfaction, have higher educational levels, and use the senior center primarily as a *voluntary organization* are likely to attend longer and participate in more activities (Ralston, 1991; Ferraro & Cobb, 1987).

Other scholars questioned the role of socio-demographic, access, health, and social contact variables (Krout, 1991) and found that senior centers' characteristics (hours and days

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opened, type of facility, available resources for activities etc.) had the largest influence on frequency and duration of attendance and the use of activities and services (Ralston, 2001).

Future Challenges

In addition to exploring some of the variables that affect senior center utilization, some of the future challenges associated with the operation of senior centers should be considered. Some of these challenges include changes associated with the increase of average age of senior centers' participants, their increasingly diverse backgrounds as well as a growing diversity of their needs.

The current average age of senior center participants is 75 years old (NCOA, 2012). Several scholars describe the "age creep" phenomenon, in which older senior centers' participants are not being replaced by new younger members (Turner, 2004; Calsyn et al., 1996). Younger cohorts bring about new challenges for senior centers' administrators. Different social, economic, and educational backgrounds, work histories, caregiving needs, civic engagement preferences are just few of the traits that separate younger cohorts such as "baby boomers" from their older counterparts (Pardasani & Thompson, 2010; Wagner, 1995; Alt, 1998; Pardasani, 2004; MaloneBeach & Langeland, 2011).

As the ethnic, social and economic diversity of the older population increases, it will become more challenging for aging services administrators to address these needs in their respective communities. Not only will senior centers continue to serve their "traditional" cohorts of older people, they will also need to find ways to attract the younger cohorts to increase the overall utilization and therefore improve their financial sustainability (Calsyn & Winter, 1999; Turner, 2004; Pardasani, 2004). Senior centers' programming and services need to reflect the changing needs of older adults. Administrators of aging services should therefore consider

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engaging in a needs assessment process to learn more about their respective communities and older adults (Pardasani, 2004; Alt, 1998).

This literature review offers a comprehensive summary of relevant research and details senior centers' characteristics, senior centers' services and their benefits, variables affecting senior centers' utilization and future challenges. In order to answer the research questions of this Capstone, I focused on examining some of the reasons why older adults do not utilize or under-utilize senior centers, learning about how they perceive senior centers, and what programs and services would attract them to utilize their local senior centers. Additionally I explored how older adults prefer to find out about activities of interest offered at the local senior centers.

Methodology

In order to address the problems defined in this Capstone, I conducted a needs assessment to assess the service and programming needs of those older adults who currently do not utilize or under-utilize Broome County senior centers. In addition, I explored how senior centers' non-users and those who under-utilize their programs and services perceive the senior centers. Under-utilizing senior centers is defined as only using few of the senior centers' activities such as exercise classes. Both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers are the primary stakeholders in the needs assessment process. To explore and assess the range of opinions I chose focus groups as the most appropriate data collection method for this study. Focus groups are a qualitative research technique, which combines participant observation and interviewing into one (Schutt, 2009). The use of focus groups also allows for participants to interact with each other and therefore lets the researcher utilize group dynamics to gain a deeper understanding of different concepts.

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To further investigate the senior centers' utilization issues, I identified a group of secondary stakeholders in the needs assessment process. This group includes Broome County senior centers' supervisors because of their direct involvement in the operation of senior centers as well as their day-to-day contact with older adults who utilize their programs and services. I personally interviewed supervisors to learn about their perceptions of the various utilization trends, programming and service needs of older adults, advertising strategies and future challenges. As a qualitative research method, personal interviews use semi-structured conversations to explore the world from the subjects' point of view and therefore can improve a researcher's understanding of a problem at hand (Kvale, 2009).

Data Collection

Focus Groups

Eight focus groups were scheduled in March of 2012 (Appendix A), and 55 older adults participated in them. Three of the eight focus groups included older adults who currently under-utilize senior centers' programs and services (a total of 24 participants). One of the focus groups included both older adults who under-utilize senior centers' programs and services as well as those who do not utilize them at all (a total of 7 participants). The other four focus groups included older adults who currently do not utilize senior centers (a total of 24 participants). As an incentive to increase participation, each focus group was concluded with a drawing for a \$20. All participation was voluntary and each focus group lasted about an hour.

I recruited non-users through personal contacts using a snowball sampling technique by asking each participant to bring a friend who met the age and utilization criteria (60+; senior center non-user). In addition, convenience sampling was used to recruit non-users by scheduling one of the focus groups at a senior housing building. I also advertised with other senior housing

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buildings and asked them to post signs informing potential non-users about the upcoming focus groups.

Participants who currently under-utilize senior centers were recruited using convenience sampling. Senior center supervisors were asked to provide input on groups of older adults who engaged in the various senior center activities (exercise, chorus, shuffleboard, etc.), were likely to participate in the focus groups and meet the criteria of under-utilization. I then visited several senior centers' activity groups and promoted the scheduled focus groups by handing out posters and sign-up sheets. Focus groups for those who under-utilize senior centers were scheduled at convenient times and started immediately after the end of the various activities.

All participants were asked to complete a short survey at the beginning of each focus group (Appendix B). The surveys asked for basic demographic information. It also asked questions about focus group participants' current involvement in voluntary organizations as well as their preferences for and level of social interaction. Complete results of the surveys can be found in Appendix L. Key characteristics of the sample included:

- **Gender** – Female (83% non-users; 74% under-utilizers), Male (17% non-users; 26% under-utilizers)

- **Age – Non – users:** 30% were age 60-69, 37% were age 70-79 and 33% were age 80 plus

Under-utilizers: 26% were age 60-69; 56% were age 70-79; 18% were age 80 plus

- **Race/Ethnicity – Non-users:** 90% White/Caucasian; 7% Native American; 3% Other

Under-utilizers: 96% White/Caucasian; 4% Native American

A semi-structured focus group protocol (Appendix C) containing open-ended questions provided some flexibility in the process of exploring different concepts related to the use of

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senior centers by focus groups participants and allowed for probing. I specifically explored participants' perceptions of senior centers, their reasons why they do not utilize or under-utilize local senior centers, and what programs and services would attract them to attend their local senior centers. In addition, I asked them what advertising strategies should be used to promote senior centers, their programs and services. Both the focus group interview protocol and surveys were based on a focus group protocol and survey used in a study conducted by the Center for the Study of Community and the Economy at Lycoming College (Williamson & Kolb, 2007).

I asked all focus groups' participants for permission to audiotape the sessions and took detailed notes to supplement the audio recordings. The audio-recorder was not used unless all participants in each focus group consented to being audiotaped. Even though confidentiality for focus groups' participants was not guaranteed, no personal identifiers were collected.

Interviews

I conducted in-person or phone interviews with nine supervisors who operate a total of eight senior centers (Appendix D). These senior centers represent the major senior center categories (i.e., stand alone buildings, located in a shared building, rural, urban). One of the interviewed supervisors is currently working at First Ward senior center because of the recent closing of the Greenman senior center. Three of the eight senior centers are in rural areas (Deposit, Whitney Point, Harpursville), while the other five are located in an urban setting (First Ward, Broome West, East Side, Johnson City, Vestal). OFA directly operates six of the eight senior centers (Deposit, Broome West, East Side, Vestal, Harpursville, Whitney Point), Johnson City senior center is a private non-profit and First Ward senior center is operated by the City of Binghamton.

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To interview the supervisors I used an interview protocol, which contained some of the same open-ended questions as the focus group interview protocol as well as some additional questions (Appendix E). Because of the semi-structured character of the interview protocol, I was able to ask probing questions in order to have interviewees clarify and expand on different concepts. I asked all interviewees to describe some of the utilization trends they have observed at their senior centers. Other interview questions focused on exploring why some older adults do not utilize or under-utilize their senior centers, what programs and services would increase utilization, and what challenges senior centers will face in the near future. Interviewees also shared their ideas about what type of activities and food they imagined offering at a new senior center and what type of seniors would use this new facility. In addition, I asked all interviewees to describe the various advertising strategies they currently use and what other strategies should OFA employ to increase the utilization of senior centers.

Each interview lasted about a half an hour. I asked for permission to record all personal and phone interviews. I also took detailed notes to supplement the audio recordings. I assured all interviewees that their confidentiality would be maintained by not using any personal identifiers. All audiotapes were destroyed after the completion of the data analysis process.

Strengths and Limitations

There were several benefits of using focus groups and interviews to collect my data. A benefit of both techniques is that they provided me with the ability to probe and therefore gain a deeper understanding of the various topics of interest. In addition, the ability to engage participants in a group setting enhanced the exploration of a diverse range of ideas, thoughts and beliefs. Personal interviews, on the other hand, allowed for face-to-face interactions and were easier to manage than focus groups. Phone interviews enabled me to hear the thoughts and ideas

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of interviewees who were not able to participate in face-to-face interviews because of geographical distance or busy schedules.

While there are several advantages to the use of both qualitative techniques some limitations exist. The perceptions, ideas and thoughts of the interviewed individuals cannot be generalized to the whole population of older adults in Broome County because of the size of the sample and the use of focus groups. Both sampling methods (snowball and convenience) can lead to bias in how individuals were recruited to participate in the focus groups and personal/phone interviews, specifically due to the possibility of over- or under-representing of particular groups within the population.

Another limitation of this study is the potential bias caused by one or several individuals who can dominate the focus groups' discussions and therefore impact the quality and quantity of input from other participants. While this type of behavior did not occur excessively, some focus group participants dominated the discussions and could have therefore affected other participants' responses. In these cases, I stepped in and directed the conversation to other participants by making direct eye contact with them and encouraging them to share their thoughts and opinions.

In addition, several individuals who participated in the focus groups for under-utilizers did not actually meet the criterion of "under-utilization" as defined in this Capstone. Instead, these individuals were frequent users and therefore did not belong to the targeted population of seniors.

A final limitation of this Capstone is how the data obtained in the focus groups was analyzed. As explained later in the Data Analysis section, I first coded the collected data and then counted the occurrences of each code to identify the most common themes. Due to the large

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number of participants in my focus groups, it was not possible for me to record which specific focus group member mentioned a particular theme. Therefore it is possible that some focus group participants mentioned the same topics multiple times in a focus group.

Data Analysis

Audiotapes from focus groups and interviews with senior center supervisors were first transcribed and later coded. Codes were organized alphabetically for each focus group or supervisor protocol question. To identify the most commonly occurring themes, I counted the times each of the codes appeared in all transcripts. I later grouped the most commonly occurring codes into larger categories to help me identify key findings and to answer both research questions.

Findings

Focus groups participants and interviewees provided rich insight on current senior center utilization trends, reasons why some older adults currently either do not utilize or under-utilize senior centers, what programs and services would attract them to come to senior centers and what advertising strategies would be appropriate to enhance the overall awareness about senior centers, their programs and services.

Several common themes emerged in the process of analyzing collected data: 1) non-users have more negative perceptions of senior centers than those who under-utilize; 2) today's seniors lead active and busy lifestyles; 3) there are a variety of trends related to activities and entertainment occurring at most of the local senior centers, and focus group participants and interviewees identified several activities that would attract greater utilization of local senior centers; 4) older adults have less interest in the traditional hot meal program and prefer lighter

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meals, more choices and better quality of food; and 5) non-users reported lack of awareness about senior centers' programs and services, and interviewees discussed a variety of marketing strategies aimed at improving overall awareness of senior centers and addressing negative perceptions some people have about senior centers.

Finding 1: Non-users have more negative perceptions of senior centers than those who under-utilize.

To explore some of the perceptions older adults have about senior centers, all focus group participants (both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers) were asked to write down three words or phrases they think about when they hear or think of senior centers. A complete list of their responses can be found in Appendix F. Table 2 below shows the three most common themes and the number of times they were mentioned by non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers.

While both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers associated centers with activities and food/meals, non-users mostly associated them with old people (old timers, for the elderly, too many old people, etc.). Non-users' negative perceptions included negative views about other seniors, those who attend senior centers, types of activities and food at senior centers. Table 3 below details some of their personal thoughts on being older and details representative quotes from four of the five focus groups with non-users where these issues were discussed.

Non-users associated senior centers with activities such as bingo, education, exercising, games, and group events. Under-utilizers expressed more positive perceptions and mostly wrote down the various activities offered at senior centers (ex. bingo, cards, exercise, and trips). They also associated senior centers with a place where they socialize, meet friends and have fun.

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Table 2: Three most common themes of senior centers’ perceptions for both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers

	Non-users	Under-utilizers
Most common perception themes associated with senior centers	#1: Old people (total number of mentions: 13)	#1: Activities (total number of mentions: 20)
	#2: Activities (total number of mentions: 12)	#2: Socialization/Friends/Fun (total number of mentions: 18)
	#3: Food/Meals (total number of mentions: 11)	#3: Food/Meals (total number of mentions 8)

Table 3: Non-users perceptions

Negative perceptions about seniors	<p>“Well, I am not sure if I consider myself a senior yet. A senior is someone who doesn’t do anything anymore, because they are incapable of doing anything.”</p> <p>“I refuse to be around people who talk about their ailments. I just can’t do that, I worry that I will end up just like them.”</p>
Negative perceptions on who attends senior centers	<p>“Are the people who participate at the senior centers able-bodied? Are they all handicapped? Are they on crutches?”</p> <p>“I think of senior centers as a place for much older people, maybe in their 80s who have more difficulty getting together with people and doing things.”</p> <p>“To me senior centers are places for people who are older than me.”</p>
Not thinking of oneself as old person	<p>“I don’t feel like an old person, I just look like one.”</p> <p>“ I don’t think myself as elderly, I hate even to ask for the senior rate for my air fare. I am still pretty active, I still work a little and have a lot of friends, I am not looking for another social environment.”</p> <p>“I am in my 70s and I am still working and active, and ironically work with seniors, many of them are younger than I am in years but not mentally or physically and don’t see myself in that category yet.”</p>
Associating senior centers the type of activities at senior centers	<p>“I don’t want to play bingo, or talk about low salt diets because that is not what I am looking for.”</p> <p>“I just don’t have any interest...I don’t play bingo, I don’t play cards anymore....”</p>
Negative perceptions about the type of food offered at senior centers	<p>“The food is hot dogs or whatever...most places can’t afford to buy steak.”</p>

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Consistent with responses to the question regarding what focus group participants think about when they hear the word senior centers, negative perceptions were the second most common reason for non- or under-utilization mentioned by non-users and senior center supervisors (Table 4; see Appendix G for a complete list of codes).

Table 4: Reasons for non-or under-utilization of senior centers

	Non-Users	Under-utilizers	Senior centers' supervisors
Most common reasons for non-or under-utilization of senior centers	#1: Active/busy senior lifestyle <i>Number of mentions: 25</i>	#1: Issues with the meal program <i>Number of mentions 5</i>	#1:Negative perceptions about senior centers <i>Number of mentions: 11</i>
	#2: Negative perceptions about senior centers (see Table 4) <i>Number of mentions: 15</i>	#2: Active/busy senior lifestyle <i>Number of mentions: 4</i>	#2: Competing community activities (volunteering, gym) <i>Number of mentions: 6</i>
	#3: Lack of awareness/Lack of interest/Lack of appropriate information <i>Number of mentions: 7</i>	#3: Lack of need/interest for senior centers <i>Number of mentions: 4</i>	#3: Active/busy senior lifestyle <i>Number of mentions: 5</i>

In addition to describing various negative perceptions associated with senior centers, several non-users frequently talked about negative perceptions they associate with senior centers' names (Total number of mentions: 4, Appendix J). As one of the non-users noted:

I would have to think about what you want to rename the senior centers to make them more attractive. I wonder if marketing could be revised to give it a different image or if another word could be added. It's just the idea of senior citizen as an image. So if you could have spirited senior centers, and a name on the senior centers and the marketing of the programming to make it sound interesting to somebody else than that would probably gradually change the image of the senior citizens.

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Another non-user provided more detail by explaining that, “Well they don’t really have names, these senior centers – it is the Johnson City senior center. If they had a name then it would kind of define the spirit of the place.”

Finding 2: Today’s seniors lead active and busy lifestyles.

In addition to negative perceptions, other key reasons for non-or under-utilization of senior centers include seniors’ active and busy lifestyle (Table 4, p. 18). As one supervisor noted:

Those coming for activities seem to be people who are on schedule, they are busy. They are doers, they are out and about, going here and there. They are picking up grandchildren or going to swim. They just have classes, or are taking the Zumba.

Another supervisor shared her experience: “These people are on a schedule, they are here to exercise for a half an hour and they are out the door again.” Other supervisors talked about the “in and out” trend with some seniors only coming to the centers for specific activities and highlighted how busy and active older adults are. As one supervisor noted, “They are busy, they are involved in their community, and they are splitting their time up between everyone. Some come for Zumba and leave. They are in and out.”

Even though some of the interviewed older adults talked about their busy and active lives as one of the reasons for non- or under-utilizing (Table 4, p. 18), one non-user offered encouraging insight about how to appeal to this population:

I am also busy, I am still working, sort of part time. I go to lacrosse, soccer games, and play golf. I am busy but more it is about not knowing what is out there. I would come to Zumba, I have been looking for something like that. I would do other things if they

appealed to me.

Finding 3: There are a variety of trends related to activities and entertainment occurring at most of the local senior centers, and focus group participants and interviewees identified several activities that would attract greater utilization of local senior centers.

As detailed in Finding 1 (Table 2), both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers frequently associated senior centers with a variety of activities such as bingo, education, exercising, games, group activities, and trips. Additionally, the following trends related to activities and entertainment emerged in the supervisors' interviews.

1. Two of the eight senior center sites (East Side and Deposit) are physically located in a church and reported to be mainly nutrition sites, where limited activities are offered due to a lack of space and the size of their current membership. Both of these sites are also dealing with various challenges such as limited parking, being associated with the church, decreasing participation due to a higher age average of their current members and difficulty attracting new younger participants. These two senior centers reported a decrease in overall utilization of their programs and services, as well as difficulties obtaining quality entertainment to attract new members.
2. The other six senior centers are located in stand-alone buildings with more parking options. The most common trends observed by supervisors of these centers were as follows:
 - *These senior centers are offering broader programming and have seen an increase in the use of health and wellness programs.* One of the supervisors explained:

When we first started we had classes that were just knitting, crocheting and now it's oil painting, ceramics, computer classes, on site college classes. It just expanded and now we

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have Zumba, where before we didn't have anything that was exercise. Now it's a lot of exercising.

Another supervisor noted that "More people are becoming health conscious and using exercise equipment, taking Zumba class, the chair exercise class has grown, and the bone savers class is quite large. They really have turned and are playing less bingo."

- *There is an increased demand for quality entertainment as well as an increase in the costs of obtaining such entertainment.* Several supervisors talked about the importance of offering quality entertainment to attract new members as well as encouraging current members to utilize the senior centers more frequently. Entertainment is frequently offered with special events (evening, holiday meals, etc.) and often attracts larger crowds at the senior centers. Supervisors reported the lack of funds to obtain such entertainment as well as a lack of financial support from OFA. As membership is shrinking at almost all of the senior centers, this affects their ability to raise enough funds to provide the desired entertainment. As one supervisor explained:

As our clientele has changed, and I should say it has really evolved, because we are losing a lot of those older clients who stay at home, we have noticed an increase in the demand for better entertainment. Keep in mind that entertainment can cost a \$100-\$150/night. So for us to provide that entertainment without any support from OFA, then we really have to work hard, we have to do fundraisers...It is more pressure to get what you need for your clients to use the senior center. Sometimes it feels like treading water.

- *There is a difference in the use of senior centers by individuals who regularly use senior centers and those who only come in for a few activities.* Supervisors reported differences in the way senior centers are being utilized by older adults. Of special interest is the difference

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between what was commonly referred to as the “regulars” and others who only come for some activities. According to one supervisor, “We have a crowd that attends lunch and it tends to be the same people who come for lunch, they are the regulars.” Another supervisor noted:

When I first started people came two to three times a week, some came five times a week. Whether they were lonely, needed the meal or participated in activities. I could look at the roster and know what person came when. I knew most of the people. Now so many new faces come through the doors and I don’t know all of their names.

In addition to the trends related to activities and entertainment reported by supervisors, both non-users and under-utilizers were asked about types of activities that would attract them to their local senior centers. Focus group participants and supervisors were also asked to imagine building a new senior center and naming activities they would provide to older people. A complete list of answers to both of these questions can be seen in Appendix H. As shown in Appendix H, specific activities of interest for both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers were grouped into larger categories.

Table 5 below compares the most commonly mentioned categories of activities that would attract greater participation. When analyzing responses displayed in Table 5, one can conclude that older adults mostly desire activities already offered at their local senior centers.

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Table 5: Activities that would attract greater participation at senior centers

	Non-Users	Under-utilizers	Senior centers' supervisors (non-users)	Senior centers' supervisors (under-utilizers)
Activities of interest to non-users and under-utilizers	#1: Intellectual programs <i>Number of mentions: 11</i>	#1: Intellectual programs <i>Number of mentions: 5</i>	#1: High quality programs and services/Attractive appearance <i>Number of mentions: 8</i>	#1: Health and Wellness <i>Number of mentions: 4</i>
	#2: Health and Wellness /Arts and Crafts Classes <i>Number of mentions for each: 5</i>	#2: Music/ Performances <i>Number of mentions: 2</i>	#2: Intellectual programs <i>Number of mentions: 7</i>	#2: Trips <i>Number of mentions: 3</i>
	#3: Music/ Entertainment <i>Number of mentions: 3</i>	#3: Evening meal/Evening performance <i>Number of mentions: 2</i>	#3: Health and Wellness <i>Number of mentions: 4</i>	#3: Lighter meals <i>Number of mentions: 2</i>

As mentioned above, both focus groups' participants and supervisors were also asked to list activities they would offer at a new senior center (Appendix H; Question 3 and 6). Focus groups participants (non-users and under-utilizers) most frequently talked about health and wellness activities (total number of mentions: 28), arts and crafts activities (total number of mentions: 11), and intellectual programs (total number of mentions: 9). Supervisors also listed health and wellness activities (number of mentions: 11), arts and crafts activities (number of mentions: 5), and intellectual programs (number of mentions: 3) as the top three types of activities they would offer at a new senior center.

Finding 4: Older adults have less interest in the traditional hot meal program and prefer lighter meals, more choices and better quality of food.

When asked about some of the utilization trends at their senior centers, all supervisors reported a steady decline in the utilization of the traditional hot meal program in the last few years. As one supervisor noted, “The hot meal program is really low. Sometimes I honestly think that if we didn’t have the meal program, people wouldn’t miss it. There is [sic] a handful of them who would but for the most part...” While this conclusion can be made about the traditional hot meal program, which requires reservations, the utilization of meals where no reservation is needed (breakfast, salad bar, sandwich bar) has increased at two out of the four senior centers who are currently offering this option. One of the two supervisors confirmed this trend by explaining that:

The reserved hot meals counts have been less. It has been shocking to see some of the numbers that went down to the teens. But breakfast always does well, breakfast for lunch, soup and sandwich bar. These are all meals without reservation. They tend to like that.

Another supervisor noted, “We will often have only between two and four people signed up for the regular hot meal, and 36 people having the salad bar.”

While declining interest in the traditional meal program was reported by supervisors, when asked about three words or phrases they associate with senior centers, both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers frequently wrote down “food/meals” (Finding 1, Table 2). Even though both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers associate them with a meal program, when asked about what activities would attract them to the senior centers, the code for meals (food, breakfast, evening meal) only occurred four times. This could be attributed

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to the wording of the question and therefore could have misled some participants who did not associate the word “activities” with “services” such the meal program.

Non-users, those who under-utilize senior centers and supervisors were asked about the type of food they would offer at a new senior center (see Appendix I). Their responses to this question are summarized in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Type of food and meal program to be offered at a new senior center

	Non-users	Under-utilizers	Senior Centers’ Supervisors
Type of food and meal program to be offered at a new senior center	#1: Light and healthy foods (fruits and veggies, low carbs, low sodium, salads, soups) <i>Number of mentions: 12</i>	#1: Light and healthy foods (Fruit bar/Salad bar, low carbs, low sodium) <i>Number of mentions: 7</i>	#1: Light meals (fresh fruit, soup and sandwich, café style food) <i>Number of mentions: 6</i>
	#2: Ethnic Foods (Italian, Thai)/Vegetarian options <i>Number of mentions: 3</i>	#2: Better Meals/Choice meals <i>Number of mentions: 5</i>	#2: No reservation/A la carte/On site cooked meals <i>Number of mentions: 5</i>
	#3: Desserts <i>Number of mentions: 2</i>	#3: Breakfast <i>Number of mentions: 2</i>	#3: Buffet style dining <i>Number of mentions: 4</i>

Non-users, those who under-utilize senior centers and supervisors most frequently imagined offering light and healthy foods at a new senior center. Non-users also talked about offering ethnic foods and desserts. Those who under-utilize senior centers expressed interest in having better meals, being able to choose between two hot meals more often and offering breakfast meals. Supervisors frequently expressed their desire to offer “no-reservation needed” type of meals at their sites. Focus groups’ participants, on the other hand, did not talk about the reservation system for meals as frequently without me probing with a specific question. In one of the focus groups, I specifically asked about the reservation system and what they thought about it. One non-user noted that:

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Maybe the senior centers could offer both, the hot meal with a reservation and if you just pop in you can have soup and salad. I think I would opt for that, because I never know that I am going to do. I don't want to be tied down as I am finally at the point where I can make these choices.

The quality of food was frequently discussed by non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers (Appendix G, total of 5 mentions). As detailed in Table 4 (p. 18), those who under-utilize most frequently talked about issues with the meal program as the reason for not utilizing their senior centers more. One under-utilizer noted, "The food they provide is not that desirable or tasty. I guess for \$3 you cannot expect more. They have special occasions and then they have better meals." A non-user provided more insight on the quality of food: "I had an occasion couple of weeks ago to be a guest here at lunch, and food was...I guess I would say it was institutional quality."

Finding 5: Non-users reported lack of awareness about senior centers' programs and services, and interviewees discussed a variety of marketing strategies aimed at improving overall awareness of senior centers and addressing negative perceptions some people have about senior centers.

In order to address some of the negative perceptions and lack of awareness about senior centers' programs and services, appropriate advertising methods need to be utilized by OFA and senior centers' supervisors. Both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers were asked to talk about specific advertising methods they would prefer to learn more about senior centers (see Appendix J for complete list of codes). Additionally supervisors were asked to talk about the various advertising methods they use to promote their programs and services. Table 7

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compares the most preferred advertising methods by users and those who under-utilize with the methods most commonly used by supervisors.

Both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers most frequently talked about the local newspaper, senior news and senior center newsletters as the most preferred way for them to find out about senior centers. Additionally, non-users reported that emails, flyers and bulletin boards would be other appropriate methods of advertising. In contrast, those who under-utilize senior centers preferred the use of TV and “word of mouth” to learn about what is happening at their local senior centers. As illustrated in Table 7, supervisors are using many of the preferred advertising methods mentioned by both non-user and those who under-utilize senior centers.

Table 7: Advertising methods preferred by non-user and those who under-utilize senior centers and advertising methods currently used by senior centers’ supervisors.

	Non-users	Under-utilizers	Senior Centers’ Supervisors
Advertising methods	#1: Newspaper (Good Times)/Senior News <i>Number of mentions: 8</i>	#1: Local newspaper (Good Times)/Senior News/Senior centers’ newsletter <i>Number of mentions: 7</i>	#1: Local newspaper/Senior News/Senior Centers’ Newsletters <i>Total number of mentions: 18</i>
	#2: Email <i>Number of mentions: 3</i>	#2: TV <i>Number of mentions: 3</i>	#2: Flyers/Bulletin Boards/Posters/Church Bulletin <i>Total number of mentions: 9</i>
	#3: Flyers/Bulletin Boards <i>Number of mentions: 3</i>	#3: Word of mouth <i>Number of mentions: 3</i>	#3: News media (rolling channel, radio, cable channels) <i>Total number of mentions: 7</i>

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Of great concern is that many of the focus group participants who currently do not attend senior centers lack awareness about senior centers' programs and services. This theme was the third most common reason for not attending senior centers (number of mentions: 7) (see Table 4, p. 18). As one of the focus group participant noted:

I really don't know if there are things going on that I might be interested in. I don't know if there is somebody telling you how to work an iPhone, or somebody giving presentations on hip replacements, or something else that might be of interest to me. I don't get that information in my face very often.

Another non-user explained: "...half the time I don't know what is going on in here. I saw in the paper that Winnie was teaching Zumba classes and I didn't know about this. I don't think there is a lot of outreach."

When asked about other strategies OFA should utilize to promote senior centers, supervisors frequently talked about the need for engaging in a variety of marketing strategies with the ultimate goal of improving the overall awareness, image and addressing negative perceptions of older adults in the community (Appendix J, question 8). Three supervisors talked about exposing older adults to senior centers early on. One supervisor elaborated:

I need to start at 50 because these are the next seniors and we have to get them into the senior center now, and if getting them into the exercise room gets them into the building so be it. Then they can see what else goes on in here, so when they are 60 maybe then they will feel more comfortable being here.

Additionally, three supervisors talked about the importance of the physical appearance of senior centers as a strategy to attract new members and make senior centers more comfortable

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and inviting. One supervisor noted, “I threw out everything that looked like 1950s. It portrays an image that we don’t want. Even replacing the old TVs with flat screen TVs is important.”

Another supervisor explained that, “The appearance of the senior centers is important. They love flowers outside. They like the lounge we did out here. The lounge was a huge improvement to the senior center.” Another supervisor noted, “The senior center needs to be attractive on the outside. Inside, it needs to look cool. It needs to look inviting. It needs to be fresh, feel alive.”

Lastly, four supervisors talked about the need for a continuous marketing strategy and specifically mentioned community outreach, use of Facebook and TV to increase the overall awareness and improve the image of senior centers. As one supervisor summed up:

Sometimes “show and tell” is a way to learn something new or something we forgot.

The one thing OFA has done is the use of Facebook, the website and keeping it updated.

But that is still not going to reach everyone. There needs to be ongoing media coverage, community service announcements. All the things we are using now, but maybe more frequently. Lot of people wonder what we do at the senior centers. Younger seniors have stereotypes about what is going on in here. We are the best kept secret in town.

Recommendations

Based on the findings listed above, the following recommendations will assist OFA to increase the utilization of senior centers by both older adults who currently do not utilize senior centers and those who only use them for few activities. The following actionable steps should be considered by OFA administrators: 1) continue to focus on offering quality activities of interest to both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers; 2) utilize current and new advertising methods to increase the overall awareness about senior centers’ and marketing

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strategies to improve the overall image of senior centers, and 3) focus on improving the quality of food offered at the senior centers, as well as expanding the “no reservation” meal program.

Recommendation 1: Continue to focus on offering quality activities of interest to both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers.

As highlighted in the reviewed scholarly literature higher quality of senior center programs is one of the factors linked to increased utilization of senior centers (Pardasani, 2004; Turner, 2004; Walker et al., 2004). Additionally, senior centers have evolved over time from being used primarily for meals and limited activities to places where quality of programming and specifically the quality of entertainment is playing a more important role (Krout, 1989; Pardasani, 2004).

Offering quality programming is therefore essential to senior centers’ ability to attract and retain new members, as well as encourage higher utilization by their current members. Today’s seniors lead busy lives and are often involved in multiple activities throughout the community. Younger seniors are often employed and are also busy with their families and caregiving duties. As many supervisors noted, the newest trend appears to be the “in and out” of the senior centers and utilizing of only few activities by busy older adults.

This study confirms that older adults are interested in utilizing quality activities and have less interest in the use of senior centers to obtain a meal (Finding 3 and Finding 4). Of special concern is the ability of senior centers, which are primarily meal sites, to maintain and expand their membership. It is unlikely that these senior centers will be able to meet the changing needs of today’s seniors without offering quality activities in addition to the meal program.

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While most of the senior centers currently offer a broad range of programs, it is important that new and trendy activities be added to keep up with what is offered elsewhere in the community. Intellectual programs such as continuing education classes, presentations on local history and others were the most commonly mentioned activities of interest. As defined in the voluntary organization model, providing opportunities for self-expression increases the length of attendance at senior centers (Ralston, 1991; Ferraro & Cobb, 1987; Taietz, 1976). Arts and crafts programs, intellectual programs, and health and wellness programs all provide opportunities for self-expression and are therefore likely to improve the overall utilization of Broome County senior centers.

Senior centers and OFA administrators should therefore focus on offering quality intellectual programs and finding appropriate instructors to teach them. One option is to recruit qualified older adults to teach classes on cooking, technology, gardening and other classes of interest. Recruiting older adults who possess the appropriate knowledge and experience to teach at the senior centers would not only enhance the quality of programming, but also engage them in meaningful volunteer opportunities. Appendix H offers details on the specific activities of interest and can serve as a resource for planning and scheduling purposes.

Supervisors frequently talked about the need to provide quality entertainment to both current and potential members in order to improve the overall utilization of their programs and services (Finding 3). Senior centers mostly rely on fundraising to obtain needed funds to purchase entertainment and declining membership at the centers often limits their ability to raise enough money to do so. It is therefore essential for OFA to support senior centers in the process of exploring alternative funding options to obtain quality entertainment.

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One option would be to allow senior centers to rent out their rooms for community or private events and retain any of the rental income to pay for entertainment expenses. Another option is to create a donation webpage on the OFA website and list specific ways that individuals can donate to benefit the senior centers or OFA itself. A review of best practices on how such webpage can be set up and what the types donations (ex. cash, endowment gifts, and charitable remainder trusts) one could make would be needed. Specific projects such as the purchase of new exercise equipment as well as general needs such as entertainment could be advertised on Facebook, in Senior News and in senior centers' newsletters to inform potential donor of how their money would be used.

Recommendation 2: Utilize current and new advertising methods to increase the overall awareness about senior centers' and marketing strategies to improve the overall image of senior centers.

While older adults mostly desire activities already offered at their local senior centers (Finding 3), there appears to be a lack of awareness about senior centers' programs and services by those who currently do not utilize them (Finding 5). Both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers confirmed that the use of the local newspaper, Senior News and senior center newsletters to promote activities at senior centers are appropriate advertising methods (Finding 5). Additionally, both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers reported that they find out from friends, bulletin boards and flyers about activities in which they are currently involved.

The use of email was preferred by those who do not utilize senior centers as an effective way for them to obtain information about upcoming events. OFA should therefore consider creating a database of email addresses and sending out mass emails to registered older adults.

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Emails could list the various activities as well as the meal menu for the month. The design and format of such emails is crucial to the success of this outreach strategy. The email format should therefore be easy to read and quick to follow in order to prevent over-loading email recipients with information. An example of such email format lists activities offered to Binghamton University students (see Appendix K) and allows the user to click on specific activities of interest to learn more about the event.

Older adults who participated in this study frequently talked about their mixed perceptions about senior centers (Finding 1). Of special concern is the dominant theme among non-users, who expressed a variety of negative perceptions associated with senior centers, older age and attending a senior center (Finding 1, Table 3). Addressing these negative perceptions is therefore crucial to addressing both research questions defined in this Capstone. This task can be achieved with the use of appropriate creative marketing strategies.

To address the negative perceptions about senior centers, a whole marketing campaign should be devoted to promoting the value of senior centers, older people and enhancing their overall image. OFA should explore recruiting Binghamton University business and/or marketing students for internships with the goal of creating specific marketing strategies to address some of these issues. One specific marketing strategy could include contacting the local newspaper and working with them on a feature article that would promote the value of older adults and senior centers. Such article would include attractive pictures of seniors engaged in activities, which are likely to appeal to other older adults, such as exercise classes, lectures and others. A similar approach could be used to reach out to local TV and radio channels. In addition, while some senior centers already have their own websites, a review of their design and ease of use should be done to maintain an attractive and modern look, which would appeal to today's seniors.

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The debate on whether changing senior centers' name is one that involves various perspectives and is therefore challenging to address. Just a few non-users discussed this topic and one individual who under-utilizes senior centers made this suggestion (Finding 1). None of the senior center supervisors talked about this topic. Testing whether such a change would make a difference is likely not a feasible option, as most senior centers would have to change their signage and would therefore incur costs to do so. A future study is needed to explore how a change in senior centers' names would affect utilization.

Another area of interest highlighted by the supervisors is the overall physical appearance of senior centers (Finding 5). Though not a traditional advertising method, maintaining an appealing, modern and inviting look at local senior centers is most certainly a marketing strategy. OFA should therefore work closely with senior centers' supervisors on finding affordable ways to improve the overall appearance of senior centers and involving their current and potential users in this process. One option is to organize and advertise a community event to paint, re-decorate and freshen up the look at some of the centers. Donations of paint or other supplies could be sought from local vendors, and volunteers could be recruited to undertake these projects. Small and inexpensive changes to the décor (ex. new pictures, plants, chair covers, and tablecloths) would likely improve the appearance of the centers and therefore also appeal to a broader audience including younger seniors. As some of the senior centers' supervisors noted, it is important to improve the outdated look of senior centers by making small changes to modernize them.

Recommendation 3: Focus on improving the quality of food offered at the senior centers, as well as expanding the “no reservation” meal program.

As the overall utilization of the traditional hot meal program has decreased at majority of the senior centers, improving the quality of food is an important step in making the meal program more sustainable. As described in Finding 4 of this Capstone, both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of the meal. Others were interested in having more meal choices. The most common theme related to food mentioned in the focus groups was the interest in eating lighter and healthier. As older adults are becoming more health conscious, providing healthy options is essential to the success and continuation of the meal program at the senior centers.

In addition, some senior center supervisors reported that no reservation meals are becoming more popular and are more likely to address the needs of today’s busy seniors who are in and out of the senior centers. Those senior centers that are already providing a variety of “no reservation” meals should continue to focus on expanding the selection and quality of these meal options. In addition, the no-reservation meal program should be expanded to other centers where this option would be an appropriate addition to the existing meal program.

Conclusion

Broome County senior centers continue to be the focal points for the delivery of programs and services to older adults with the ultimate goal of enriching their lives and improving their ability to live independently in their respective communities. As communities nationwide experience a growing elderly population, their aging services providers, including local senior centers will be challenged to meet the increasingly racially, ethnically, culturally and economically diverse needs of older adults. The Broome County Office for Aging and its senior

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centers will need to re-evaluate how programs and services currently offered at the different centers are meeting the needs of today's more active and independent older adults.

As noted in this study, a multi-faceted approach will be necessary to provide quality programs and services, secure adequate funding to obtain quality entertainment, utilize a variety of advertising methods and marketing strategies to improve awareness, address negative perceptions about senior centers and improve the quality of food offered at the senior centers. This study can therefore serve as a guide to making the necessary improvements with the ultimate goal of increasing the utilization at the local senior centers by older adults who currently do not utilize or under-utilize the centers' programs and services.

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Appendix A

List of scheduled focus groups

Focus Group Date	Focus Group Location	Number of Participants
March 13, 2012	First Ward Senior Center (senior centers' under-utilizers)	11
March 20, 2012	Johnson City Senior Center (senior centers' under-utilizers)	9
March 20, 2012	Marian Apartments Senior Housing (senior centers' non-users)	6
March 21, 2012	Broome County Library (mix of both senior centers' users and under-utilizers)	7
March 22, 2012	Broome West Senior Center (senior centers' non-users)	8
March 23, 2012	Broome County Office for Aging (senior centers' non-users)	5
March 27, 2012	Johnson City Senior Center (senior centers' under-utilizers)	4
March 28, 2012	Johnson City Senior Center Senior centers' non-users	5
Total number of participants		55

Appendix B

Focus group survey

If you decide to participate in this research project, please do not write your name on this survey.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with the Office for Aging or Binghamton University. If you decide to participate, you are not obligated to answer all questions, and may stop at any time.

Questions about your rights as a volunteer in research can be directed to Binghamton University's Human Subjects Research Review Committee at (607) 777-3818.

Your voluntary completion of this survey or participation in the focus group constitutes your consent to take part in this research study.

Please answer the following questions:

1. How old are you?

Check one: 60-64 65-69 70-74 75-79 80-84 85 plus

2. What is your gender?

Check one: Female Male

3. What is your race/ethnicity?

Check one: Asian American Black or African American Hispanic

Native American Pacific Islander White, Caucasian

Other: _____

4. Do you live alone?

Check one: Yes No

5. What is your household monthly income?

I live alone	I live with one other person	I live with two other people
\$0-\$908	\$0-\$1226	\$0-\$1544
\$909-\$1363	\$1227-\$1839	\$1545-\$2316
\$1364+	\$1840+	\$2317+

Do Not Want to Disclose My Income

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I prefer the peace and quiet of home **OR** I like to get out of the house as often as possible

I like to be around other people **OR** I like to do things on my own

I prefer the company of other people my age **OR** I prefer being around people of all ages.

Thank you for completing our survey.

Appendix C

Focus group interview protocol

Focus Group Participant Information Sheet

Broome County Office for Aging (OFA) Focus Group Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for your participation in the OFA Focus Group Project. The purpose of this project is to determine how older adults perceive senior centers, and what programs and services would attract them to utilize them. As a research subject in this project, please familiarize yourself with the following information.

- **Your participation is voluntary.** You are not obligated to answer all questions and you may choose to leave the focus group at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate in the focus group will not in any way influence your relationship with Binghamton University or OFA.
- **All personal information collected in the focus group will be confidential.** All personal information collected in the focus group will be kept confidential by research project staff and will be utilized only for this project.
- **The focus group sessions will be recorded.** Focus group sessions will be recorded only to ensure accuracy of notes taken by research project staff. The recordings will be destroyed upon the project's completion. *You may decline to have the focus group session recorded and still participate.* Your decision whether or not to have the focus group session recorded will not in any way influence your relationship with Binghamton University or OFA.
- The results of this study will be provided to OFA to assist them in addressing some of the utilization issues at the local senior centers.

If you have any questions throughout your participation in the focus group, please ask the focus group moderator.

If at any time you have any questions about the OFA Focus Group Project, please contact: Lucia Esposito at OFA (607-778-2149).

If you at any time you have questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact: Binghamton University's Human Subjects Research Review Committee 607-777-3818.

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Focus Group Oral Consent and Audio Release Statement

Broome County Office for Aging Oral Informed Consent and Audio Release Statement

Hello. My name is Lucia Esposito and I am a graduate student at Binghamton University who will be facilitating this focus group. I am conducting focus groups with older adults to learn more about their perceptions of senior centers. I am also interested in learning why older adults do not utilize senior centers and what programs and services would get them interested.

If you decide to participate in the focus group, your responses will be kept confidential. Any information collected during the focus group session will be accessible only to research project staff via a password for virtual data or key to a locked storage area for material data. Please note that you are not obligated to answer all questions and you may decide to leave the focus group at any time. The focus group session will last approximately one hour. We will be asking a series of open-ended questions. Your decision whether or not to participate in the focus group will not in any way affect your relationship with Binghamton University or OFA.

Do you want participate in this focus group?

You have agreed to participate in this focus group. Prior to the discussion, I ask that you complete this brief demographic survey. Once again, please be aware that your responses will be kept confidential. Your decision whether or not to fill out this survey will not in any way affect your relationship with Binghamton University or OFA.

I would also like to request your permission to record the focus group session. I will be recording the focus group session only to ensure that the notes we take during the focus group sessions are accurate. The recordings will not be used for any other purpose. The audio tapes will be stored at my locked residence and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project. If you do not wish to have your responses recorded, you may still participate in the focus group. In that case, I will not record the focus group session; I will simply take notes. Your decision whether or not to have your responses recorded will not in any way affect your relationship with Binghamton University or OFA.

Do you give permission to have the focus group session recorded?

Questions about the project can be directed to Lucia Esposito at OFA (607-778-2149). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Binghamton University's Human Subjects Research Review Committee (HSRRC) at 607-777-3818.

Do you have any questions about the focus group project? May I proceed with the first question?

Question # 1: How familiar are you with the BC senior centers and with their services?

Hand out cards asking participants to write down the first three words or phrases that come to mind when they hear "senior center"

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Question #2: Why do you currently not come to your local senior center?

(List negatives on sheets of papers)

Question #3: What type of activities would attract you to come to your local senior center?

(all ideas will be posted on large papers and participants will use stickers to mark their favorite ideas)

Question # 4: If you could build a new senior center, what would it look like?

- What type of activities would it offer?
- What type of food would it offer?
- What type of seniors would use this center?

Question #6: How should the senior centers advertise the services they offer?

Question # 7: What can senior centers do to attract more people to come and participate in their activities?

Appendix D

List of interviewed senior centers' supervisors

Vestal Senior Center	Deposit Senior Center	Northern Broome Senior Center (Whitney Point)
Broome West Senior Center (Endwell)	Johnson City Senior Center	East Side Senior Center (Binghamton)
First Ward Senior Center (Binghamton)	Eastern Broome Senior Center (Harpursville)	Greenman Senior Center/First Ward Senior Center (Binghamton)

Appendix E

Senior centers' supervisors' personal interview protocol

HELLO-- I am Lucia Esposito – a graduate student at Binghamton University. We are conducting a research project on senior centers utilization issues. You have been invited to participate in this personal interview to help us better understand why some older adults do not utilize senior centers. Your input will help us improve our programs and services at senior centers.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with the Broome County office for Aging and Binghamton University. If you decide to participate, you are not obligated to answer all questions, and may stop at any time.

If you agree, I would like to ask you some questions about your thoughts on senior centers and their programs and services. This interview should take less than a half hour. Your responses are confidential and will be grouped with other responses obtained in other interviews.

If you have any additional questions later, I will be happy to answer them. You can talk to me after the focus group meeting is over or you can call me at 607 778 2149. If at any time you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject you may call Binghamton University's Human Subject's Research Review Committee at (607) 777-3818.

Do you have any questions about the research project? May I proceed with the first question?

Question #1: What are some of the utilization trends you are seeing at your senior center?

Question #2: What do you think are some of the reasons why some older adults are not utilizing senior centers? This would also include people who only come in for some of the group activities (Zumba, chair exercises etc.)

Question #3: What do you think are some of the challenges senior centers will face in the next 10-15 years.

Question #4: What type of activities do you think would attract new members to come to senior centers?

Question #5: What can senior centers do to increase the utilization of programs and services by its current members?

Question #6: If you could build a new senior center, what would it look like?

- What type of activities would it offer?
- What type of food would it offer?

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- What type of seniors would use this center?

Question # 7: What are some of the advertising strategies you are currently using to promote your programs and services?

Question #8: What additional strategies, if any, do you think should be used by the Office for Aging to promote the senior centers and their services?

Question #9: Is there anything else that we haven't had a chance to discuss that you think I should know?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix F

Senior centers' perceptions as expressed by non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers

Non-users (in red): most common themes: **Old people** – underlined in the text below; **Activities** – marked with a plus sign in the text below, **Food/Meals** – marked with a star in the text below

A place to eat meals *	Food *	Membership cost
A place to learn new things+	Friends	Music+
A place to meet people	Fun	<u>Nice old people</u>
Activities +	Fun	Nothing else to do
Bad food *	Fun	Nothing there that would interest me
Bingo+	Games+	<u>Old</u>
Bingo+	Given up	<u>Old Age</u>
Bingo+	Good meals *	<u>Old individuals</u>
Can't get there	Group activities+	<u>Old people</u>
Cliques	Groups gathering	<u>Old people</u>
Cliques	Handicapped parking	<u>Old people</u>
Community	I don't want to participate	<u>Old timers</u>
Companionship	I see no interest with that activity	<u>Older</u>
Company	Lunch *	<u>Older people</u>
Education+	Lunch *	<u>Older people</u>
<u>Elderly people</u>	Meals *	Over the hill
Exercising+	Meals *	Painting+
Food *	Meals *	<u>People are old – over 65</u>
Food *	Meals *	Play cards
Self-centered people	<u>They talk about their ailments</u>	Valuable community service
Sharing	Togetheriness	Would like to be able to go
Social Contact	<u>Too many old people</u>	Socialization/games
Social Exercise+	Trips+	
Social group	<u>Turning old</u>	
Socialization		

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Under-utilizers (in black): most common themes: **Activities** – underlined in the text below; **Socialization/Friends/Fun**– marked with a star sign in the text below, **Food/Meals** – marked with a plus sign in the text below

Active	Food+	<u>Learning new things</u>
Active	Food+	Lunches+
<u>Activities</u>	Food programs+	Making friends *
<u>Activities</u>	For active people	<u>Many activities</u>
<u>Activities</u>	For older people	Meals+
<u>Activities at the center</u>	Friendly *	Meals+
<u>Activities for old people</u>	Friendly people *	Meeting new friends *
Affordable lunches+	Friends *	Meeting people*
Beneficial	Fulfilling	Meeting people *
<u>Bone savers class</u>	Fun *	New Friends *
Busy	Fun *	Old People
<u>Card Games</u>	Funding	Over 55
Clean	Getting together with new	People
Company *	friends *	Place to meet people *
Conversation*	Good conversation *	Place to visit
<u>Doing things</u>	Good meals+	Second home
<u>Entertainment</u>	Good times *	<u>Senior courses</u>
<u>Entertainment</u>	<u>Group activities</u>	<u>Senior trips</u>
<u>Exercise</u>	<u>Group Exercises</u>	Social
<u>Exercise</u>	Happy *	To meet people *
<u>Exercise</u>	<u>Hobby Room</u>	Very friendly
<u>Exercise class</u>	Informative	<u>Zumba class</u>
Food+	Just for the elderly	

Appendix G

List of codes representing reasons for non-attending or under-utilizing of senior centers

Under-utilizers (in black) – most common themes: **Issues with the meal program** – marked with a star sign in the text below **Active/busy lifestyle**– underlined in the text below; **Lack of need/interest** – marked with a plus sign in the text below

<u>Active lifestyle</u>	Interested in outside community activities +
<u>Busy lifestyle</u>	Lack of need to go to a SC+
<u>Busy lifestyle</u>	Lack of transportation
<u>Caregiving</u>	Limited programs of interest +
Different interests+	Low food quality *
Distance from center	Negative experience
Distance from the center	No interest in meal program *
Employment	Reservation system for meals *
Food appearance *	Senior centers' perception – place for the old
Food quality *	Senior centers' perception – place for the old
Health issues	

Non-users (in red): most common themes: **Active/Busy Lifestyle** – marked with a plus sign in the text below **Negative perceptions about senior centers**– underlined in the text below; **Lack of awareness/Lack of interest/Lack of appropriate information** – marked with # in the text below

Employment– marked with a star sign in the text below

Active lifestyle +	Busy Lifestyle +
Active lifestyle +	Caregiving +
Active Lifestyle +	Church +
<u>Associating with old people</u>	Discomfort about going alone
BU lyceum +	Distance from center
Busy lifestyle +	Employment *
Busy lifestyle +	Employment *
Busy Lifestyle +	Employment *
Busy lifestyle +	Employment *
Busy lifestyle +	Employment *
Busy lifestyle +	Family life +
Busy lifestyle +	Family life (babysitting) +
Busy lifestyle +	Family life (babysitting) +
Busy lifestyle +	Family life +

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Fear (reservations) about coming to SC	<u>Perception - Not thinking of oneself as an old person</u>
Food quality	<u>Perception about the type of activities a SC (bingo, cards)</u>
Gym membership +	<u>Perception about the type of food served at senior centers</u>
Gym membership +	<u>Perception of old people</u>
Involvement in church activities +	<u>Perception of old people</u>
Lack of awareness of senior news#	<u>Perception on aging</u>
Lack of Interest by spouse #	<u>Personal perception of being old</u>
Lack of interest in meal #	Schedule conflict – personal & programs schedule +
Lack of interest in traditional SC activities #	<u>Senior centers’ perception – confined in a building to eat a meal</u>
Lack of knowledge about SC #	<u>Senior centers’ perception – people on crutches</u>
Lack of knowledge about SC programs #	<u>Senior centers’ perception – place for people with limited social contacts</u>
Lack of outreach #	<u>Senior centers’ perception – place for the old</u>
Lack of transportation	Uncomfortable experience
Lack of Transportation	Volunteering +
Large social network	Volunteering +
Low food quality	
Membership fee cost	
Membership fee cost	
<u>Not feeling like an older person</u>	
Not looking for another social environment	
Not looking for another social environment	
<u>Not thinking of oneself as an old person</u>	
<u>Not thinking of oneself as an older person</u>	
<u>Not thinking of oneself as old</u>	

List of codes representing reasons for non-attending or under-utilizing as expressed by senior centers’ supervisors

Question #2: What do you think are some of the reasons why some older adults are not utilizing senior centers? This would also include people who only come in for some of the group activities (Zumba, chair exercises etc.)

Senior centers’ supervisors: most common themes: **Negative perceptions about senior centers**– underlined in the text below; **Active/Busy Lifestyle** – marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Competing community activities (volunteering, gyms)**– marked with * in the text below

Busy lifestyle +	Cost of activities
Busy lifestyle +	Getting MOW
Busy lifestyle +	Higher income
Caregiving +	Increased frailty
Community involvement *	Interest specific attendance
Competing community activities *	Lack of activities for men

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Lack of outreach
Lack of parking
Lack of personal contact outreach
Lack of programming
Lack of room at SC
Lack of transportation
Membership at gyms*
More spending money
Need to change perceptions/stigma associated with senior centers
No exercise room
No specific reason
Other community programs/activities *
Other volunteer projects *
Perception – don't want to be around old people
Senior center perception – place for old people

Senior center perception – place for old people
Senior center perception – SC for old ppl
Senior center perception – senior center a nursing home
Senior center perception – too young for SC
Senior center perception – too young to come to a center
Senior center stigma
Seniors more socially active *
Social isolation
Trade off between the meal and activities
Use of senior center – only to volunteer
Younger seniors - Busy lifestyle +
Younger seniors' Senior center perception – not old enough

Appendix H

List of activities of interest to non-users, those who under-utilize senior centers and senior centers' supervisors

Q 2: What activities would attract you to come to your senior center more frequently?

Under-utilizers (in black)– most common themes: **Intellectual Programs** – underlined in the text below; **Music/Performances**– marked with a star sign in the text below, **Evening Meal/Evening Entertainment** – marked with a plus sign in the text below

Breakfast	Other community events outside of the center
Cards	Performance by children and young people*
<u>Cooking classes/demos</u>	<u>Presentations</u>
Evening entertainment +	<u>Presentations on various topics (health, politics, home repair, gardening, health, history)</u>
Evening meal +	Senior Centers opened on weekends
Gym membership	Swimming/Water exercises
<u>History classes</u>	Walking club
<u>Intellectual programs</u>	
Music (entertainment)*	

Non-users (in red): most common themes: **Intellectual programs** – underlined in the text below; **Health & Wellness/Arts & Crafts** – marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Music/Entertainment** – marked with a star sign in the text below

Activities for men (sports, hunting)	<u>Homeopathy</u>
Arts +	Knitting +
Bingo	<u>Lectures</u>
<u>Book clubs</u>	<u>Lectures</u>
<u>Book reviews</u>	Music *
Cards	Music (entertainment) *
<u>Classes</u>	Music (entertainment) *
<u>Classes</u>	Painting +
<u>Classes on Holistic approaches</u>	Tai Chi +
<u>Cooking Classes</u>	Tai Chi +
Crocheting +	Tatting class +
Dancing +	<u>Technology class</u>
<u>Discussion groups on current events</u>	Trips
Entertainment *	Trips
Food	Trips
Food	Weight strengthening +
Golf +	

Question # 3: If you could build a new senior center, what type of activities would it offer?

Most commonly occurring themes for both non-users (red) and those who under-utilize senior centers (black): **Health & Wellness** – underlined in the text below; **Arts & Crafts** – marked with a star in the text below; **Intellectual programs** – marked with a plus sign in the text below.

- Activities for men
- Activities that would interest Baby boomers
- Activities to leave legacy
- Baking Classes+
- Balance
- Bingo
- Bowling
- Bowling
- Bowling
- Bowling,
- Card room
- Ceramics *
- Computer classes+
- Contemporary music entertainment
- Cooking class/demo+
- Cooking classes +
- Cooking classes/demos +
- Craft room *
- Dance
- Dancing
- Exercise
- Exercise
- Exercise
- Exercise classes
- Exercise equipment
- Exercise equipment
- Food
- Garden – vegetable & flowers
- Genealogy classes+
- Genealogy+
- Golf lessons
- Gym
- Gym
- Horseshoes
- Intellectual programs +
- Karate
- Knitting *
- Knitting & crocheting groups *
- Library
- Local bus trips
- Meditation
- Meditation room
- On-site cooked meals
- Painting *
- Painting *
- Photography *
- Picnic tables outside
- Pilates
- Pool
- Programs offered by outside providers
(massage therapist, rei ki)
- Purposeful volunteering opportunities
- Quilting *
- Quilting *
- Room rental
- Sewing *
- Shuffleboard
- Shuffleboard
- Singing groups
- Snack bar
- Strength training
- Swimming pool (non-user)
- Swimming pool on site
- Tai Chi
- Tatting *
- Technology classes +
- Theater
- Theater
- Trips
- Volunteer opportunities (where various skills can be used)
- Weights training (non-user)
- Yoga

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List of activities shared by senior centers' supervisors for both non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers.

Question #4: What type of activities do you think would attract new members to come to senior centers?

Non-users: most common themes for activities mentioned by senior centers' supervisors about those who do not utilize senior centers: **Intellectual programs** – underlined in the text below; **High Quality Programs & Services/Attractive appearance** – marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Health & Wellness** – marked with a star sign in the text below

“drop in” meal program	Good atmosphere +
Affordable	Gradual change to increase attractiveness of the SC itself+
Attracting attention to senior center	Health & wellness *
Attractive appearance of the SC+	Health & Wellness *
Breakfast	<u>Intellectually interesting</u>
<u>Chat groups</u>	Name change
<u>College class</u>	Older regulars
<u>Continuing education</u>	Outreach/promotion
Convenience of programming +	Paid activities
Core group	Pottery class
Current movies	<u>Presentations</u>
Encouragement to participate in the various activities	<u>Presentations</u>
Excellent customer service +	<u>Presentations on local history</u>
Exercise *	Quality entertainment +
Exercise programs *	Quality programs +
Free activities	Quality service +
Free activities	

Question #5: What can senior centers do to increase the utilization of programs and services by its current members?

Under-utilizers – most common themes for activities mentioned by senior centers' supervisors mentioned about older adults who under-utilize senior centers: **Health & Wellness** – underlined in the text below; **Trips** – marked with a star sign in the text below, **Lighter meals** – marked with a plus sign in the text below

Regulars	Trips *
Seek input	Visibility
Smaller meals +	<u>Wii</u>
Soup & Sandwich +	Younger senior interests-trips, activities *
Technology class	<u>Younger seniors use of health and wellness activities (zumba)</u>
<u>Trendy exercise</u>	<u>Zumba</u>
Trips *	

BROOME COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UTILIZATION

Question #6: If you could build a new senior center, what type of activities would it offer?

Senior centers' supervisors: most common themes: **Health & Wellness activities** – underlined in the text below; **Arts & Crafts** – marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Intellectual programs** – marked with a star in the text below

Activities for men

Ceramics+

Computers

Computers

Crafts +

Crafts +

Educational programs *

Exercise

Exercise classes

Exercise classes

Exercise equipment

Exercise room

Fun exercise

Game room

Golf course

Guitar lessons *

Gym

Gym

Gym

Music

Pool

Quilting +

Scrapbooking +

Shuffleboard

Technology classes *

Theater

Trips

TV & library area

Yoga

Appendix I

List of types of food to be offered at a new senior center as expressed by non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers

Question: What type of food would the new senior center offer?

Under-utilizers (in black)– most common themes: **Lighter/Healthy Foods** underlined in the text below; **Better meals/choice meals** – marked with a star sign in the text below, **Breakfast meals** – marked with a plus sign in the text below

Better meals +	Lobster
Better meats +	<u>Low carbs</u>
Better tasting meals +	<u>Low sodium</u>
Breakfast *	<u>Nutritious meals</u>
Breakfast food *	Open menu
Choice Meals +	<u>Salad bar</u>
Choice meals +	<u>Salad bar</u>
Cream of wheat	Surf & turf
Ethnic Food	Take home meals
<u>Fruit</u>	Three meals a day
<u>Fruit bar</u>	
International Coffee	

Non-users (in red): most common themes: **Lighter/Healthy Foods** – underlined in the text below; **Ethnic Foods** – marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Desserts** – marked with a star sign in the text below

Desserts *	<u>Low sodium,</u>
Desserts *	<u>Low starch</u>
Ethnic Dinners +	Mixed system – both reservations and drop
Ethnic food +	in meals
<u>Fruits</u>	<u>Salad</u>
<u>Fruits and vegetables</u>	<u>Salads</u>
<u>Healthy foods</u>	<u>Soups</u>
<u>Homemade soup</u>	<u>Soups</u>
<u>Lots of fiber</u>	Special nights
	<u>Vegetables,</u>
	Vegetarian options +

BROOME COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UTILIZATION

List of answers from senior centers' supervisors about what type of food would they offer at a new senior center

Question: What type of food would you offer at a new senior center?

Senior centers' supervisors: most common themes: **Lighter food**– underlined in the text below; **No reservation/A la carte** – marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Buffet style**– marked with a star in the text below

A la carte +

A la carte +

Breakfast

Buffet *

Buffet food *

Buffet style *

Café model

Food variety

Fresh fruit

Hot meals

Hot meals

Less starch

Lighter food

No reservation +

No reservation +

No trays

On site cooking +

Soup & sandwich

Special meals for special

events

Yogurt

Appendix J

List of preferred advertising methods as expressed by non-users and those who under-utilize senior centers

Question #4: How should the senior centers advertise the services they offer?

Under-utilizers (in black): most common themes: **Newspaper (Good Times)/Senior News/Senior Centers' newsletter** - underlined in the text below; **TV** – marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Word of mouth** – marked with a star in the text below

<u>Articles in other local magazines</u>	Senior center name change
<u>Bigger distribution of senior news</u>	<u>Senior news</u>
Contacting OFA directly	<u>Senior news</u>
Doctors' offices	TV +
<u>Good times</u>	TV +
Grocery stores	TV commercials +
<u>Newsletter</u>	Grocery stores
<u>Newsletter</u>	Website
Open House	Website
Packet for retirees	Word of mouth *
Radio	Word of mouth *
	Word of mouth *

Non-users (in red): most common themes: **Newspaper (Good Times)/Senior News** – underlined in the text below; **Emails** – marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Flyers/Bulletin Boards**– marked with a star sign in the text below

Bulletin boards *	<u>Good Times</u>
Change in name	<u>Interesting articles in successful aging</u>
Change in name	Kiosk in the mall *
Change of SC image	<u>Newspaper</u>
Change of senior citizens' image	<u>Newspaper</u>
Colorful brochures	<u>Senior News</u>
Email+	<u>Senior News</u>
Emails +	<u>Senior news</u>
Flyers at grocery stores, library, drug store *	TV
<u>Good times</u>	

BROOME COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UTILIZATION

List of advertising methods currently used by senior centers' supervisors

Question # 7: What are some of the advertising methods you are currently using to promote your programs and services?

Senior centers' supervisors: most common themes: Newspaper (Good Times)/Senior News – underlined in the text below; **Flyers/Bulletin Boards/Posters/Church Bulletin**– marked with a plus sign in the text below; **Flyers/Bulletin Boards**– marked with a star sign in the text below

Auto dialer program	<u>Newsletter</u>
<u>Binghamton press</u>	<u>Newsletter</u>
Bulletin boards +	<u>Newsletter</u>
Cable channels *	<u>Newspaper</u>
Church bulletin +	Open house
Churches +	Pharmacy
Community involvement of the site supervisor (boards, councils etc.)	Posters +
Doctor's offices	Promotion of the meal program in the community
Encouraging seniors to be involved in the community	PSA *
Flyers +	Radio *
Flyers +	Reach out to recent widow/widower
Flyers +	Rolling channel *
Flyers +	Rolling channel *
Flyers +	Senior center tours
<u>Good times</u>	<u>Senior news</u>
<u>Local newspaper</u>	<u>Senior news</u>
<u>Local paper insert with the newsletter</u>	<u>Senior news</u>
<u>Local papers</u>	<u>Senior news</u>
<u>Local stores</u>	Soliciting sponsorship funds from local businesses
<u>Local town/village newspaper</u>	TV *
News media *	Word of mouth
<u>Newsletter</u>	Word of mouth
<u>Newsletter</u>	Word of mouth

Question #8: What additional strategies, if any, do you think should be used by the Office for Aging to promote the senior centers and their services?

Advertising at public buildings	Continuous marketing
Appropriate signage for SC	Doctor's offices
Assuring that people feel comfortable at the SC	Early exposure to the senior center
Banks	Exposure to the senior center
Community education	Exposure to the senior centers
	Face book

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FB

Feature article in newspaper

Increase awareness of SC

Lack of advertising by OFA

Lack of awareness about OFA

Marketing

Modern appearance of SC

Outreach

Packets to retirees

Senior center appearance

Senior center marketing

TV videos

Appendix K

Example of a mass email listing Binghamton University events (B-Line)

Mar 30, 2012

Campus organization jobs/internships

>>Want to be a Summer Tour Guide?

Mar 29, 2012

General announcements

>>Tabling Opportunity at STAP AIDS Walk/Run
>>Student Volunteer Center Clothing Drive!
>>OCC Transport Spring Break Service Update

General Events

>>Seeking Cosponsors for "Beyond KONY 2012"

Mar 28, 2012

General announcements

>>Drummer Needed for Glee Club

Performances

>>Russian National Ballet Theatre to Perform Full-length "Swan Lake

Mar 27, 2012

Auditions

>>Performers and Artists Needed for Upcoming Charity Event

General announcements

>>Seeking Artwork and Photography to Display at BSSI Coffeehouse
>>Share a Skill: Learn How to Do Virtually Anything

Source: http://www.binghamton.edu/b-line/archieve_news.php

Appendix L

Survey Results

Survey Question #1: How old are you?

Age	Non-users n=30	Under-utilizers n=23
60-64	13%	17%
65-69	17%	9%
70-74	17%	13%
75-79	20%	43%
80-84	10%	9%
85 plus	23%	9%

Survey Question #2: What is your gender?

Gender	Non-users n=30	Under-utilizers n=23
Female	83%	74%
Male	17%	26%

Survey Question #3: What is your race/ethnicity?

Race/Ethnicity	Non-users n=30	Under-utilizers n=23
Asian American	0%	0%
Black or African American	0%	0%
Hispanic	0%	0%
Native American	7%	4%
Pacific Islander	0%	0%
White, Caucasian	90%	96%
Other	3%	0%

Survey Question #4: Do you live alone?

Do you live alone?	Non-users n=30	Under-utilizers n=23
Yes	70%	65%
No	30%	35%

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Survey Question #5: What is your household monthly income?

I live alone	Non-Users n=17	Under-utilizers n=17	I live with one other person	Non-users n=17	Under-Utilizers n=17	I live with two other people	Non-users n=17	Under-utilizers n=17
\$0-\$908	12%	0%	\$0-\$1226	0%	0%	\$0-\$1544	0%	0%
\$909-\$1363	24%	29%	\$1227-\$1839	0%	24%	\$1545-\$2316	0%	0%
\$1364+	29%	41%	\$1840+	35%	0%	\$2317+	0%	6%

Survey Question #6: What is your highest level of education?

Level of education	Non-user n=30	Under-utilizers n=23
Less than high school diploma	3%	13%
High school diploma or Equivalent	30%	43%
Some College	33%	30%
Community College degree	3%	9%
Baccalaureate degree	20%	4%
Graduate degree	10%	0%

Survey Question #7: How do you usually find out about the activities in which you are involved?

	Non-users n=79	Under-utilizers n=62
Friends	29%	19%
Local newspaper	19%	21%
Bulleting boards & flyers	8%	21%
Mail	11%	8%
Radio	5%	3%
TV	10%	15%
Email	14%	5%
Other	4%	8%

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Survey Question #8: What voluntary organizations do you currently participate in?

	Non-users n=71	Under-utilizers n=33
Church	42%	27%
Health & Wellness club	24%	15%
Neighborhood association	4%	9%
Youth organizations	1%	0%
Other voluntary organization	15%	27%
I currently do not participate	13%	21%

Survey Question #9: We would like to ask how often you meet people, whether at your home or elsewhere. How often do you meet friends or relatives who are not living with you?

	Non-users n=28	Under-utilizers n=23
On most days	50%	48%
Once or twice a week	43%	39%
Once or twice a month	4%	4%
Less often than once a month	4%	9%
Never	0%	0%

Survey Question #10: Which of these two statements describes you the best?

	I like to experience new things OR	I like things the way they are
Non-users n=25	85%	15%
Under-utilizers n=19	95%	5%
	I like to take an active role in planning events OR	I like to attend events other people planned
Non-users n=20	35%	65%
Under-utilizers n=17	41%	59%
	I have too much to do OR	I have a lot of spare time
Non-users n=20	60%	40%
Under-utilizers n=15	60%	40%
	I prefer the peace and quiet of home	I like to get out of the house as often as possible
Non-users n=26	42%	58%
Under-utilizers n=18	6%	94%

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	I like to be around other people	I like to do things on my own
Non-users n=23	83%	17%
Under-utilizers n=18	83%	17%
	I prefer the company of other people my age OR	I prefer being around people of all ages.
Non-users n=28	4%	96%
Under-utilizers n=20	20%	80%

BROOME COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UTILIZATION

Appendix M

Date: March 2, 2012

To: Lucia Esposito, MPA

From: Anne M. Casella, CIP Administrator
Human Subjects Research Review Committee

Subject: Human Subjects Research Approval
Protocol Number: 1922-12
Protocol title: *Broome County Senior Centers: Addressing Issues of Utilization*

Your project identified above was reviewed by the HSRRC and has received an Exempt approval pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations, 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) .

An exempt status signifies that you will not be required to submit a Continuing Review application as long as your project involving human subjects remains unchanged. If your project undergoes any changes these changes must be reported to our office prior to implementation, using the form listed below:

http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/2009_Forms/012_Modification%20Form.rtf

Principal Investigators or any individual involved in the research must report any problems involving the conduct of the study or subject participation. Any problems involving recruitment and consent processes or any deviations from the approved protocol should be reported in writing within five (5) business days as outlined in Binghamton University, Human Subjects Research Review Office, Policy and Procedures IX.F.1 Unanticipated Problems/adverse events/complaints. We also require that the following form be submitted:

<http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Adverse%20Event%20Form.rtf>

University policy requires you to maintain as a part of your records, any documents pertaining to the use of human subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to, and received from, the subjects, as well as any executed consent forms, data and analysis results. These records must be maintained for at least six years after project completion or termination. If this is a funded project, you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representative of the University, State and Federal governments.

Please notify this office when your project is complete by completing and forwarding to our office the following form:

<http://humansubjects.binghamton.edu/Forms/Forms/Protocol%20Closure%20Form.rtf>

Upon notification we will close the above referenced file. Any reactivation of the project will require a new application.

BROOME COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UTILIZATION

This documentation is being provided to you via email. A hard copy will not be mailed unless you request us to do so.

Thank you for your cooperation, I wish you success in your research, and please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or require further assistance.

cc: file, S.Y. Kang

Diane Bulizak, Secretary
Human Subjects Research Review Office
Biotechnology Building, Room 2205
85 Murray Hill Rd.
Vestal, NY 13850
dbulizak@binghamton.edu
Telephone: (607) 777-3818
Fax: (607) 777-5025

