

news release

Area 9 In-Home & Community Services
Agency
520 South 9th Street
Richmond, Indiana 47374-6230
765-966-1795 or 1-800-458-9345

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Contact: Tony Shepherd, Executive Director
765-966-1795 or 1-800-458-9345

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL AGES

Preparing Wayne County's communities to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's older residents.

Based on the 2007 updated U.S. Census, Wayne County is in the top tier of all U.S. counties in its percentage of older adults, age 60 years and older, at 22%. In comparison, nationally only a little over 17% of the total population is older adults, which means Wayne County has 26% more older adult population than the national average.* This statistic of older adult percentage of population is projected to increase more rapidly for Wayne County.

The communities in Wayne County are facing the aging of the largest demographic cohort in its history. The aging of the baby boomers over the course of the next three decades will have an even more direct and dramatic impact on our communities. With life expectancy also rising, older adults will, collectively, live longer than their predecessors. With a high percentage of the baby boomers expected to live beyond 85 years of age, forecasters expect a 60% surge in the 85+ population in the next couple of decades.

This current and projected rise in the percentage and number of older adults (60+) and the elderly (85+) will continue to alter the social, physical and economic fabric of the communities that make up Wayne County. Our communities will be affected in a number of ways involving local policies, programs and services in the areas of:

- Aging, health and home services;
- Land use, housing and transportation;
- Public safety and disaster planning;
- Workforce and economic development;
- Recreation and education;
- Volunteerism, lifelong learning and civic engagement.

Wayne County needs to continue to move toward "livable communities for all ages" where older citizens and residents of all ages can grow up and grow old with maximum independence, safety and well-being.

The Area 9 In-Home and Community Services Agency (Area 9 Agency), a service of Indiana University East, is Indiana's designated regional entity, including Wayne County, for citizens in east central Indiana to access long term care services and community services for older adults and the physically disabled.

The Area 9 Agency has identified "Caregivers for the Elderly" as the current most pressing "aging issue" facing Wayne County families and communities. This most pressing aging issue is based on two significant demographic swings Wayne County has and continues to experience:

- The high percentage of older population, and
- The loss of younger adults emigrating from the communities in the county for career and job opportunities the past decade.

The impact of these two demographic shifts is: there are increasing numbers of older adults, especially the frail elderly who need caregivers, yet the available pool of caregivers, adult children and younger adults, is decreasing. It is the coming together of these two demographics that public officials, local businesses and health care providers must recognize and address to ensure we have livable communities for all ages.

Information on assistance and services to help caregivers, frail elderly and individuals with physical disabilities remain living in their own homes as long as possible is available by contacting the Area 9 In-Home and Community Services Agency at 765-966-1795; 800-458-9345 or www.area9agency.org.

*AGing Integrated Database (AGID), U.S. Administration in Aging



Tony Shepherd, MPA & LSW, is the executive director of the Area 9 In-Home and Community Services Agency which serves Fayette, Franklin, Rush, Union and Wayne Counties.