



HONORING COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE

# Examples of Innovation and Inspiration

### Collective Impact Partners

Collective impact brings people together in a structured way to achieve social change. The Connecticut Age Well Collaborative plans and implements its work through a collective impact model. The evolving list below reflects strategically cultivated relationships with governmental, nonprofit and academic organizations who were invited as partners. "Partners" are organizations committed to collaborating to align efforts and shared resources toward fostering Connecticut communities where we all thrive as we grow up and grow older.

#### Core Partners

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity  
Connecticut Community Care  
Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Connecticut State Department of Aging and Disability Services  
Point32Health Foundation

#### Collaborating Partners

AARP Connecticut  
AgingCT  
Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter  
The Arc Connecticut  
Center for Medicare Advocacy  
Central Connecticut State University  
Connecticut Association of Directors of Health  
Connecticut Association of Senior Center Personnel  
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness  
Connecticut Conference of Municipalities  
Connecticut Local Administrators of Social Services  
Connecticut Main Street Center  
CT Chapter of American Planning Association  
CT Council of Small Towns  
CTData Collaborative  
CT Department of Public Health  
CT State Independent Living Council  
CT Training and Technical Assistance Center at UCONN  
The Housing Collective – Centers for Housing Opportunity  
LeadingAge Connecticut  
National Conference for Community and Justice  
Partnership for Strong Communities  
Regional Plan Association  
Sustainable CT  
UConn Center on Aging, University of Connecticut

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Well Collaborative, an initiative of  
Connecticut Community Care

Connecticut is a wellspring of ideas and innovations on how to foster aging, dementia, and disability inclusivity. This municipal resource guide highlights recipients of the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative's first annual Wellspring Awards.

Following a call for nominations, a review committee selected recent or ongoing projects, policies and initiatives that have long-term, systemic community impact, going beyond provision of individual services and supports and integrate the voices of individuals with lived experience.

This resource guide, the third in this series for local government, was produced by the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative, a statewide, cross-sector initiative to foster more aging, dementia, and disability-inclusive communities, resulting in more just, equitable communities for everyone. Delegated by the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity, the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative is leading the state's livable communities initiative (Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 17b-420a).

**WELLSPRING AWARD WINNER**

# Age-Friendly Glastonbury

For their community-wide effort to address the diverse and evolving needs of community members of all ages, especially in relation to infrastructure, outdoor spaces, and housing.



In the spring of 2019, the Town of Glastonbury launched an ambitious, three-year process of learning and planning—collecting input from residents of all ages, business and community groups, and religious organizations, and collaborating across numerous town departments. The result was the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan: a road map to guide the town toward its goal of building a more inclusive community for all ages.

The plan establishes recommendations and action points to achieve Glastonbury's goals—providing services to address the needs of all residents, increasing awareness of the needs of older adults, sharing resources that facilitate a resident's ability to age in place, leveraging the value of older adults to support intergenerational opportunities, and providing appropriate and affordable housing options across the lifespan. Community listening sessions and focus groups identified infrastructure, outdoor spaces, and housing as priority areas.

In the first year of implementing their Action Plan, Age-Friendly Glastonbury received funding from the State of Connecticut's Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP), the AARP Livable Communities Grant Program, and the North Central Area Agency on Aging, as well as dedicated funds from the Town of Glastonbury. In December 2021, Glastonbury was recognized as a certified member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.



**PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS**

- Town of Glastonbury
  - Commission on Aging
  - Community Development
  - Engineering Department
  - Health Department
  - Housing Authority
  - Parks & Recreation Department
  - Senior and Social Services
  - Town Council
  - Town Manager
  - Youth and Family Services

Bike Walk Glastonbury

Glastonbury Chamber of Commerce

Glastonbury Police Department

Welles Turner Library

Age-Friendly Glastonbury also received planning and implementation support from local religious institutions and residents of all ages.



**PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES**

Age-Friendly Glastonbury has inspired new initiatives and provided support to continue and expand existing ones.

**Walkability and accessibility improvements**, including accessible benches and shaded arbors for rest in the Town Center, strategically placed lighting, and accessibility to parks and athletic fields.

**Poetry in the Parks**, encouraging discovery of Glastonbury's public parks and open spaces, through signs and banners featuring excerpts from favorite poems.

**Hiking and walking mobile app**, supporting safe community access to local hiking trails, with downloadable maps, trail facts, and more.

**The Friendship Circle**, providing residents with early-stage dementia with monthly activities and opportunities for social engagement.

**The Caregiver Support Series**, offering education and support to people caring for loved ones with dementia. *In partnership with Hartford Healthcare.*

**Eye Openers Low Vision Support Group**, a space to share concerns, questions, solutions, resources, challenges, and celebrations for residents dealing with low vision or loss of sight.

**The Chores Program**, helping residents over age 60 or living with disabilities to stay in their homes by connecting them with volunteers to assist with yard work or light housework.

WELLSPRING AWARD WINNER

# Thrive55+ Active Living Center, Groton

For their work toward adopting a new branding identity and for their inclusion efforts for individuals with dementia or socialization issues.

After almost 50 years of operation, the Groton Senior Center—a municipal initiative under the umbrella of Department of Parks and Recreation—decided it was time for a change. And so in 2021, following an extensive community study, they rebranded as Thrive55+ Active Living Center, dropping the term "Senior" in favor of a more positive expression of the center's mission.

But rethinking the status quo comes naturally to Thrive55+. Embracing their role as a safe place for families to drop off loved ones with dementia, the center started looking for ways to truly engage those community members—ultimately leading to Discover Connections, a social program for people with mild to moderate cognitive issues. Positive impacts are easy to see: regular program-goers smile more, talk more, and are more integrated into the Thrive55+ community than ever before. Participant input is key to the program's success, guiding topics for the twice-monthly meetings and providing inspiration and support for additional projects, such as Project Lifesaver, a public safety initiative that helps locate people with dementia who wander, and *Portraits of Life: Honoring Legacies*, an exhibition of portraits with accompanying biographies of community members with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

In 2022, Thrive55+ received the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities Topical Award for Innovation in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for their programming for people with mild to moderate dementia. In 2021, *Portraits of Life* was recognized as a Program of Excellence by the National Institute of Senior Centers.

PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

Inclusion initiatives at Thrive55+ are ongoing and expanding—and are often inspired by current program participants.

**Rebranding initiative,** promoting positive perceptions of the center's activities and mission, with the goal of expanding interest and attracting new participants to engage with Thrive55+.

**Discover Connections,** offering twice-monthly social engagement programming for people 55 and older with mild cognitive challenges or at risk for social isolation.

PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

Ayer Neuroscience Institute, Hartford Healthcare

Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter

Yale New Haven Health

Visiting Angels

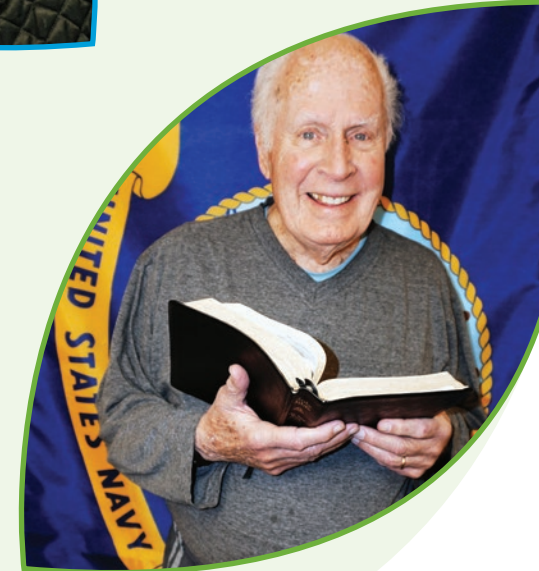
Care Partners of Connecticut

Mind Matters

Groton Police Department

Waterford Police Department

Additionally, Thrive55+ honors their most important stakeholders: the program participants and their care partners.



**Portraits of Life,** an exhibition of portraits and biographies honoring the lives of Thrive55+ members with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, focused on portraying an uplifting, inspiring, and comprehensive understanding of each participant's life.

**Project Lifesaver,** providing the Groton Police Department with specialized search and rescue training and radio bracelet tracking equipment to speed up location efforts and improve security for people with dementia who are prone to wander.

**Alzheimer's Support Group,** offering a community of support and facilitating connections to regional services for the families of people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

## WELLSPRING AWARD WINNER

## Dementia-Friendly Southington

For their comprehensive effort to support people experiencing cognitive change, especially through training of municipal staff and community partners.



When the town of Southington was approached by local non-profit LiveWell Dementia Specialists with a proposal to become Connecticut's first dementia-friendly town, they embraced the opportunity. Creating a more inclusive environment for an estimated 3,600 community members living with dementia was a natural next step for a municipality dedicated to improving the living experience of all residents.

Spearheaded by LiveWell and informed by input from residents diagnosed with dementia, Dementia-Friendly Southington kicked off an ambitious awareness-raising campaign, offering free Dementia Friends sessions for individuals and Dementia-Friendly @ Work trainings for businesses. Sessions educate attendees about dementia and offer suggestions on supporting those who are living with it. Within the first two years, over 700 residents and 50 municipal employees completed a session.

Impacts have been wide-ranging. Local businesses from banks and restaurants to churches and non-profits have trained staff and adapted facilities to support people with cognitive changes. The Southington Public Library has expanded their offerings for people with dementia—hosting a monthly Memory Café and adding works written for people with dementia to their shelves. And the police and fire departments have added people with dementia to their Special Needs Registry, alerting responders when a person in an emergency has cognitive changes.

Dementia-Friendly Southington is made possible by generous support from The Bradley Henry Barnes and Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust at the Main Street Community Foundation.

## PARTNERS &amp; STAKEHOLDERS

LiveWell Dementia Specialists and project lead, Katy O'Leary

Town of Southington

Southington Fire Department

Southington Police Department

Southington Public Library

First Congregational Church of Southington

Bob Savage and the Dementia Peer Coalition

Dementia-Friendly Southington would like to acknowledge the many local businesses who have supported the initiative, including Bread for Life, Chips Restaurant, Southington YMCA, and Wells Fargo Bank.



## PROGRAMS &amp; INITIATIVES

Dementia-Friendly Southington has motivated a broad range of initiatives, from awareness trainings for the community to tailored supports for people living with dementia.

**Dementia Friends Sessions**, free, one-hour sessions for residents, providing education about dementia and suggesting small ways to be helpful and supportive to those living with it.

**Dementia-Friendly @ Work Training**, free, 90-minute sessions for businesses, teaching them to recognize the signs of dementia and offering tips on how to create a dementia-friendly environment and interact with customers with dementia.

**Special Needs Registry**, enabling town fire and police departments to respond with appropriate support to emergencies involving residents with dementia.

**Memory Café**, offering monthly social meet-ups to combat isolation for people experiencing cognitive changes from Alzheimer's or other dementias and their family members.

**Cognitive Change Collection**, a curated collection of resource materials at the Southington Public Library for patrons with dementia, including *Take Me Back* reminiscence kits, multimedia materials and fiction written specifically for people with dementia.

**Dementia Peer Coalition**, providing peer-to-peer support, operated by and for people living with dementia.

**To Whom I May Concern**, an interactive theater program in which people diagnosed with dementia share their experiences in their own words.

**WELLSPRING AWARD WINNER**

# Central Connecticut State University

The first Connecticut university to join the Age-Friendly University Global Network, promoting lifelong learning and intergenerational connection and disrupting ageism.



Connecticut is home to the seventh oldest population in the United States; by 2030, 25 percent of our state's population will be over 60. Identifying a growing need to serve the educational interests of this group, Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) became the first university in the state to join the Age-Friendly University (AFU) Global Network, a group of more than 150 higher education institutions committed to developing programs to serve the needs of an aging population.

CCSU's commitment to age-inclusivity is campus-wide and goes beyond offering gerontology programs. Administrators have streamlined access to tuition waivers for students 62 and older—and as enrollment of older students has expanded, a club called the Matricu-"laters" has formed to share resources and support. Along with welcoming older adults into the classroom, CCSU continues to increase its community engagement. The Scholars for Life Speaker Series offers in-person and virtual faculty lectures to the community, while the WISE program brings together older and younger adults to discuss topics of mutual interest. Course abroad programs to Hong Kong and to Scotland create intergenerational learning opportunities focused on global aging experiences.

Culture change takes time, but CCSU is proud of what it has already achieved. The Office for Equity & Inclusion now recognizes age as a diversity variable, allowing resources to be devoted to eliminating ageism on campus. One such resource, Ageism First Aid, addresses the negative impact of ageism and the importance of social inclusion, instilling a new generation of graduates with a willingness to reframe aging.

**PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES**

Age-friendly initiatives at CCSU support learning and intergenerational connection across the lifespan.

**Inclusive enrollment policies,** welcoming students age 62 and older to enroll full-time or part-time at CCSU tuition-free, via a state-funded waiver.

**Scholars for Life,** a speaker series organized by the Office of Continuing Education, offering free virtual and in-person lectures on a diverse range of topics by CCSU faculty and friends.

**PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS**

- Central Connecticut State University
  - Interdisciplinary Gerontology Committee
  - Office for Equity & Inclusion
  - Office of Continuing Education
  - Office of the President
  - Registrar's and Bursar's Office
  - Center for Community Engagement & Social Research
  - Center for International Education

The Whitney Center

WISE Program Partners and Participants

New Britain Senior Center

Newington Senior and Disabled Center

AARP

Connecticut Healthy Living Collective

CCSU also thanks those who have worked with our interns and clinical students over the years.



**The Matricu-"laters",** a grassroots effort led by students for students, providing information, support, and community for interested older students attending CCSU.

**Gerontology Programs,** including a minor and an undergraduate certificate, establishing a solid background in aging-related issues and preparing students to serve the aging population in various fields.

**The WISE Program,** a service-learning experience that connects undergraduates with older adults at senior centers and assisted living centers in the community, promoting intergenerational understanding, dispelling age stereotypes, and fostering well-being.

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