

MAYOR'S COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

The arts council which has been in existence for nearly one and a half years has two goals; one, to bring artful entertainment to the largest audience possible and two, to promote art that is closest to the realities of people's lives. Art at its best moves people to question and challenge assumptions long held dear, it provokes a desire to communicate in a deeper way with our friends, families and neighbors. Art moves our lives forward and gives us models of what we can be and aspire to rather than letting us accept what is. As George Bernard Shaw said, "Art next to pain is the greatest teacher."

The mayor's arts council has put on music and dance concerts at Battery Park, created the Municipal Art Gallery at City Hall, brought outstanding art and performance events to the city, held art auctions for fund raisers, hosted local theatre productions and supported efforts to create a City Acting Company, sponsored Token Images—ongoing art exhibits on the CCTA buses, and more. This year we would like to focus our work in the neighborhoods. We would like to initiate art programs such as festivals, ethnic revivals, talent shows, and community pageants that would tap into the traditions of community self-help, civic idealism and neighborliness.

We would welcome new members and new ideas.

MAYOR'S COUNCIL ON THE ELDERLY

The Mayor's Advisory Council on the Elderly have been meeting now for almost a year. A number of issues affecting the elderly have been addressed and I can report that progress has been made in each of the areas studied.

Housing:

One of the strong recommendations made by the Council was to have all subsidized housing (elderly housing) develop a single application and that an application filed at one High Rise could be the application for all. This is now in place.

Another recommendation was to have the City make efforts to increase multiple housing units, as well as expanding subsidized housing.

Some progress has been made in this area.

Another recommendation was to have the Health Officer of the City begin evaluating the housing in the City since much of it is unfit for human habitation.

The Mayor has placed strong emphasis on this and these surveys are being accomplished.

Medical Care:

The Council decided to oppose indiscriminate rate hikes by Blue Cross, Blue Shield. Our lead led to an overwhelming public outcry which has resulted in the Blues not receiving their most recent requests.

The Council has decided that communication between the elderly community and physicians was sadly lacking, people did not know the avenues of appeal on excessive charges, did not know that certain physicians accepted Medicare assignments and that other physicians would lower their fees if they knew of a patient's inability to pay.

In a meeting with the physicians, the physicians agreed to handle elderly people with more awareness of their financial plight, the physicians also agreed to and did advertise how people could make appeals.

RSVP is in the process of updating the VPIRG Manual which will clearly identify all physicians who accept assignment.

Transportation:

The Council was very unhappy with CCTA's approach and attitude to the elderly and handicapped. A change in management in CCTA allowed us the opportunity to have several agencies dealing with the elderly to express concerns and make suggestions for the new CCTA Manager, Cathy Debo. We now have a much more receptive and responsible transport system.

We have also provided data and information to the State for their State Planning of transportation as it applies to the City of Burlington.

Contact with Elderly:

While the first 6-7 meetings were primarily organizational and devoted to allowing people to express their many concerns in the above three listed areas, the Council decided that we had to also continue to have immediate concerns of the elderly aired.

The Council therefore met with the elderly in each High Rise in an effort to secure participation. These meetings were heavily attended and a great deal of feedback was received.

Primary among the various feedback was the issue of snow and ice on sidewalks.

Council sponsored Senior Citizens day in Downtown Burlington, assisted at Health Fair, and requested funds for cultural events in Aged Housing.

The above represents only a small portion of the issues and concerns addressed and considered by the Council. The Council is pleased with its accomplishments even though we all feel we have a lot more to do.

The Council is now undergoing a re-organization to allow fuller elderly participation and to have the elderly take over the leadership roles.

I wish to thank you, Mayor Sanders, for the support and confidence you placed in this Council. I hope we have lived up to some of your expectations.

I would also like to thank all of the many participants and Council people who have worked so hard, on their own time, to make this a success.