

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

Memorandum

November 30, 2007

TO: Fred Couceyro, Director, Parks and Recreation  
FROM: Paul Hunt, Senior Services Coordinator  
RE: 2007 Annual Report

The activities of the Senior Services fall basically into four categories:

1. Social Service Coordination -

Social Service coordination falls into two main groups of constituents. First are the senior citizens themselves who call for a variety of reasons that will be discussed later in this memorandum. Second are the younger community members who call on behalf of older citizens. This second group can be subdivided into three groups: a) community members who call regarding issues related to their own family members who live either in Coral Gables or outside Coral Gables; b) family members who live outside Coral Gables, many times outside the state, who call regarding a senior citizen family member who lives in Coral Gables; and c) community members who call regarding senior citizen neighbors, some with various complaints but most with genuine concerns about their neighbors, many times trying to care for these neighbors in the best tradition of neighborliness.

The types of calls can be classified as follows: 1) general information regarding activities and services. Many times these calls are handled with referrals to activities and services and follow-up is minimal. Other times, as the initial conversation progresses, it becomes clear that the opening questions are symptomatic of larger issues requiring more intensive responses; 2) calls for specific services where there already an identified problem. These calls may be from other agencies, community members, or other city department personnel; and 3) crisis intervention that is usually a result of situations that failed to receive proper earlier attention but may involve a threat of immediate eviction or immediate threat to the life or well-being of a senior citizen in the community.

Most of the first class of calls can be handled through information available directly from the Senior Services Coordinator or with some investigation the information can be developed and given to the community members. Some of these calls require follow-up but many are one-time requests although the same individual may call repeatedly with different requests for information. Some of these calls are regarding activities provided by the Department of Parks

and Recreation and the Senior Services Coordinator works closely with the staff of the Department of Parks and Recreation to respond to these requests for information and for sign-up procedures.

The second class of requests often requires repeated contacts on behalf of the senior citizen in order to arrange for appropriate services. The Senior Services Coordinator may often need to meet with the senior often in the senior citizen's home (this has been preferable, even in marginal cases, because of the difficulties with meeting with people in the interim location). While referral and coordination of services is the ultimate goal of the Senior Services Coordinator, there have constantly been a residual of cases that have remained the direct responsibility of the Coordinator even when other agencies have become involved. For example, there is a modest number of clients who, for whatever extended period of time, feel that it is important, sometimes critical, to talk to the Senior Services Coordinator very frequently, often daily and occasionally more than once per day during certain periods. This is typical during periods of depression or high anxiety pending the final engagement of services.

The third class of requests involves potential evictions, receipt of court documents, and other threats of service interruption such as to telephone or electric service. Often these crisis calls are only the first indication that there are multiple problems that need responses. For instance, one case where the electricity had been shut off, the senior had not paid her bills because of the onset of Alzheimer's Disease which apparently had gone undiagnosed previously. Another case involved court documents being served for a hearing, not about the senior citizen's status which actually prompted the initial call to the Aging and Adult Abuse hotline, but concerning the status of the mentally retarded adult child who was residing with the senior citizen. In this case the senior citizen panicked, fearing that her daughter would be removed, and had planned to simply ignore the court hearing. The Senior Services Coordinator proceeded to explain the entire process to the mother, to arrange for an advocate from a local agency, and orient the court-appointed attorney to various details of the case.

It is estimated that approximately eighty percent of the time of the Senior Services Coordinator's time is occupied with activities classified as Social Service Coordination.

## 2. Senior Recreation

Senior recreation activities have become the responsibility of the Senior Division.

Ms. Anastasia Smith joined the staff on June 2007 as a Recreation Specialist.

Subsequently she was joined by Ms. Leticia Ellis on a part-time basis. They used the summer months to solidify our existing programs and make appropriate adjustments. In addition, Ms. Smith has developed and enhanced our monthly events for seniors and the attendance has increased significantly. The senior mailing list has been formalized and continues to enlarge. She has also attempted to solicit the opinions of seniors.

During the summer the arrangement to use space in the University Baptist Church was finalized and use of the space there was initiated. As with any new arrangement it was a learning experience for everyone involved but the cooperation and collaboration of the Church has been

very much appreciated and we look forward to continued use of the space to provide a variety of senior recreation programs.

The growth in this area has been very good and, with that experience in hand, planning for senior recreation in 2008 can continue this very healthy pattern of growth. Examples of new programs include: Autobiography & Memoir, Music Appreciation, Healthy Living, Let's Do Lunch weekly lunch, Mosaics Class, Floral Arranging Class, Knitting and Crocheting Class, and Dancercise. In addition, the Senior Recreation Specialist has conducted a series of trips to local events including theater and leisure activities. The Golden Gables has been a very good vehicle for publicizing these events and for recruiting participants from the community.

The Recreation Specialist devotes all of her time to senior recreation activities. Supervision by the Senior Services Coordinator occupies approximately five percent of his time.

3. Public Policy -

It is important to the ultimate well-being of the seniors in Coral Gables that public policy issues are followed as closely as possible. The Coordinator attends meetings on occasion to maintain a sufficient level of knowledge about current issues in the field of senior citizens services to be able to adequately respond to the ongoing needs of the seniors in Coral Gables.

This activity area consumes approximately five percent of the time of the Senior Services Coordinator.

4. Senior Citizens Advisory Board -

This Board schedules a monthly meeting and receives reports on various issues regarding senior citizens in Coral Gables.

This activity area had been consuming approximately five percent of the time of the Senior Services Coordinator. These activities had peaks during the month and during the year.