



# South County Senior Center Community Forums 2025

Providing Services, Activities, and Support for Older Adults

South County Senior Center

22 Amherst Rd., Sunderland, MA 01375

[www.southcountyseniorcenter.org](http://www.southcountyseniorcenter.org)

# Our Leadership Team

Board of Oversight:

Joyce Palmer-Fortune (Chair, Whately)

Trevor McDaniel (Deerfield)

Daniel Murphy (Sunderland)

Jennifer M. Ferrara, MBA – Director

Chris Goudreau – Outreach Coordinator

Tom Patria – Program Coordinator

# UMass Needs Assessment (2021-2022)

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36% response rate (1,393 respondents age 50+ in South County)

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66% recognize the Senior Center's role in the community

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30% would attend more if programs matched their interests

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64% (age 50s) prioritize physical health programs & outdoor exercise

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58% (age 50s) want fitness space

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50% (age 60s-70s) want lifelong learning courses

# Facility Needs & Community Concerns

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- Seniors need a permanent, safe meeting space - one location
- 45% don't know who to contact for social, health, or municipal services
- 50% have been caregivers in the past 5 years
- 58% of caregivers struggle balancing responsibilities

## SC Aging Population Trends

- 23% of residents age 65+ live alone (solo agers)
- 45% of those age 80+ live alone
- 10% of 65+ residents diagnosed with Alzheimer's (likely underreported)
- By 2035, 37% of the regional population will be 60+
- Senior Center demand will continue increasing





# Membership Growth


## **Active Members:**

- 2019-2021: 262 active members
- 2022-2025: 671 active members

## **New Members:**

- 2019-2021: 105 individuals
- 2022-2025: 438 individuals

## **Residency of Members:**

- Sunderland: 150
  - Deerfield: 342
  - Whately: 59
  - Surrounding Communities: 120
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# How to Meet Demands?

## Increase Staff Hours & Increased Open Hours

- Our Director Position is up to 40 hours.
- In 2023, we increased Outreach Coordinator from 12 hours, 19 hours, to 35 hours and began to offer additional transportation. Grant funding has provided an additional 5 hours.
- In 2023, we increased our Program Coordinator to 19 hours.
- Open 5 days up from 3 days a week.



# Program Statistics

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- 7/1/23-2/5/24
  - Program Coordinator position was funded for 15 hours per week
  - Hosted 628 events
  - 359 active members and 251 guests (non-members ages 60+)
  - Average daily attendance was 71 members per day
  - 132 program days in a large
  - Centrally located space (other than 3 movement classes)
- 7/1/24-2/5/25
  - Program Coordinator hours increased to 35 hours per week
  - Hosted 935 events
  - 408 active members and 299 guests (non-members ages 60+)
  - Average daily attendance is 61 members per day
  - 152 program days
  - Varied locations

# What Our Members Need/Want

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**Programming (via edmSTUDIO & SCSC Surveys, Fall 2024):**

## **1. Greater Social Connections**

- Provide events for meeting peers and forming new friendships
- Reduce loneliness; contribute to mental and physical well-being, reduce risk of depression, cognitive decline
- Improve quality of life by providing a sense of belonging, purpose, and support system

## **2. Physical Fitness Activities**

- Enhanced Fitness, Seated Dance, Chair Yoga, Tai Chi
- Maintain mobility, flexibility, and balance
- Reduce fall risks and health complications

# What Our Members Need/Want

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**Programming (via edmSTUDIO & SCSC Surveys, Fall 2024):**

## **3. Learning Opportunities**

- Computer, Art, Drawing Classes; historical figure presentations
- Stimulation to keep the brain sharp and engaged

## **4. Varied & Interesting Activities**

- Organize outings/field trips (museum visits, theater & music performances, group trips)
- Improve cognitive health and memory

# How We Make It Happen

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## Offer Multiple Locations

- 22 Amherst Rd., Sunderland
  - Main Location/Staff Office/Food Pantry/Small Capacity Programs/Grab & Go Lunches
- First Congregational Church (Sunderland)
  - Food Distribution
- Whately Town Hall
  - Movement Classes & Large Capacity Events
- Partnership with Cadence Yoga Studio, Sunderland
  - Chair Yoga, Balance
- APCC (Polish Club), S. Deerfield
  - Large Congregant Meals & Large Capacity Social Events
- Deerfield Town Hall
  - Brown Bag Distribution
- Hybrid Opportunities



# Outreach

- Food Assistance – SNAP & HIP
- Fuel Assistance Applications (HEAP)
- Transportation for Programming & Medical Appointments
- Referrals – Home Care, Legal Aid, Food Assistance, Transportation, SHINE, Housing & Home Modification
- One-on-one private outreach appointments

# Nutrition Program Partnerships

- Food Bank of Western Mass: Brown Bag program & applications
- Dept. of Transitional Assistance: SNAP processing site
- Turners Falls Area Survival Center: Pop-up food truck (2nd Wed. of each month)
- Collect donations from stores/farmers



# We Need a Center!

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- The increase in membership proves we are meeting community needs.
- Senior Center programs/services demand is rising.
- We are finally at **adequate** staffing and need to continue to maintain our current level of service.
- We need **one, new Center** to serve the current and projected number of older adults in our community.

*Citation: Coyle, Caitlin, 'Aging in South County' (June 2022), Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging Publications.*