

Hastings Community Education

Boomer's Summit

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Report by University of St. Thomas

Graduate Students

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INTRODUCTION: In October of this year Hastings Community Education, partnering with the City of Hastings hosted a “Boomer Summit”. It was a community conversation for the “Baby Boomers”, facilitated as a World Café. The following four conversation areas covered were:

- What could happen that would enable you to feel fully engaged and energized by your involvement in the community of Hastings?
- If the City of Hastings and Community Education had no limitations, what bold steps would you ask it to take for Boomers?
- In what one area do you think that the City of Hastings and Community Education could step up their leadership to significantly improve the benefit they deliver to the community, particularly for Boomers?
- What is missing from this conversation? What is it we are not seeing? What do we need clarity about?

These questions were meant to stimulate the conversation. Much of the information obtained crossed over into several of the questions. The bottom line is to understand what the Boomers want/need from the City of Hastings and Hastings Community Education. Because the City of Hastings and Hastings Community Education model lifelong learning, they were open to turning the analysis over to the University of St. Thomas graduate students as a part of their project toward their Masters Degree.

Following the summit, these St. Thomas graduate students sorted the data, developed themes/topic areas that were prevalent from the conversation information. Using this information, they developed data driven recommendations under the various topic areas.

Thank you for this opportunity. Please let us know if you have questions.

Finally, you are on the cutting edge, in hosting a community-wide summit to look toward the future for the large number of Boomers who are wanting to be involved in their community.

Topic: Senior Center

Market this resource as a “community center” rather than a “senior center.” Participants were interested in a concept that would welcome the entire community reflecting multiple generations and diverse groups of people. This place should be presented as a fun place for learning, socializing, and health.

Make this space more accessible by offering services for free or at low cost, expand hours to include evening and weekends, and offer online registration. Importance was placed on the availability and the expertise of staff.

Offer specific types of activities and learning experiences, to include:

- Fitness such as yoga and aquatic/pool, athletic tournaments
- Technology such as computer classes, cell phones, and access to computers
- Social spaces for activities such as playing pool, watching movies, playing cards, book clubs, juke box, etc.
- College classes
- Learning related to retirement
- Opportunities for consulting services
- Arts such as theatre, band, choir

Topic: Health Care

Boomers are concerned about receiving well rounded and quality care as they age. They believe Community Education could assist with the following:

- Provide resources (print/electronically) about locations that assist or can direct boomers to the best health care options for them.
- Develop a list of local health care facilities and providers after using the power of community education to convene with local resources/providers.

Topic: Transportation

Boomers are concerned about the lack of transportation options that would allow them to get to offerings and resources in the community.

- Be a collaborator of resources in the community in regards to transportation to better empower boomers about their transportation options.
- Offer low cost or free transportation options to and from different community education opportunities or locations or programs, and market this information to better get boomers involved in programming.

Topic: Diversity

Boomers are seeking opportunities for greater diversity both in programming and cultural awareness. Recommendations are:

- Expand social opportunities
- Provide intergenerational experiences
- Utilize boomers as connectors and communicators with other community organizations
- Use boomers as leaders in cultivating cultural awareness
- Offer field trips outside of Hastings to more diverse settings
- Offer cultural responsiveness training
- Invite different cultural representatives in to share about their culture

Topic: Create a Sense of Belonging

Boomers want more opportunities but also a balance with volunteering. And, they want to feel like they belong and make contributions to the community.

- Community Education should be a catalyst to reach out to all the different groups that volunteer and bring them together to brain storm a central location for a volunteer board. For the Boomer volunteer opportunities include the length of time and duration of the opportunity.
- Consider a more comprehensive needs assessment in order to know and understand the unique needs of boomers.
- Recognize the differences between working and non-working boomers.
- Energize boomers to be involved and set goals.
- Provide a livable senior community.

Topic: Marketing

- Boomers want community education to market their programs in a variety of modes.
- Use modes of media to reach as many people as possible including the paper, online, community center and social media.
- Provide methods such as this Summit to keep ideas ongoing.
- Offer affordable programming with an occasional free or discounted rate.