



Lycoming/Clinton Bi-County Office of Aging Senior Center Planning Project

Final Report

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Research conducted by the
Center for the Study of Community and the Economy
Lycoming College
Williamsport, PA 17701

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Table of Contents

Section	Page
Executive Summary	2
Introduction	3
Research Team	4
Research Methodology	5
Issues and Recommendations	7
Senior Center Usage	9
Center Activities	12
Center Meal Options	18
Perceptions of Senior Centers	20
Center Appearance and Being Welcoming	23
Center Structure	25
Promotion	27
Appendices:	
A Focus Group Script	30
B Lycoming County Focus Group Notes	32
C Clinton County Focus Group Notes	38
D Lock Haven High-rise Focus Group Notes	43
E Telephone Survey Script with Results	47
F Follow-up Focus Group Notes	54

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to research both perceptions and usage of senior centers by older Clinton and Lycoming County residents. Also researched were the reasons for non-usage and suggestions for increasing the number of users. The research consisted of a phone survey of county residents aged 60 to 75 and focus groups of older non-users.

The research found that similar issues were revealed by both the phone survey and focus groups. Overall, senior centers retain a positive perception. The centers were seen as useful, welcoming and clean. The activities that were most often requested were those already offered by the centers.

However, older citizens who were not users stated they already had busy lives and as a result did not have time to use senior centers. In addition, this group of busy older citizens believed senior centers were for people who needed services because of a lack of social networks or ill health. While not a negative perception, it was not an image that conformed to their sense of identity.

As a result of the research findings it is recommended that the senior centers consider how they interact with these busy seniors who currently do not use centers. It is suggested that activities be stimulating and that the seniors be involved in both the planning and promotion of events. The center manager role would evolve into a facilitator of a senior-run center.

Introduction

The Lycoming-Clinton Bi-County Office of Aging (LCBCOA), a program of the Lycoming Clinton Counties Commission for Community Action (STEP) Inc. asked the Center of the Study of Community and the Economy (CSCE) to assess the current and future needs of seniors of Lycoming and Clinton Counties as related to current and potential programming offered by the counties' ten senior community centers.

The total unduplicated count of consumers using STEP's senior community centers during the 2005-2006 fiscal year was 2,206. This number represents less than 7 percent of the bi-county population over age 60. Use of senior centers nationally has been in decline as the definition of retirement has changed and retirees' expectations for how they will spend their time in retirement has evolved.

The primary research questions for the study are:

How do current retirees between the ages of 65 and 75 who use senior centers in Lycoming and Clinton Counties assess the strengths and weaknesses of current programming? What additional programming should be offered?

Why do current retirees between the ages of 65 and 75 choose not to use senior centers? What could the centers offer or change that might make them more attractive to a wider range of users?

How do those nearing retirement age (age 60 to 65) perceive of senior centers? What programming might senior centers offer that would attract those nearing retirement to become users?

To answer these questions, the researchers at CSCE conducted the following methods of analysis:

- Three focus groups to gauge perceptions of senior centers and solicit possible changes from non-users in Lycoming County, Clinton County and the Lock Haven Elderly High-rise in Lock Haven, PA.
- A telephone survey of 722 respondents in Lycoming and Clinton Counties between the ages of 60 and 75.
- A follow-up focus group with previous focus group participants to discuss and assess survey results.
- A presentation of findings and discussion with managers of the 10 senior centers.

Research Team

The following individuals will lead the research team (Full resumes are available on request):

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Assistant Professor of Political Science
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Ph.D. 2002, Political Science, Emory University
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B.A. 1995, Political Science and Psychology, University of Houston

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Education

Ph.D. 1992, Business Management, Golden Gate University
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Research Methodology

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a qualitative research technique that uses participant interaction to uncover consumer's attitudes, opinions and values. Focus groups are often one of the first choices of research methodology when little is known about the cause of a problem. For this reason they are considered exploratory research because the issue or problem is being explored in this study. Focus groups can be used as a first step in exploring the cause a problem which can then be further researched using a quantitative research technique such as a survey.

Focus groups are sometimes misunderstood as mere discussion groups where people just talk while a moderator listens. However, a well designed focus group conducted by a trained moderator is much more. The purpose of the focus group is to encourage the participant to go beyond their first response to the issue being discussed. The interaction with the moderator and also between the group members is designed to uncover deeper feelings and develop new and creative ideas.

Four focus groups were conducted with five to eight participants. The participants were chosen using a participant profile that specified that the participants should be both men and women aged 60 or older who were currently not users of the senior centers. The participants were residents of both Lycoming and Clinton County from both cities and rural areas. In addition as much as possible the participants were chosen to represent the ethnic diversity of the communities. Finally the participants were to be active adults who were healthy enough to potentially make use of the centers. Potential participants were contacted through other organizations that frequently had older users or volunteers. Finding appropriate and willing participants was a not a problem.

Telephone Survey

The telephone survey, conducted March 25-29, 2007, included 722 respondents randomly selected from registered voters age 60-75 in Lycoming and Clinton Counties. The margin of error for the survey is +/- 3.6%. It should be noted that the margin of error for subgroups (Clinton County respondents, men, active seniors, etc.) can be significantly larger depending on each group's share of the total population.

Registered voters were selected to provide a broad cross-section of the target population and because the accompanying data that comes with a registration-based sample provided useful information for reporting purposes. The primary drawback of using a registration-based sample is that those residents who are not registered could hold different opinions about senior centers than those who are registered. Non-registered residents are likely to be of lower socio-economic status, rent at a higher rate, be less connected to the community, and less active overall. However, any differences in opinion between registered voters and those that are unregistered is likely to be small especially given that a high percentage of 60-75 year population is registered to vote. Therefore, any difference was not considered significant enough to alter the substantive results of the survey.

The survey sample was compared to the universe of registered voters age 60-75. The respondents were older and included more women than the population warranted. Therefore, the data was statistically weighted so that the results reflect the target population on age and gender.

It should be noted that in some of the survey analysis, respondents were categorized into “More active” and “Less active.” This distinction was measured based on responses to a series of questions in the survey (Questions 6-11). An index was constructed giving a respondent one point for every “active” response they gave to one of the six questions (“Both” was coded an active response). The mean of the index was 4.4. Those respondents (52.5 percent of respondents) with a score above the mean (5 or 6) were labeled “More active”; those (47.8 percent of respondents) with a score of 4 or less were labeled “Less active.”

Issues and Recommendations

Key Issues

Perceptions of Senior Centers are largely positive.

Those in the target population that do not use senior centers are not avoiding the centers because of a negative perception about the centers or their current users. They see centers as playing a positive role in the community and for people like themselves.

Seniors desire the kinds of activities Senior Centers currently offer.

While non-users may prefer a different mix of programming, they generally are attracted to most current programming types. Therefore, attracting a broader range of participants does not require radically changing programming content.

Lack of usage is more about style than substance

Given that seniors have positive perceptions about centers and desire the activities they offer, two issues remain. Many seniors remain unaware of what centers have to offer. More importantly, however, is that many remain unconvinced that a social service agency model can offer them something they can't already provide themselves in terms of activities, companionship or information.

The next generation of seniors includes very busy people.

If they ever did, seniors today do not retire and then suddenly become lonely, inactive people. Work, volunteering, family time, travel, and other activities make today's seniors extremely busy.

Active seniors don't want to be recipients of social services.

They don't see themselves as slowing down and don't want to be needy. Today's seniors see activity as the fountain of youth. Becoming recipients of services provided by others means they are submitting to the aging process, something they want to avoid as long as possible.

Core Recommendations

Senior centers must find a place to compete in their busy lives; active seniors want stimulating and interactive programming.

Senior centers are not just competing against time spent home alone in front of the television. The next generation of seniors will remain active longer in the workforce, in the community, with their families and with their friends. Centers must continually demonstrate to each new group of retirees why they should build time into their busy lives to attend. Programming must be as interesting and stimulating as what seniors experience in the rest of their lives.

Senior Centers must be organized so that seniors feel ownership in the activities they take part in.

Rather than go to a place and be the passive recipients of programming, many seniors would respond to opportunities to shape the centers activities themselves. By taking ownership in the center, seniors will be able to plan and implement activities to their own liking. Guided properly, senior-planned activities will also

be attractive to other new users. The goal should be for seniors to feel that the center is “my” or “our” center.

Centers should work to blur the lines between volunteer and user.

Many current volunteers fall within the target population of the senior centers. There is no magic line that separates those with the time, desire and ability to give of themselves and those who could gain value—entertainment, information, social or otherwise—from the activities senior centers offer. Centers should seek to increase usage by engaging users as volunteers and volunteers as users.

The Senior Center becomes a base for senior-planned activities.

Active seniors distinguish between activities that are planned on their behalf (social services) and those they plan. Usage should increase as seniors design and help to promote activities they want in a way they would enjoy.

The Center Manager becomes the facilitator for the seniors and their plans.

Rather than top-down planning and programming done by the center managers, the managers facilitate the plans made by users. The manager gives structure to the planning process and takes care of the organizational details.

Marketing must be multi-dimensional and participatory.

Current advertising methods are appropriate but not enough. Seniors asked for reminders and for information to be put in other venues that they frequent. They also would like to be involved in promoting the activities they plan. Peer outreach is an effective way to engage current users and attract new ones.

Senior Center Usage

The key concern underlying the commission of this study is the low level and declining usage of Senior Centers, both locally and as part of a national trend. Focus groups concentrated on gaining a better understanding of why non-users among the target population did not attend senior centers. Survey questions on the topic primarily sought to get a sense of how much of the target population had visited a senior center and respondents' overall familiarity with the centers.

The focus groups provided interesting data on why seniors who are aware of senior centers do not use the facilities and the scheduled activities. Both the Lycoming and Clinton County nonusers focus group participants stated that they were simply too busy to make use of senior centers. When asked about their current activities they mentioned everything from volunteering to second careers. Some of the participants' activities resulted from family responsibilities including seniors who were caring for elderly parents. Other activities were the result of personal interest. For most, their busy lifestyles resulted from a combination of work, volunteer activities, hobbies or caring for home and family. Another common comment was that they were not old enough to make use of senior centers. These comments came from participants in their 60s as well as a participant who is 80.

Clinton County high-rise residents had other reasons for not using senior centers. Some stated transportation was an issue. Others felt that the current users of senior centers were cliquish and unfriendly, particularly to those not interested in playing bingo or cards.

Overall, the participants did not feel old enough to participate in activities at the senior centers. While many participants were willing to volunteer at the centers, they did not see themselves as either needing the services or as fitting the profiles of a user of a senior center. They felt the profile of a senior center user was someone who was socially isolated and without the center would just stay home and watch television. One participant explained that 'active, healthy' people had no need for senior centers.

The telephone survey sought to determine patterns in usage among the target population. As Figure 1 indicates, overall approximately 17 percent of respondents indicated they have visited a senior center. Usage was significantly higher in Clinton County when compared to Lycoming County. The data does not give a clear indication explaining the county-based differences. This result should be compared to actual usage levels, and attempts should be made to better understand the discrepancies. The answer may lie in some inherent difference between seniors in the two counties or it may have to do with the level or quality of services offered. If the latter is true, making improvements in Lycoming should result in an equalization of usage levels across the two counties.

As is true among much of the data, females appear to be more engaged than males. Females reported attending senior centers more often than did males. It was expected that younger respondents would have visited senior centers less often than older respondents. While that pattern is true when comparing 70 to 75 year olds to the younger two groups, the difference is small and non-existent between the younger groups. It may be that younger respondents who have visited have done so more in the role of volunteer or in support of their own aging parents. Finally, active respondents were more likely to have visited a senior center than less active respondents.

Figure 1: Respondents Indicating They Have Visited Senior Center by Sub-Group

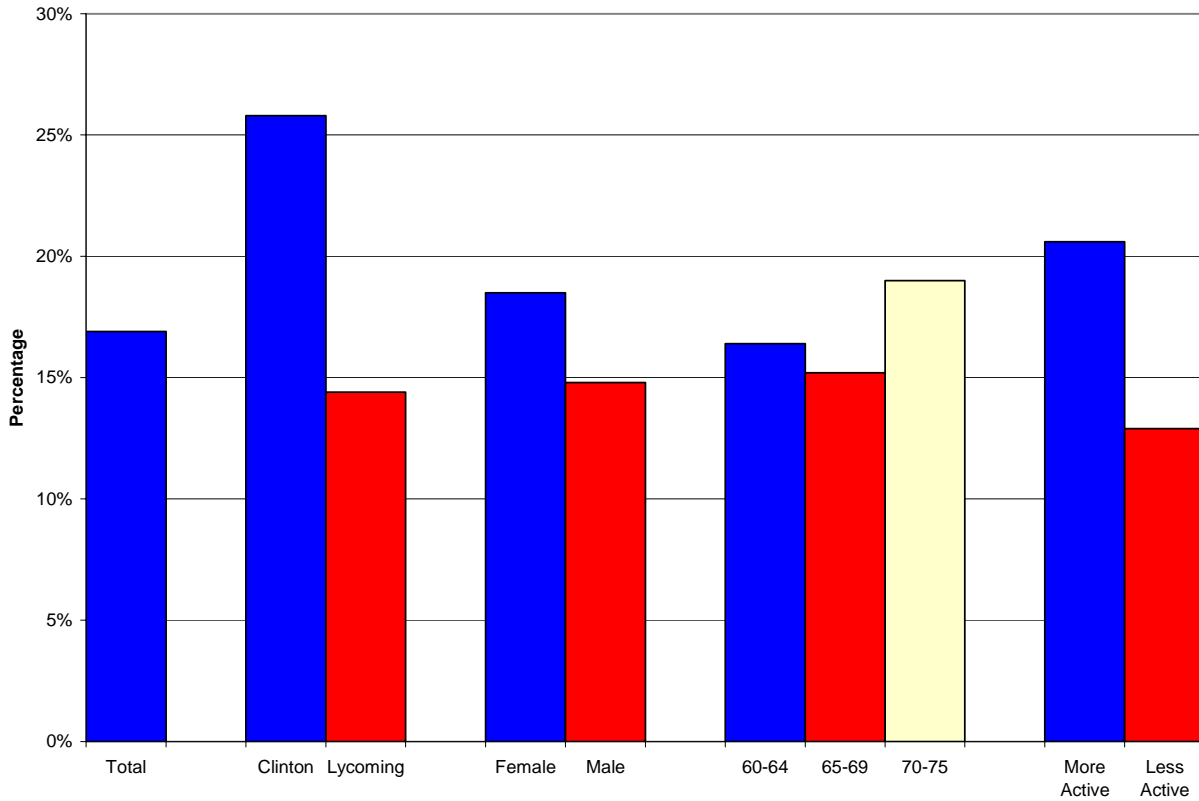
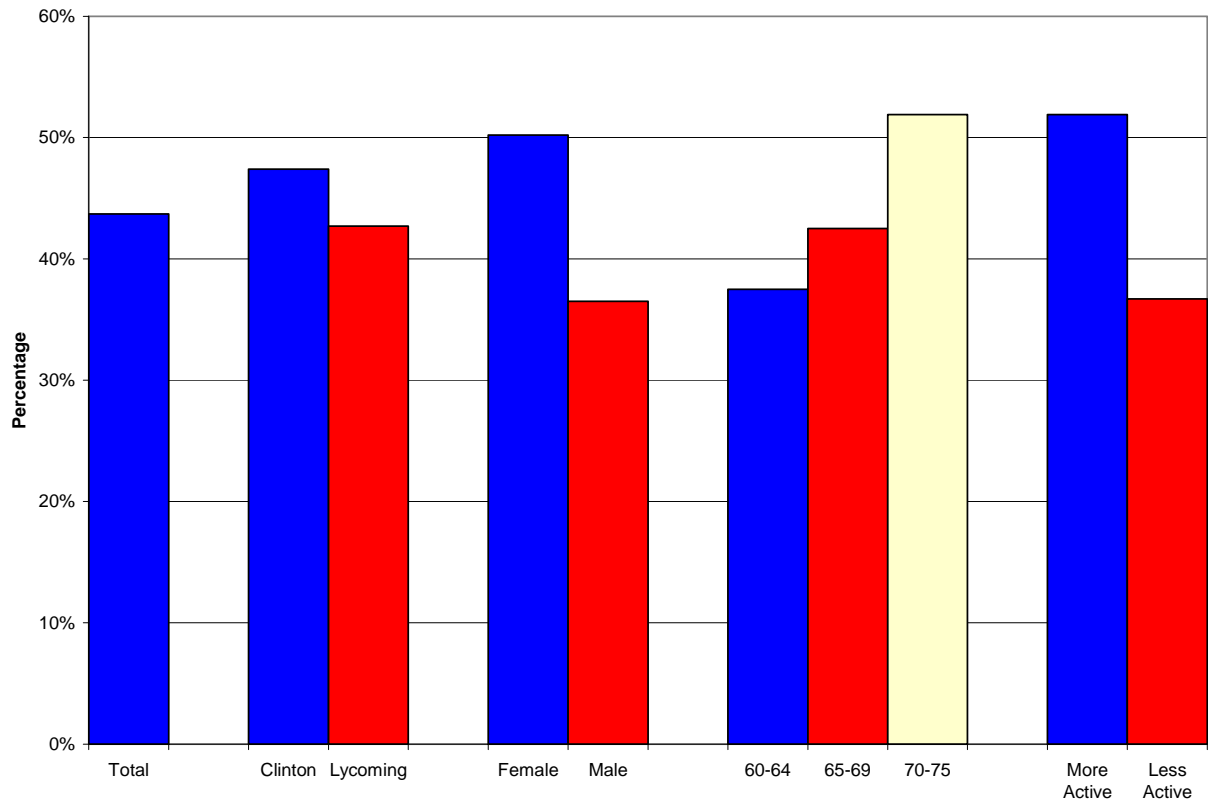


Figure 2 displays the results when respondents were asked to rate their overall familiarity with senior centers. Overall, less than half of respondents admitted being somewhat familiar or better with senior centers located in their county. While those familiar with centers varied some across subgroups (with respondents from Clinton County, female, older and more active being more familiar), the general lack of familiarity should cause concern, but is also a sign of hope. Those unfamiliar with services are unlikely to take advantage of them. However, it is much easier to create a positive image amongst those who are unfamiliar than it would be to alter a negative image held by those who were familiar and disliked senior centers.

Figure 2: Respondents Indicating They Have Are Very or Somewhat Familiar with Senior Centers by Sub-Group



Center Activities

The next major concern is to get a sense the kinds of activities members of the target population were looking for. Anecdotal evidence suggested disconnect between the services senior centers provided and the kinds of activities that might appeal to a broader range and younger set of seniors. Journalistic accounts suggest that bingo and shuffleboard have no place in the active lifestyles of new retirees. Center management worried that the types of activities they were offering, while appealing to a narrow range of seniors that make up their current users, not only did not appeal to younger retirees, but also actively discouraged them from getting involved in senior centers.

Non-users in focus groups were asked to suggest activities they would like to see in senior centers without prompting about current offerings. The survey used their responses combined with other activities suggested by center management to gauge the prevalence of the focus group responses among the target population.

When the focus group participants were asked what activities would motivate them to use a senior center, educational and physical activities were both frequently mentioned. The educational activities included speakers on a variety of subjects including history, health and finances. All three groups were interested in learning more about technology including the latest in computers, cell phones and digital cameras.

The desired physical activities included exercise classes and dancing. The participants explained that the exercise should be offered at differing levels of ability. Dancing classes were seen as another way to exercise with ballroom, line and square dancing being mentioned as possibilities. A walking track, treadmill and bicycling were also mentioned.

Other activities mentioned were focused on hobbies. Crafts, such as scrapbooking and quilting were discussed by the women. The men were more focused on woodworking and photography. Cooking was an interest shared by both men and women. It was thought that crafts would be a way for seniors to meet others with the same interests or develop new interests and meet new friends. Cooking was again seen as a shared activity where those in the class could prepare meals for others.

Much of the discussion focused on being involved in activities both as a learner and also as some who is teaching the craft or being the speaker. However, there was no interest in passive learning. While the participants are interested in a discussion on history, they are also interested in visiting historical sites. In fact, trips of any type were of interest. Some participants were interested in local history, others in visiting garden shows, while some wanted to go gambling at the new Pennsylvania casinos. Rather than just keeping busy, the activities that were considered desirable were those that kept both the body and mind actively involved.

Special events were also mentioned in all the groups. The activities proposed ranged from a classic movie marathon, to a health fare, to a 50's night. The final focus group then took this idea and further developed it. This group saw special events as a way to introduce people to the senior centers and then bring them back for regular activities.

Interestingly, the participants did not feel that all activities should occur at the center. They suggested that the centers partner with other organizations such as the library or local educational

institutions. While the center would ‘sponsor’ the activity, it would be run by an institution that had the needed personnel or facilities. They also suggested that some activities be held at other locations such as a museum or college. This would give those attending an opportunity to visit new places.

The Lycoming and Clinton County focus groups both discussed the idea that the centers could function as a clearing house for information. They want the centers to be sources of information on common issues shared by all seniors such as health care and financial planning. Even career planning was mentioned as a service that could offered, which shows that these ‘seniors’ intend to keep busy as long as their health allows. They also felt that the users of the centers could help each other with these concerns. They proposed that the information should be posted on the center’s website.

Summary of Activity Preference

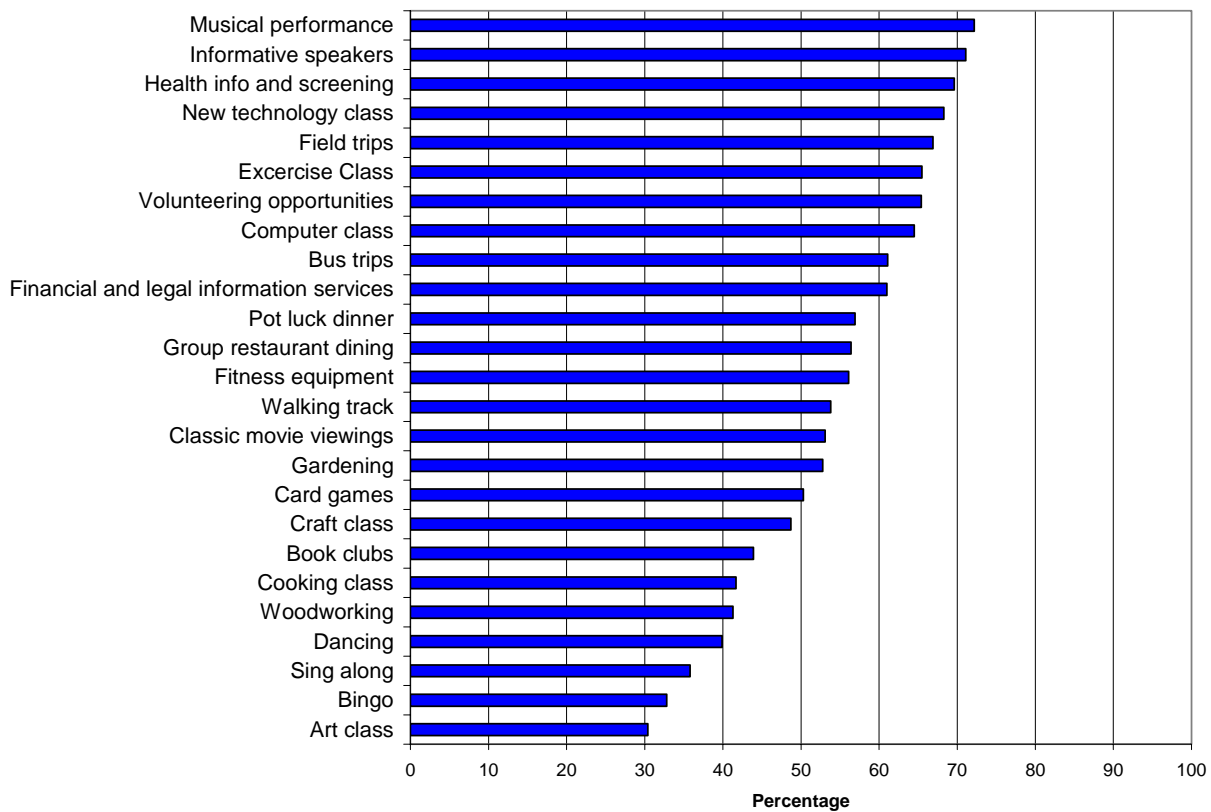
Priorities for <u>Lycoming</u> : More interactive and intellectual	Priorities for <u>Clinton</u> : More interactive and everyday focused activities	Priorities for <u>High-rise</u> : Food and health interests
Movies Family day Weekly speakers Use of technology Dancing classes Bus trips very popular Information on issues	Bible studies Crafts Physical activities Cooking classes Playing music	Meals and snack bar Health screening Walking track Sing-along Computer classes Card lessons Bus trips

Following up on the focus group results, the telephone survey asked respondents to assess whether each of a series of activities would make them more or no more likely to visit a senior center if that activity were offered. Figure 3 presents the results of their responses in terms of the percentage of respondents indicating that each activity would make them more likely to visit a center.

The activities receiving the broadest support are activities that stimulated the mind. From musical performances to speaker, field trips and computer and technology classes, respondents were most receptive to activities that either provided information or active entertainment. Also popular were physical activities like exercise classes, fitness equipment and walking tracks. Finally, social activities like pot luck dinners and group restaurant dining received majority support.

It should be noted that the activities that were supported by a smaller share of respondents should not necessarily be dismissed. Traditional activities like bingo or card games, as well as specialized activities like woodworking or cooking classes, received less broad support, but one would expect that participants would be dedicated in their involvement in such pursuits. Such activities should be considered especially when seeking to expand usage among particular subgroups who find that activity particularly appealing.

Figure 3: Respondents Indicating Activity Would Make Them More Likely to Visit Senior Center



To that end, it is useful to distinguish amongst a variety of subgroups in the target population to determine which activities find particularly strong support among which subgroups. Figure 4 breaks down by gender the data presented in Figure 3. Generally, women are more motivated to attend senior centers, regardless of activity, than men. Among the more popular activities, the largest gaps exist for musical performances, exercise classes and bus trips.

Among the less popular activities, it can be seen why each activity’s popularity is limited based on its concentrated popularity among subgroups. For example, craft classes, book clubs, cooking classes, dancing, sing-a-longs, and bingo tend to be more popular among women than men. By comparison, woodworking appeals predominantly to men. Indeed, the only activities men preferred more than women at any meaningful level were woodworking and financial and legal information services.

The differences seen between the genders do not extend to significant differences among respondents living in Clinton versus Lycoming counties, as can be seen in Figure 5. Most activities are supported at similar levels across the two counties, with the exceptions of musical performances, which Lycoming respondents favored, and fitness equipment, which Clinton respondents favored.

Figure 4: Respondents Indicating Activity Would Make Them More Likely to Visit SC by Gender

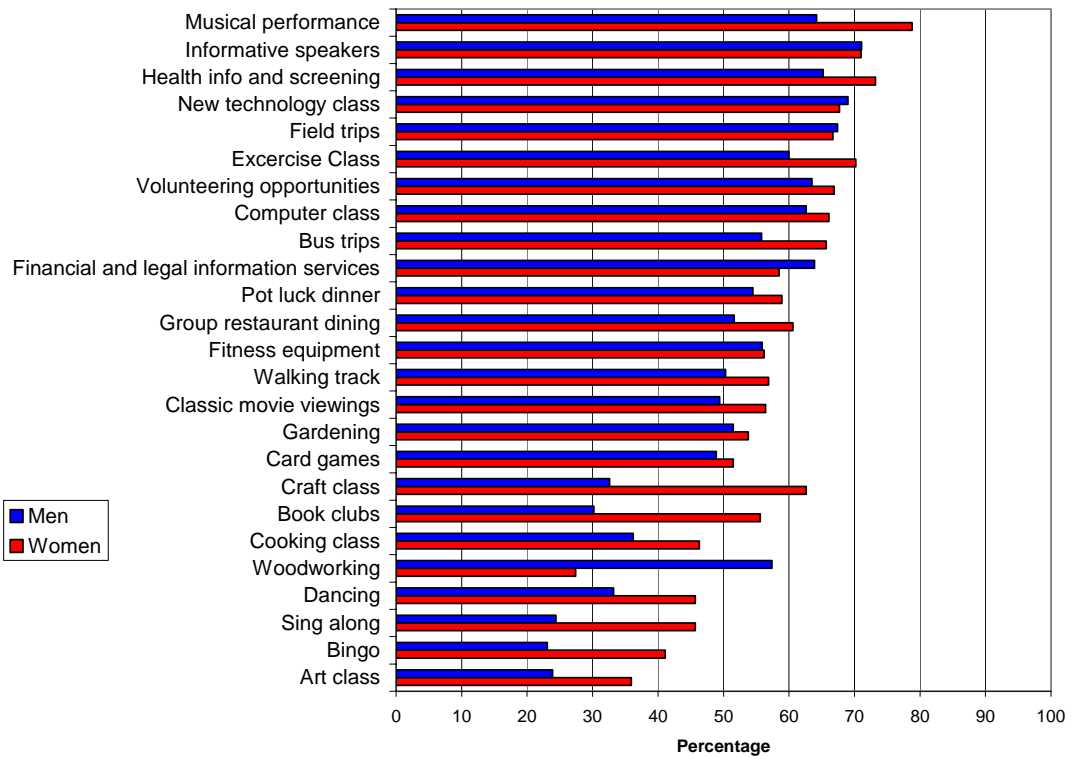


Figure 5: Respondents Indicating Activity Would Make Them More Likely to Visit SC by County

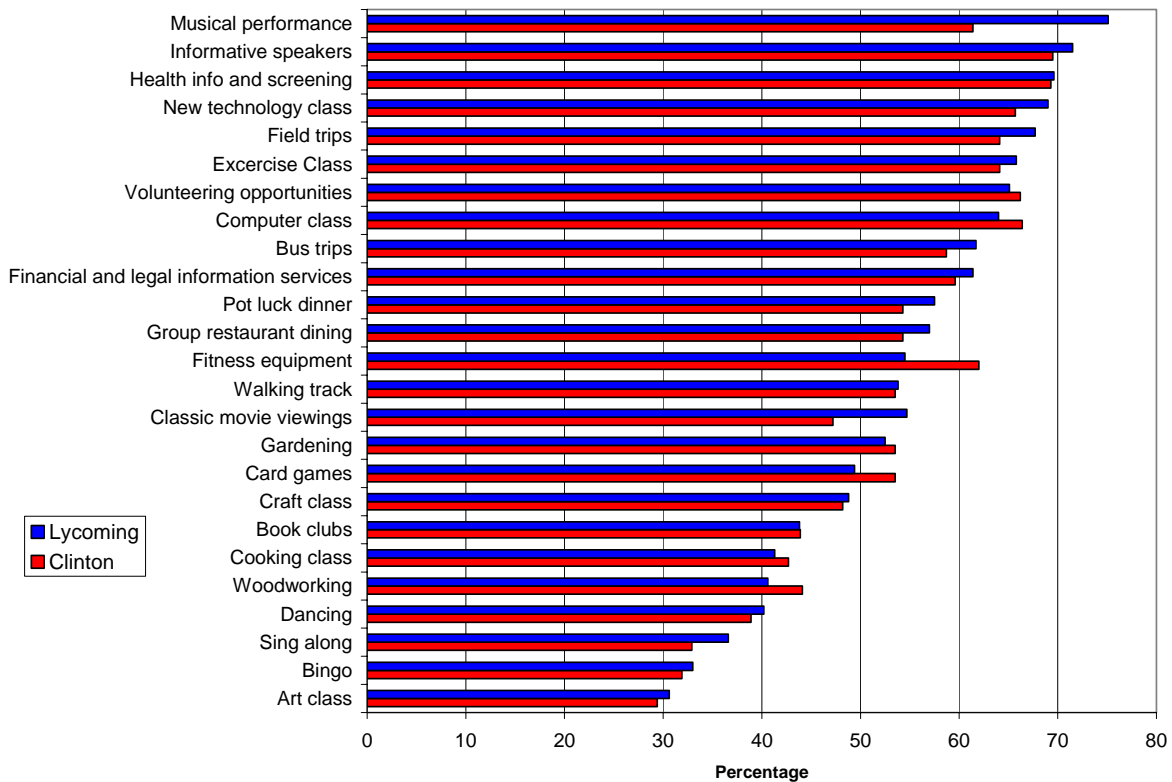
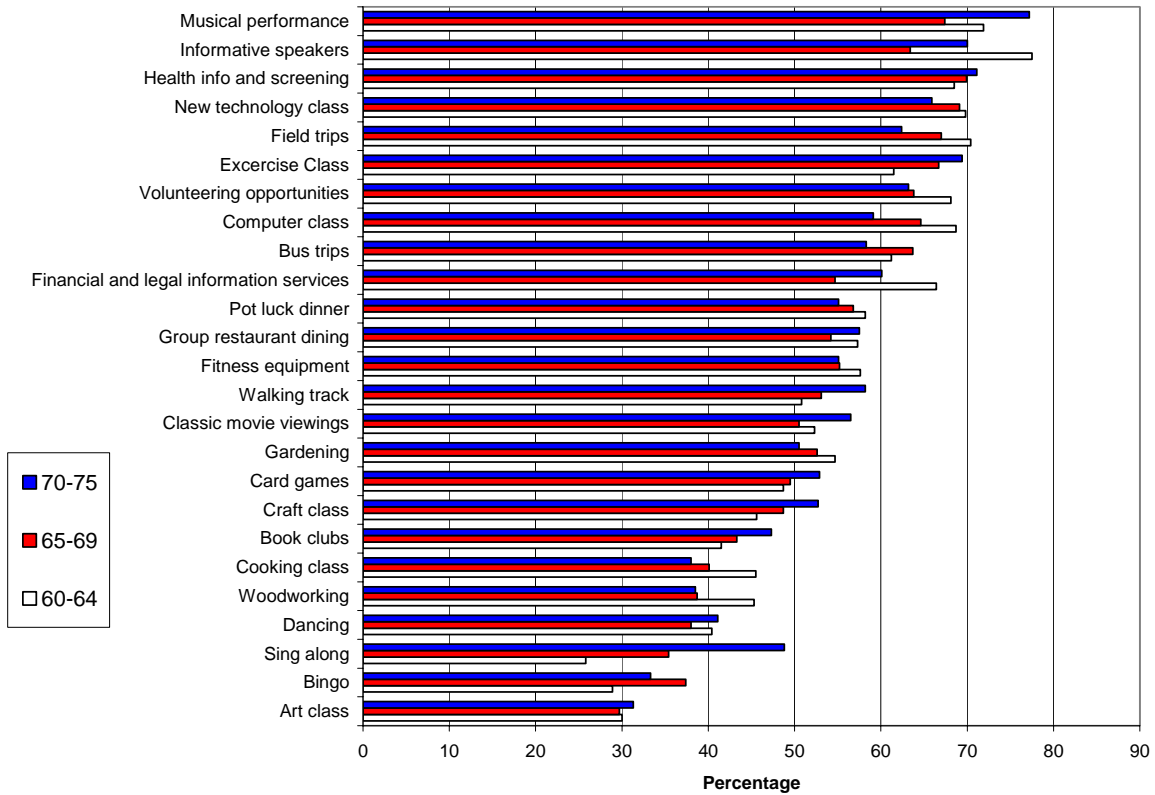


Figure 6: Respondents Indicating Activity Would Make Them More Likely to Visit SC by Age Group



The next step was to consider whether some activities appealed to a younger or older audience within the target population. Figure 6 presents the activity results dividing respondents into three age groups. The most important finding is that few large distinctions emerge. Sing-a-longs, musical performances, craft classes, cards games and walking tracks were modestly more appealing to older seniors. Those not yet retirement age were somewhat more drawn to speakers, information and computer classes, field trips and volunteering opportunities.

As age did not capture significant differences in interests, respondents were also divided by activity level, as presented in Figure 7. In general and as expected, more active respondents found nearly all the activities more appealing than did the less active respondents. However, there were differences in the gap between the two groups across activity. Table 1 indicates that generally the largest differences in interest between more active and less active respondents exist for more intensive activities.

Figure 7: Respondents Indicating Activity Would Make Them More Likely to Visit SC by Activity Level

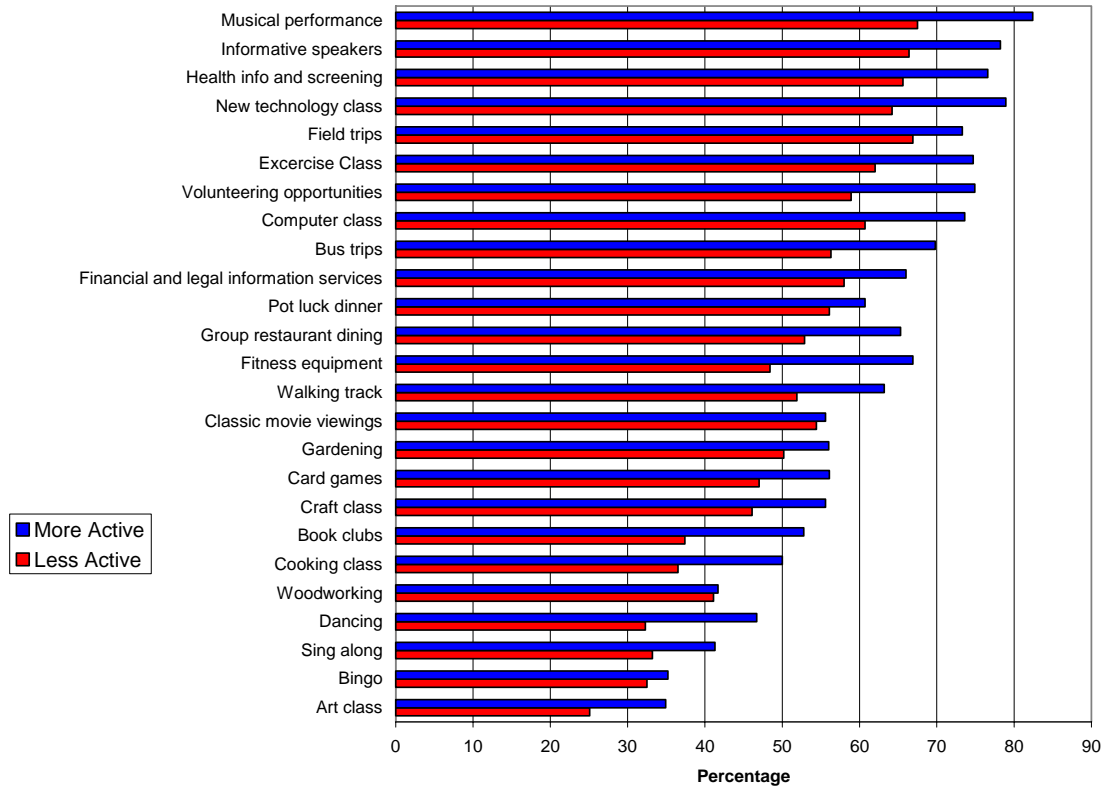


Table 1: Difference of Opinion of Activities by Activity Level

	Less Active	More Active	Difference
Fitness equipment	48.4	66.9	18.5
Volunteering opportunities	58.9	74.9	16
Book clubs	37.4	52.8	15.4
Musical performance	67.5	82.4	14.9
New technology class	64.2	78.9	14.7
Dancing	32.3	46.7	14.4
Cooking class	36.5	50	13.5
Bus trips	56.3	69.8	13.5
Computer class	60.7	73.6	12.9
Excercise Class	62	74.7	12.7
Group restaurant dining	52.9	65.3	12.4
Informative speakers	66.4	78.2	11.8
Walking track	51.9	63.2	11.3
Health info and screening	65.6	76.6	11
Art class	25.1	34.9	9.8
Craft class	46.1	55.6	9.5
Card games	47	56.1	9.1
Sing along	33.2	41.3	8.1
Financial and legal information services	58	66	8
Field trips	66.9	73.3	6.4
Gardening	50.2	56	5.8
Pot luck dinner	56.1	60.7	4.6
Bingo	32.5	35.2	2.7
Classic movie viewings	54.4	55.6	1.2
Woodworking	41.1	41.7	0.6

Center Meal Options

Senior Centers also offer users meals as part of their programming. One research question was whether expanded or varied food options could influence more seniors to become center users. The focus groups explored this topic in some depth, while the survey focused on confirming key findings from the focus groups.

All of the focus group participants felt that food was an important component of senior center offerings. The word that was most frequently used when discussing what menu items should be offered was 'homemade'. Soup was particularly popular as long as it was homemade. Sandwiches on homemade bread were also mentioned. Participants were also interested in other options such as a salad bar that could be combined with soup and sandwiches.

Besides the healthy options, the participants also believe that once in a while 'fun' food such as hot dogs and hamburgers should be served. Sweets, they felt, should always be on offer. The traditional cakes, pies and ice cream were mentioned. Hot meals were also mentioned but there were not as popular as the other options.

The Clinton High-rise residents thought that a snack bar should be available to center users. This snack bar could serve nutritional snacks along with soft pretzels, soda and hot beverages. All participants thought some type of food should be offered at any special event. They believe that the offering of food, or at least a beverage, is a sign of welcoming.

The idea of participation in food preparation was mentioned. In fact, the participants viewed meals as a time of sharing with center users cooking for each other and exchanging recipes. In addition, they liked the idea of being able to customize a meal. A make-your-own salad bar was proposed. Another idea was that center users could frost and decorate their own cupcakes.

Food could also be shared outside of the center's facilities. The participants suggested a picnic in the park. Another idea was to share dining experiences at local restaurants. While the participants understand that for some elderly the center provides the function of supplying needed nutrition, for most the socialization that surrounds the food is just as important as the food itself.

In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether the availability of a particular food option would make them more likely to visit a senior center for lunch. While the overall numbers are difficult to interpret, especially since the options provided were relatively vague, one can see in Figure 8 that some options were popular with a wider range of options than others. A salad bar and a hot meal attracted the most support. Confirming the results of the focus groups, ethnic foods did not garner broad support. Snack foods, alone, offered no broad appeal.

In Figure 9, the results are broken down into two key subgroups where the center management would like to see growth in usage. Food, as a motivator, appeared less attractive generally to the younger respondents. Among the more active respondents, only ethnic foods appeared to offer any broader appeal, when compared to respondents overall.

Figure 8: Respondents Indicating That Food Option Would Make Them More Likely to Visit SC for Lunch

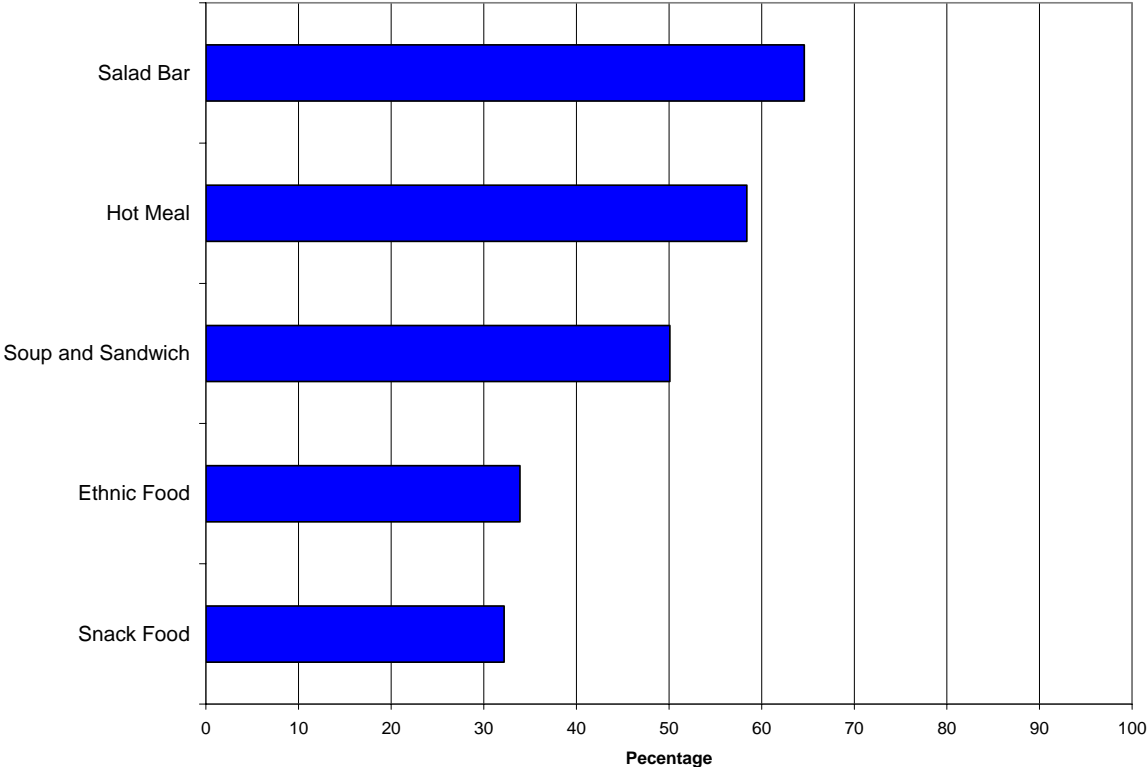
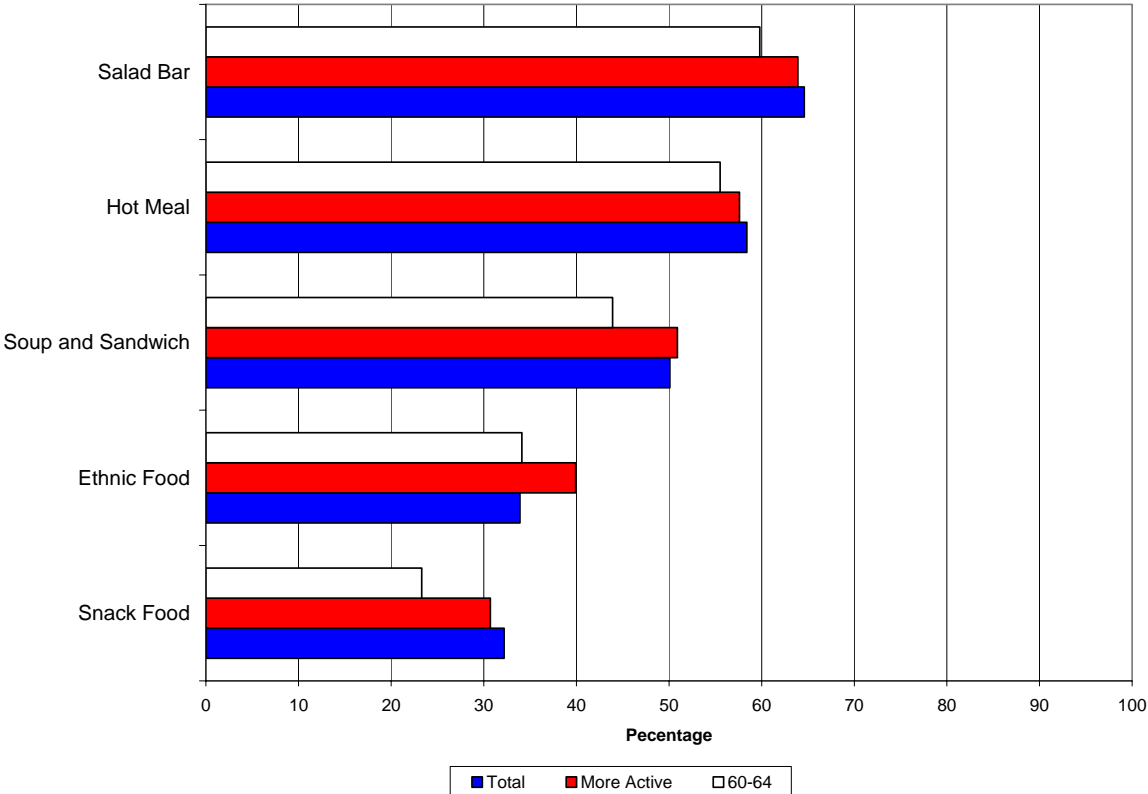


Figure 9: Respondents Indicating That Food Option Would Make Them More Likely to Visit SC for Lunch



Perceptions of Senior Centers

In addition to insuring that the senior centers offered appropriate activities to meet seniors' interests, center management was also concerned with the perceptions the target population had of senior centers. If seniors felt senior centers were filled only with frail elderly with no where else to go, it would be extremely difficult to persuade active, younger seniors to give them a try.

All three focus groups had a similar perception of focus groups. All spoke of the centers as a place for socializing with people of a similar age while sharing conversation and food. They were also seen as a place for the elderly to make friends while they played bingo or cards. These perceptions were all positive. However, the Clinton and Lycoming County focus groups felt that they did not have a need for these services as their lives were already full of people and activities. The high-rise group was aware that other activities took place and that centers were for people looking for something to do.

The survey confirmed the focus groups' positive assessment of senior centers. As Figure 10 indicates, when asked to agree or disagree whether particular adjectives described senior centers, the vast majority of respondents agreed with positive terms to describe the centers: useful, welcoming, clean, educational, convenient, fun and stimulating. Less than one in five of respondents agreed with negative terms to describe the centers: unfriendly, ugly, boring, and sad. While these results indicated positive assessments of senior centers, it should be noted that there is room for improvement to change some peoples' perceptions that centers are not fun, not stimulating, boring and sad. Figure 11 confirms that active respondents and younger respondents do not significantly differ in their assessments of Senior Centers when compared to all respondents.

Figure 10: Respondents Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing that Word Describes Senior Centers

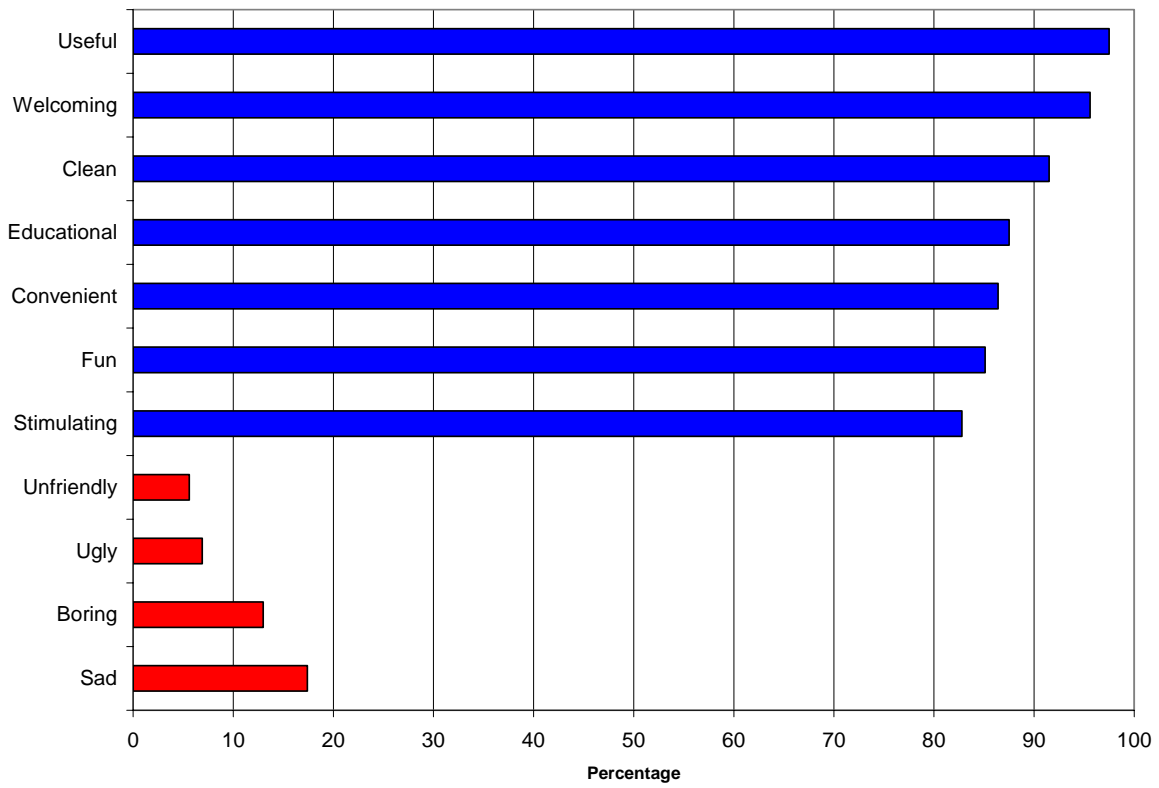


Figure 11: Respondents Strongly Agreeing or Agreeing that Word Describes Senior Centers

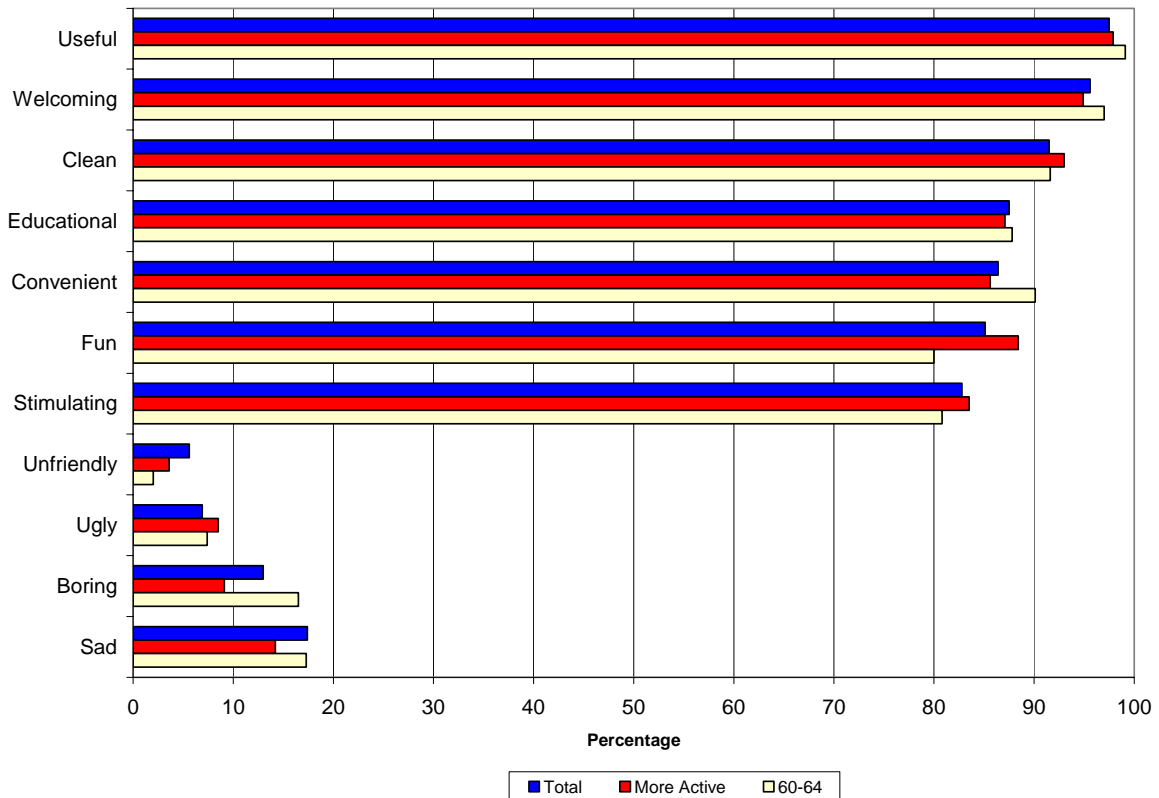
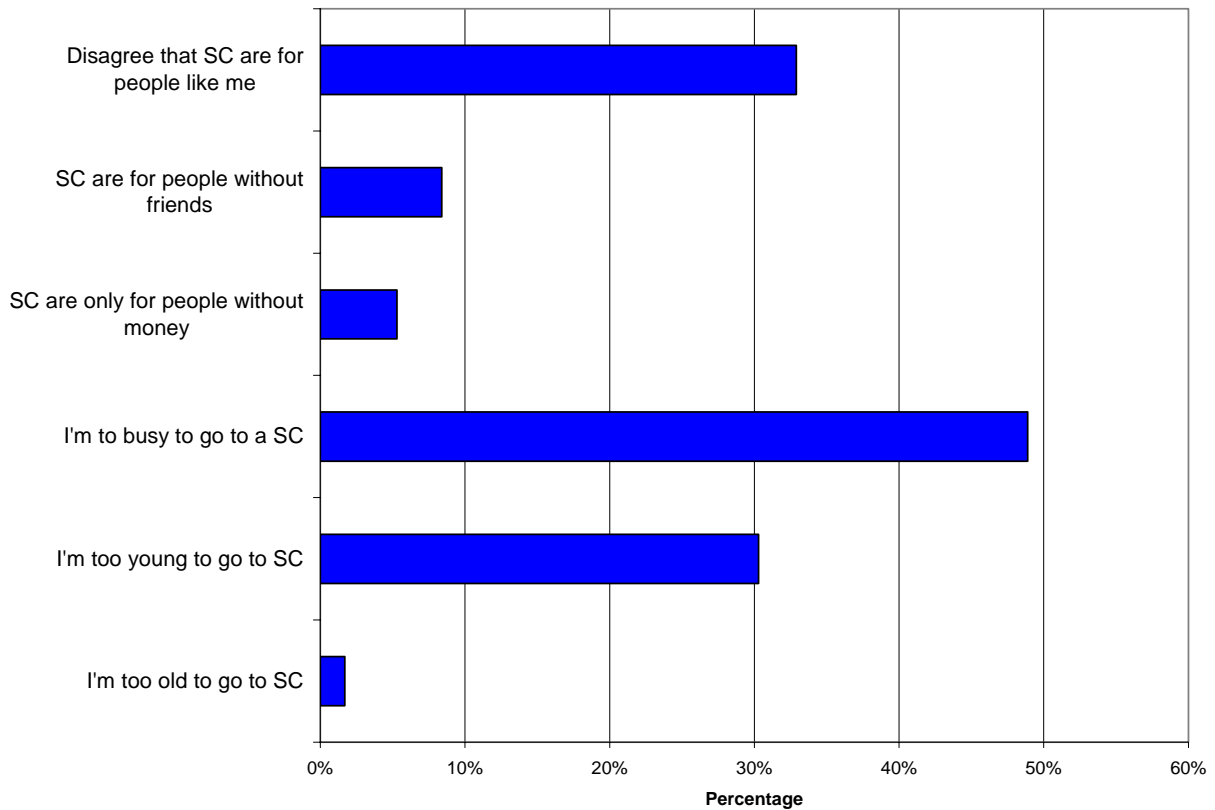


Figure 12: Perceptions about Relationship between Senior Center and Self



Another way to get at how respondents perceive senior centers is to ask them to think about themselves in relationship to senior centers and other users. Figure 12 indicates the percentage of respondents who agree (except as noted in the first question) with the statement listed. One third disagreed with the statement that senior centers are for people like me. Trying to sort out what they meant, some of the explanation comes from those who feel senior centers are for people without friends. Another small share of respondents felt that senior centers are only for people with money. A larger part of the explanation comes in the next two statements: large minorities of respondents indicated they were too busy to go to senior centers or felt too young to go. By comparison, very few felt too old to go.

Center Appearance and Being Welcoming

Senior Center Facilities

Another issue that was discussed in the focus groups was the appearance of the senior centers. All participants agreed that the center buildings should have a home-like rather than institutional appearance. Once inside the center, the furnishings should again look like pieces that could be in someone's living room rather than in an institution. For this reason, small round tables were preferred over long rectangle tables. Round tables were seen as encouraging conversation. Upholstered chairs, versus hard seating, were considered desirable. The participants described a facility that would have separate rooms or areas for different activities. One area would have comfortable seating for reading or television watching. Another area would be set aside for computer use. Many participants described the area as their own cybercafé.

A game room was proposed for card and bingo playing and a separate room for exercising and specialized activities such as woodworking or archery. Also mentioned was the need for a separate cooking area where meals could be prepared. There were a few unique requests including a chapel or mediation area. All participants wanted the colors to be restful and the spaces uncluttered.

In the final focus group, the participants noted that not all the facilities needed to be equipped for all activities. For example, one senior center could be used mainly for crafting activities while another was used for exercise classes. The participants believed all centers should have areas for computer use, comfortable seating, kitchen areas and game rooms. However, for more specialized activities, the participants are willing to travel to the center where they are available.

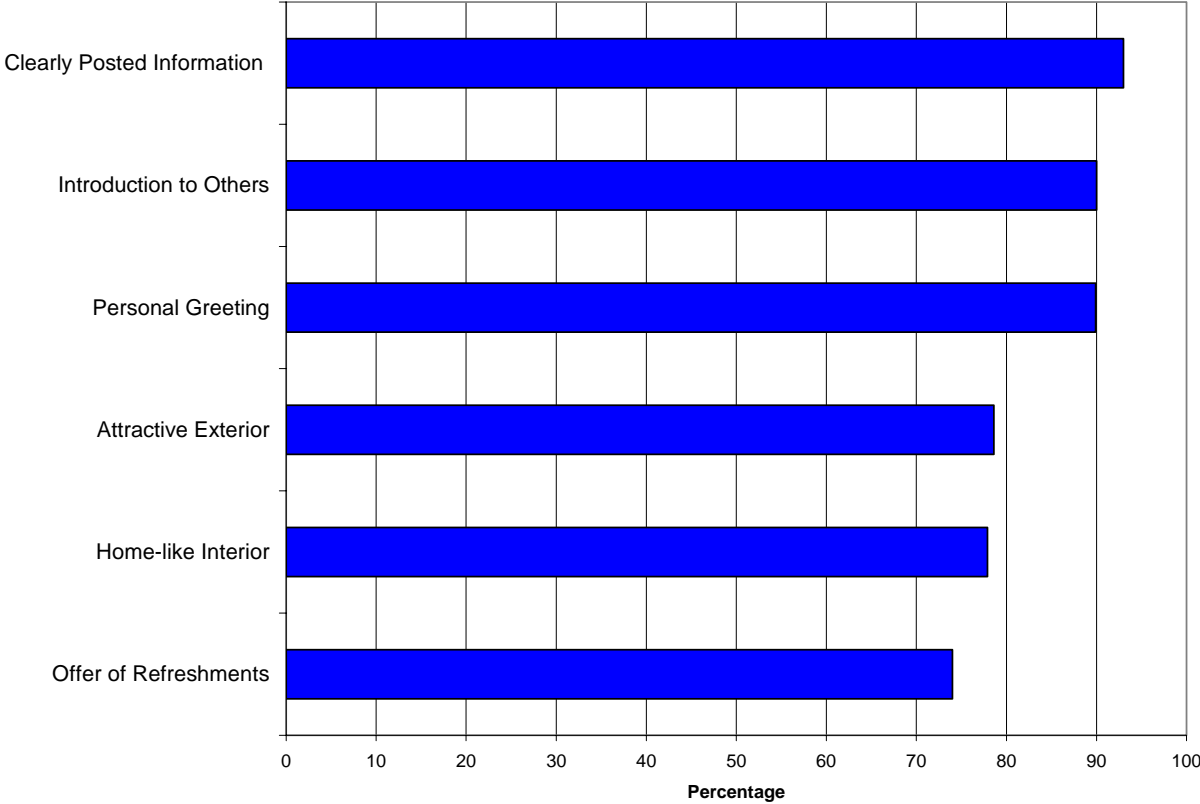
Welcoming

One of the issues that was a recurring theme at all the focus groups was the need to feel welcome when visiting a senior center. Currently, not everyone felt welcome when they went to a center. Instead they used terms such as cliquish to describe the current atmosphere. The participants did have positive ideas on how senior centers can be made more welcoming.

All the groups mentioned the idea of having a greeter at the door. This greeter would have the task of welcoming visitors. In addition, they would introduce new visitors to 'regulars'. They suggested name tags would be useful at larger events at help with introductions. The greeters would especially look out for new visitors who had recently lost a spouse or had health problems. The greeters would also have the responsibility for telling visitors about upcoming events. The participants suggested that after an event, the new visitors be sent 'thanks for coming' postcards.

To help get a better sense of how the target population might prioritize the results from the focus groups, survey respondents were asked about several features that a senior center might offer and whether each of those features would make the senior center feel more welcoming. Figure 13 presents those results. All features received broad support; however, overall respondents tended to prioritize the availability of clearly posted information as well as personal interactions like a greeting and introductions over the appearance of the facility.

Figure 13: Respondents Indicating Feature Very or Somewhat Important in Making Them Feel Welcome at Senior Centers



Center Structure

The participants in the Lycoming and Clinton County focus groups are busy individuals that have active, even heavily scheduled lives. They may work part time, have many volunteer responsibilities, care for family members, are busy learning new skills, or have even started new careers. In fact many of the participants stated they are busier now than before they left employment. The participants do not conform to the traditional model of retirement – a time of leisure. Therefore, participants feel in no need of an organization whose purpose is to provide inactive people with activities simply to fill time.

While they have no need for an organization that provides something to do, they do express an interest in an organization that provides the structure where they can share activities they enjoy with others of their own age group. As they can already fill their time, any involvement with senior centers would be based on sharing with others rather than simply on attending because of an offered activity.

While the participants felt attending activities at the senior center would be enjoyable, another important issue is that it is the ‘doing’ is as important as the ‘enjoying.’ The participants do not view retirement years as ones that should only be ‘fun’, ‘easy’ or ‘stress free.’ If they did, they would not be as involved in work, learning and volunteering as they are currently. Enjoyment is not their only goal. Rather their goal is a life that is both physically and mentally challenging. The participants believe that learning and involvement provide this challenge.

The participants know that someday their physical health may decline to where they will become dependent on the assistance of others. They acknowledge this fact and are sympathetic to those whose health does not allow them the same level of independence. In fact some of the participants already volunteer in helping the infirm elderly through the senior centers and meal delivery programs. However, not only do the participants believe that independence should be maintained as long as possible, one of the reasons they stay involved in the community is to maintain control of their lives. Rather than have a schedule of activities dictated to them, they maintain their independence by choosing how they will spend their time.

All of these themes – no need for additional activities, the need to be challenged both physically and mentally, and the desire to remain independent and in control of their lives – came together in the last focus group. This group consisted of people who had already participated in an earlier group. Because they had already thought about the issues of usage of senior centers and types of activities they should offer, they could now explore the issue on non-usage in depth.

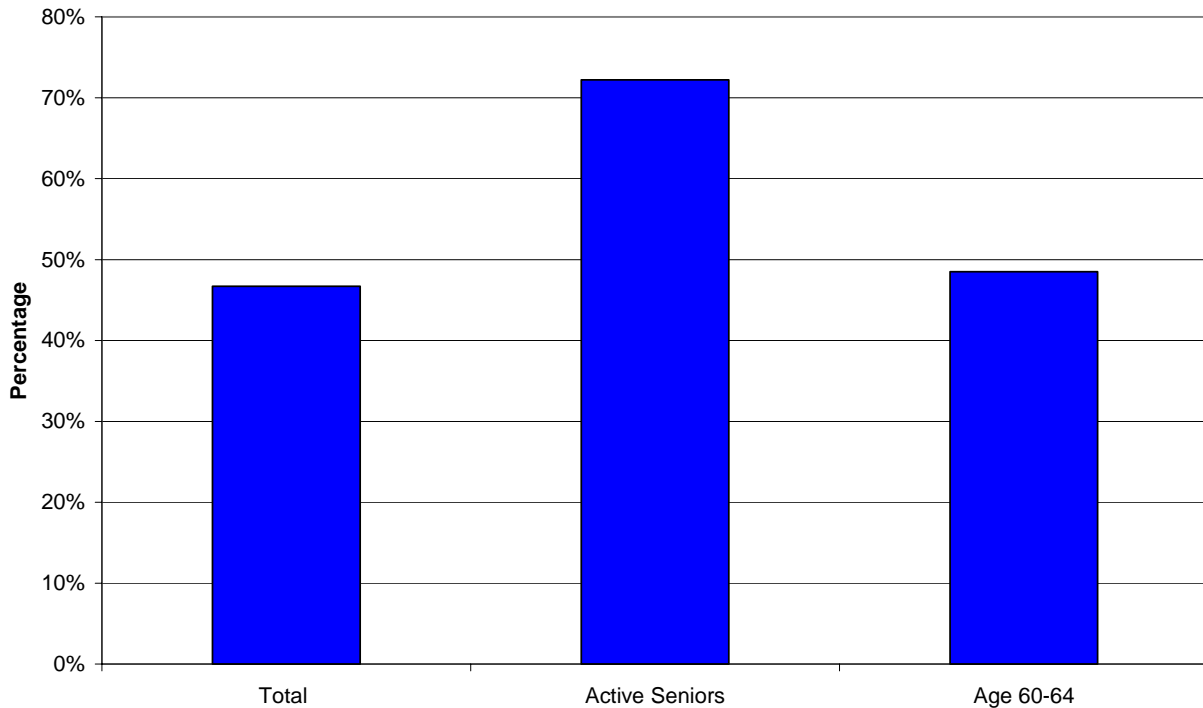
What was discussed was a potential new structure for senior centers. The participants acknowledged that the current activities at the centers often mirrored what they might enjoy. What is missing is the sense of involvement that provides the challenge that these educated, talented individuals desire. The participants want more than activities that they would enjoy, they want the challenge of being involved in the creation and promotion of these activities. If this structure existed, they would be involved with the senior center as capable adults rather than as recipients of services.

The structure they suggested would consist of a programming committee that would work with the center managers. They would suggest activities and help plan their implementation. They

would also take responsibility for suggesting ideas for promotion and again help with the implementation of these ideas. The center manager’s role would be to bring professional expertise and knowledge to the planning process. In addition the manager would help with procuring the resources that would be needed to implement the ideas.

The telephone survey confirmed the findings from the focus group that many seniors prefer to take an active role in planning their activities. As Figure 14 indicates, nearly half of all respondents indicated they liked to take an active role in planning events at least some of the time. The figure is similar for pre-retirement seniors, but when the group of active seniors are considered, that number jumps to nearly three quarters of respondents.

Figure 14: Respondents who indicated "I like to take an active role in planning events"*



* Respondents Chose this option over "I like to attend events other people have put together" or chose both options (depending on the situation).

Promotion

Given public perceptions of senior centers were largely positive and given centers offer many of the types of programming in which the target population is interested, another key question is how to best reach seniors about the programming offered at senior centers. The focus groups, especially the final follow-up group, spent time concentrating on this issue.

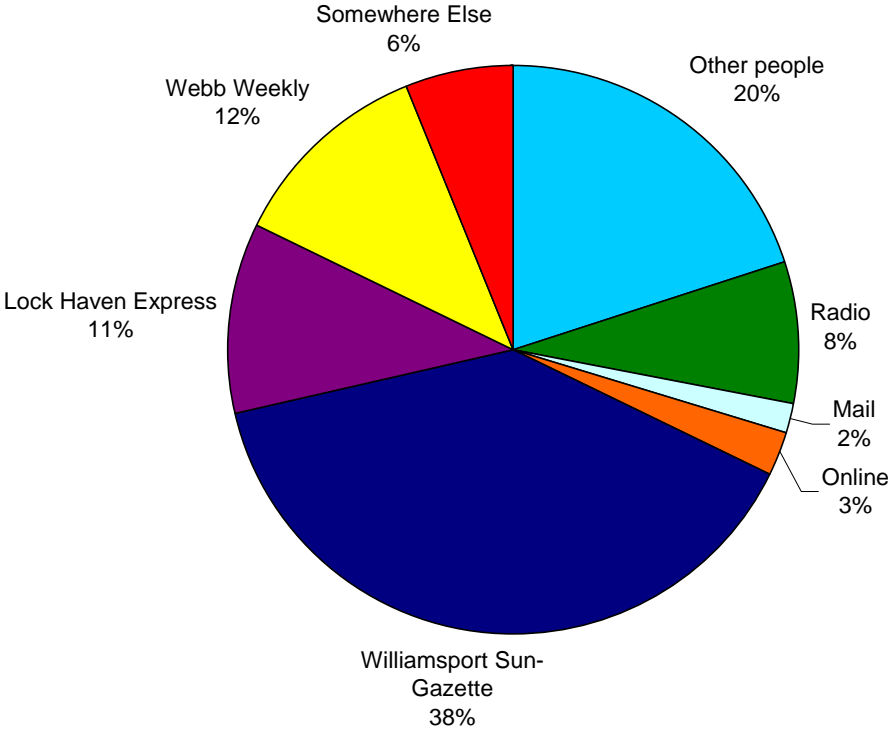
All participants had ideas on how to better inform the public of center activities. They felt that signage was critical and suggested outside signs that would post upcoming activities. They also suggested flyers posted at places that they frequent, such as doctor's offices and grocery stores.

Inside the center, bulletin boards should be updated with coming events. This information should always appear in the same location. Wherever the posting, the words should be simple and suggest good times, relaxation, intellectual stimulation, companionship and fun. In addition, photos should be included that show active, healthy seniors participating in the events.

Radio was not considered a useful means of promotion as radio listening was not that common. They believed the best way to promote was through word of mouth. Current participants would invite new visitors, especially reaching out to those seniors who might tend to stay home and then become depressed. If they were involved in planning the event, the participants thought they would also be happy to help with the promotion.

The survey asked respondents where they were most likely to learn of activities that interested them. Figure 15 indicates that beyond personal contacts, newspapers and radio remain key sources of information in the target population.

Figure 15: Percentage of Respondents Indicating Source Was Primary



Appendices

A	Focus Group Script	Page 30
B	Lycoming County Focus Group Notes	Page 32
C	Clinton County Focus Group Notes	Page 38
D	Lock Haven High-rise Focus Group Notes	Page 43
E	Telephone Survey Script with Results	Page 47
F	Follow-up Focus Group Notes	Page 54

Appendix A: Focus Group Script

STEP Senior Center Project

Research questions to be addressed in STEP Focus Groups:

1. Are non-users aware of the Senior Centers?
2. What are their opinions of Senior Centers?
3. Why do they currently not make use of the Center's activities?
4. What activities would attract them to the Center?
5. What should a Senior Center look like?
6. What benefits of attending should be promoted to non-users?

BUILDING RAPPORT

Purpose: To relax and bond group and to connect group to subject.

Method: Welcome and general discussion

Questions: Are you aware of STEP Senior Centers and what they offer?

What is your opinion of Senior Centers?

Technique: Hand out cards asking participants to write down the first three words that come to mind when they hear 'Senior Center.'

PROBING

Purpose: To uncover information useful to answering research questions

Method: General discussion followed by projective techniques

Questions: Why do you currently not use senior centers?

Technique: List negatives on sheets of papers

What type of activities would attract you to use Senior Centers?

Technique: Ideas generated by participants will be listed on large pieces of paper. Each participant will be given a gold, silver and bronze sticker to use to vote for their favorite ideas.

If you could build a new senior center, what would it look like?

Technique: Show participants photos of different styles of buildings and have them chose.

What types of food would you like to see on the menu at a senior center?

CLOSING

Purpose: To move group towards closure

Method: General discussion followed by projective technique

Questions: How should the Senior Centers promote to non users?

Technique: Ask participants to complete an advertisement for the Center by listing the benefits, i.e. fun, health, social, etc.

*B. Kolb, Lycoming College
February 1, 2007*

Appendix B: Lycoming County Nonuser Focus Group

Senior Center Focus Group Notes (First Focus Group) February 2007

Words that first come to mind...

Food, entertainment, company
Bingo, food
Old people, volunteers, food, companionship
Bingo-too much!
Food, bingo-gamers, socialization-friendship
Looking for something to do
Activities, companionship, exercise classes
Card playing, bingo, eating

Awareness of senior center offerings...

No
Don't know how many senior centers
Don't know where they are located
They help with taxes
Have volunteered at senior centers

Non use of centers because...

Too busy!
Work (churches, parks, museum, boards, research)
Usher at CAC
Speaking at other organizations
Band librarian
Care for older family members
Help with childcare when needed
Too busy to even do my recommended exercising
Side business
Chop wood
Garden
Household chores
Volunteer to help elderly

Users of senior centers are...

Active, healthy people have no need for senior centers
People who need social contact
Provide health information for those in need
People who love cards and bingo

People who just stay home and watch TV
Socially isolated
They bring in people who have no transportation

Preferred activities....

Movies (old, classic) in afternoon
Don't have to worry about content if taking family

Family day
Get more people to come
Grandchildren allowed
Good for older people stuck babysitting

Book reviews and reading
Keep your mind active
Good for people for have trouble reading

Crossword puzzles

Weekly speakers
Business people
Old music and recordings
History
Health
Finances

How to use technology
Computers
Cell phones
Digital camera

Gardening classes

Dancing classes
Ballroom dancing
Square dancing

Craft classes
Simple crafts
Scrapbooking
Putting pictures in albums
Clubs
Where members teach other
Cooking for one class
Something easy to prepare
Can learn nutrition at the same time

Bus trips

- Gambling
- Partnering with cultural opportunities for
 - Sporting events
 - Back stage tours
 - Attend open rehearsals
 - Reach Road factories
 - Even if can't tour
 - Even just to see display of products
- Don't need transportation – meet there
 - Event could be sponsored by Center
- Costs for bus trips getting higher
 - Senior center could subsidize

Exercise classes

- Good to keep moving
- Different levels
 - Some more vigorous than others
 - Easy exercises sitting in a chair
- No need for equipment

Sports

- Bowling
- Skiing

Maintain list of people who can give and need help

- College students could help
 - Fix stuck drawer
 - Change light bulb
 - Shovel walk

Information on issues of concern to elderly

- Where they can volunteer
- Where they can contribute crafts
- Information on saving money
 - This information could be maintained online
 - Print format at senior center
 - Use flyers
 - Weekly Web
 - Column or Senior Information page every month with
 - Health info
 - Financial info

Preferred menu offerings...

- Comfort food
- Soup and salad and sandwich
- Good homemade soups
 - Vegetable
 - Chicken noodle
 - No cans
- Small sandwiches to go with soup
 - Toasted cheese
- Fun food, forbidden food day
 - Hamburgers
 - Hot dogs
 - Now forbidden, so a treat
- Smores
- Build your own sandwich
- Make your own salad
- Make cupcakes for desert
- Picnics in the park
 - Sponsored by senior center
 - Hot dogs and beans

Senior center improvements...

- Building (likes picture of home with porch)
 - Front porch
 - Comforting
 - Rocking chairs
 - Looks like a home
 - Safe
 - Different rooms for different purposes
 - Internet
 - Card playing
 - Reading
- Went once to senior center:
 - Thought what am I doing here?
- Bingo games very cliquish
- Needs to be more welcoming
 - Know their names
 - Greet personally
- Greeter could also provide information on upcoming events
- Less cluttered looking
 - Too much stuff stuck on walls
 - Visually confusing
 - At least have organized clutter
- One table with information
- Bright colors

Yellows and blues

- Round tables
- Sitting area
- Lamps with good soft, home-like lighting
- Fireplace
- No throw rugs
- Conversation areas
- Comfy reading area
- Internet center
 - Hot tea, coffee, water
 - Apples, fruits, crackers, cheese
 - Small sandwiches
 - Baloney
- Bring in bottle of wine and everyone samples
 - Food to go with
- Games available
 - Word searches
 - Jigsaw puzzles
 - Board games
 - Cards
- Music with earphones for listening
- Should have input forms to continually get new ideas
 - Comments on a regular basis
- Get information out through welcome wagon
 - Goodie bags with card, hours
 - Pen with telephone number
 - Sticky note pads
- Put in church bulletin
- Info through social security center
- Someone from center going to group
- Bring in a buddy
- Get information through
 - Radio shows
 - Word of mouth
 - Scroll on bottom of TV screen
 - Sungazette
- New name
 - 60-65 don't want to go because they are not old
 - Really recycled teenagers
 - Activity center without age designation
 - Active adults community
 - Might turn off inactive
 - Activities will segment people on basis of ability and interest
 - Mature seniors
 - Senior vs. activity not so important
 - Building needs to be inviting
 - (everyone likes senior discounts!)

How to promote centers....

Promote information on all senior issues and free lunch.

Learn how to use a computer, dance, do crafts, cooking classes, etc.

Would you like something to do? Do you wish to feel important? Join our center for fun things to do. The action starts here!

Bus trip – locations, 40's movies or music

Good John Wayne Movie

Friendship, information, entertainment and food

Bus trip, movies, cooking, exercise, games

Action available, things to do, new exciting things

A meal and hear what someone has to say about a point of interest.

Fun, food, laughter

Appendix C: Clinton County Nonuser Focus Group

Senior Center Focus Group Notes (Second Focus Group) February 2007

Words that first come to mind...

- Community gathering
- Help with, taxes, transportation
- Center for elderly
- Games, seeing friends, lots of laughing
- Elderly participants usually single individuals
- For elderly, playing card and games
- Communication, social times
- Food, recreation, help
- Activities

Non use of centers because...

- Too busy
 - Church
 - Still working
 - Families
 - Second career
- Same response from participant who is 60 and who is 80
- Don't feel old enough
 - Have to be old to go
- If you don't like cards or bingo there is no reason to go.

Preferred center activities...

- Need to partner with other organizations
 - Senior circle
 - College
 - Work together with groups
 - Have college students help
- Evening activities
 - Once a month, dancing, social times
 - Somewhere can you go by yourself without a partner
 - These should be special activities for people who are too busy during the day
 - Don't need extra attention from people because of active lives
- Center could provide referral service or information
 - Fixing things
 - Services
 - Help with taxes, Medicare
 - Transportation

Bible studies

Crafts

Knitting and then to donate items

Skills

Carpentry

Photography

Woodworking

While taking classes, also socializing

And helping each other learn skills

Crafts should not be gender specific

Could learn everyday skills

Washer in faucet replacement

List of skills so that they can be shared

Older people who can no longer do activities be helped

Educational activities and physical activities

Could be evening and weekends

Could be partnered with other organizations and places

Geared toward the old, not elderly

Various levels of activities

Have someone help with doctor prescribed exercise,

As insurance does not pay for therapy

Get instructions but no fun to do alone

Book library

Could be partnered with library

Dancing very popular

Any kind is ok

Ballroom, line dancing

Computers need to be at the Center

Modern technology

Computers, chat rooms with others and grandchildren, IM

Digital cameras

All new technologies

Could be partnered with other organizations

Don't just want lectures, want interactive activities

Cooking classes

Interactive, sharing of food

Musical groups

Learning an instrument

Sing along, bands

Art classes

Painting

Watercolor

Teaches appreciation of art work

Organized trips to historical sites in area or state

Nutritional education

Center could maintain a list of local people's hobbies

So can share with others

Senior center could be used as venue for exhibiting hobby

This information could be online

Center's physical layout needs to be adjusted to allow the various activities

Want interactive activities

No speakers

Want someone different

Hands on activities

Center should work with other organizations

Places that offer computer classes

Library

YMCA

College

Use students as volunteers

Senior circle

Cooperative agreements should work together to make everyone stronger and not duplicate services

Students could help with teaching

Book club could be at the library but focused on seniors

Meet at the library

Events could be at the Heisy Museum

People who have lived with someone and are now alone could use center as a resource for help and referrals

Career planning advice from the center

Second careers

Finally have time to do what I want to do

Bingo player may want to learn the different activities also

Preferred menu at centers...

Soup but must be homemade

Soup is comforting

Cooking class could make lunch

Homemade bread

Big slice

Sweets

Anything and everything sweet

Pies, cookies, ice cream

Homemade

Good quality

Sharing of recipes and food

What should the building look like...

Bright colors

Green, primary colors

Smaller 'quiet places'

- Chapel, meditation area
 - Just a quiet place to think
 - Meditate
- Comfortable chairs
 - Not too hard, but not too soft so you can't get up
- Large room in middle
- Temporary walls that can be moved
 - Physical space can be adjusted depending on needs
- Small circular tables
 - More inviting for socialization
 - Not so big that you can't reach center
- Round tables that have drop leaves so they can be pushed together
- Computer room
 - Workstations on wheels
- Large kitchen area
 - More than one oven
- Portable stage
- Separate room for therapy exercise
- Should be plenty of parking
- No steps in entrance
- The middle picture looks like 'Clinton' county
- Need to have protection from weather at door
- No busy walls
- Need hospitality to make people feel welcome
 - Volunteers
 - Greeters
 - Make it feel like home
 - Tours of center

How to promote centers...

- TV, radio, newspaper
- Monthly calendar in paper
 - Flyers, posters
 - At doctor's office, churches
- Important to keep ideas fresh
 - Change offerings
 - Use suggestion boxes
 - Meetings (focus groups) to learn ideas for improvement
- Need new name for center
 - Have contest
 - 'Senior center' for the OLD
 - Name should be unique, not just what it is
 - Just call it 'The Place'
 - Use a clever name or phrase
 - Those in the know, know who it's for

Words associated with senior centers...

Fun and relaxation

A day of learning

Games and learning.

Learning, involvement, activities, living

Fun, entertainment, education and crafts

Socialization, learning, travel

Retirement starts center

Good food, mind expanding activities

A good time, relax, share and learn

Don't be alone, come join us for fun, activities, happiness, travel, education and meet others

New visions, sociality, change of pace

Appendix D: Lock Haven High-rise Nonuser Focus Group

Senior Center Focus Group Notes (Third Focus Group) February 2007

Words that first come to mind...

A place for older people to associate with each other
Place to meet and have parties and meals
Friends to play cards and bingo with
Meals
Food, transportation
Card games, exercise
Fellowship

Non use of centers because...

Transportation
Don't play cards
Cliques – feel like you don't fit in
Not friendly
Aren't sure what is offered

Preferred menu items...

Not fussy
Good basic food
Burgers and fries
Hot dogs
Milkshakes
Homemade soups
 Vegetable
 Bean
Turkey dinner
Sandwiches
 Grilled cheese
Salads
 Fruit salad
 Chef salad
 Chicken salad
Fruit
Snack bar
 Soft pretzels
 Soda
 Nutritional
 Vending machine with food
 Coffee, tea, hot chocolate

Beef and noodles
Mashed potatoes
Should be open for breakfast, lunch and dinner
At least one big meal
 Emphasis on food

Preferred center activities...

Meals
Hours could be early, as are up early
Exercise classes
 Holding on to chair and kicking leg
 Treadmill
 Bicycle
 Swimming pool
 Hot tub!
Health screening
Walking track
Craft room
 Meet with others with same interest
 Learn new crafts
Woodworking shop
Sing alongs
 Need to have words provided
 Gospel
 Country
 Old time jazz
Computer classes
 How to work
 Email
Bingo
Card lessons
Archery
Shuffle board
Darts
Fly tying
Background music
 Soothing
Bus trips
 Dinner theatre
 Not a lot of walking
 Sight seeing
 Philadelphia
 Longwood Garden
 PA Grand Canyon
 Ice Capades
 Fall trips
 Boat trips
 Farm show

Musical groups if not too expensive
Afraid people will not advantage

Preferred style of building...

Living room area
Comfortable chairs
 Wingback chairs
TV watching area
Patio area
Garden area
Lots of bathrooms
Archery range
Game rooms
Make it look like home
 Inside and out
Not institutional looking
Bright colors
 Light peach, yellow, green, blue
Covered walkway over there
Windows in blank walls
Computer room
 Not in living room area
 Classroom environment
 Partitions on sides of desks so no bother
Long tables are fine with no metal chairs
Round tables
 Easier to talk, cozy
Kitchen area
Heated rooms
 Need to be comfortable
All on ground level
Want wrought iron fence instead of wall
Senior Center as a name is fine

How to promote centers...

Word of mouth
Bulletin board
Bring a friend

Words associated with senior centers...

Cards, one day trips, outside dinning, one day shopping
Games such as cards, music, singing, meals, exercise machines
Snack bar, computer classes, bus trips, games
Good times, food, fellowship, company being with other people, easy access
Games, lunch, walking

Fun, exercise, health, trips
Computer courses, bus trips
Good times together, fun & snack bar, bus trips
Archery classes

Appendix E: Telephone Survey Script with Results

Hello, may I please speak with _____.

My name is _____ from the Lycoming College Polling Institute. We are conducting a survey of residents of Lycoming and Clinton Counties about their opinions regarding activity centers run for the use of older adults living in the two counties. We are not selling anything, and I want to assure you that your responses will be confidential. Could I have 7 to 9 minutes of your time?

[If yes, go on]

[If no] Thank you, and have a good evening.

[If they ask a question]

[About sponsorship] Lycoming College is doing a survey for the Lycoming/Clinton BiCounty Office of Aging of STEP.

[About how they were chosen] You were chosen as part of a random sample of residents of Lycoming and Clinton Counties.

[About what the survey is about] The questions focus on your opinions of senior centers located in the two counties.

[About seeing the results] Results of this and the other parts of the research will be available through the Office of Aging.

1. In recent years, have you visited an activity center established for the use of adults over the age of 60, commonly called a senior center?

Response	Percentage
1. Yes, have visited	16.8%
2. No, have not visited	82.8
8. Don't Know	0.4
9. Refused	

2. How often would you say that you have visited a senior center? Would you say that you visit the senior center almost every day, once or twice a week, once or twice a month or only occasionally?

Response	Percentage
1. Daily or nearly every day	12.0%
2. Once or twice a week	22.1
3. Once or twice a month	12.6
4. Only occasionally	43.9
8. Don't Know	3.8
9. Refused	5.7

3. Even if you haven't visited a senior center, how familiar would you say you are with senior centers located in your county? Would you say you are very familiar with senior centers, somewhat familiar or not familiar at all?

Response	Percentage
1. Very familiar	9.9%
2. Somewhat familiar	33.7
3. Not familiar at all	55.6
8. Don't Know	0.4
9. Refused	0.3

4. Next, I'd like to ask you about your feelings about senior centers in your county. I am going to mention several words that some people use to describe senior centers. For each word, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree that the word describes senior centers.

	1. Strongly Agree	2. Agree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree	8. Don't Know	9. Refused
a) Ugly	0.7%	5.5%	3.8%	65.7%	14.3%	9.2%	0.8%
b) Clean	5.7	69.8	4.2	2.8	0.0	16.1	1.4
c) Fun	7.3	64.5	7.1	5.5	0.0	14.2	1.5
d) Boring	0.6	10.3	4.7	61.7	6.8	14.3	1.5
e) Useful	19.1	68.5	0.8	1.7	0.0	8.1	1.7
f) Unfriendly	0.0	4.9	3.6	69.6	8.8	11.5	1.7
g) Educational	7.6	66.1	5.3	4.5	0.7	13.7	2.1
h) Stimulating	7.2	63.1	6.3	8.0	0.3	13.0	2.1
i) Sad	0.2	14.7	5.5	58.5	6.7	12.2	1.7
j) Welcoming	8.8	73.4	1.9	1.9	0.0	11.9	2.1
k) Convenient	7.0	68.3	4.7	6.3	0.3	11.1	1.7

5. I'd now like to read you a series of statements some people have made about senior centers. For each statement, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement.

	1. Strongly Agree	2. Agree	3. Neither agree nor disagree	4. Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree	8. Don't Know	9. Refused
a) Senior centers are for people like me.	3.1%	49.8%	6.0%	29.8%	3.1%	7.7%	0.4%
b) Senior centers are only for people without friends of their own.	0.4	8.0	1.7	78.6	7.9	2.8	0.6
c) I'm too busy to go to a senior center.	5.9	43.0	6.0	39.4	1.6	3.2	1.0
d) I'm too young to go to a senior center.	2.2	28.1	4.6	59.8	2.8	1.9	0.6
e) I'm too old to go to a	0.5	1.2	2.0	87.5	6.8	1.4	0.6

senior center.							
f) I never know what is going on in the center near me.	3.7	50.5	6.5	31.3	2.7	4.7	0.7
g) Senior centers are only for people who don't have much money.	0.2	5.1	2.6	79.1	8.4	4.2	0.4

Next, I am going to read you several pairs of statements someone might use to describe themselves. For each pair of statements, please choose the one that best describes you. If neither statement describes you, let me know and we'll move on.

6. I like to experience new things. OR I like things the way they are.

Response	Percentage
1. I like to experience new things.	59.9
2. I like things the way they are.	31.4
3. Neither	1.7
4. Both	6.6
8. Refused	0.3
9. No Opinion	0.1

7. I like to take an active role in planning events. OR I like to attend events other people have put together.

Response	Percentage
1. I like to take an active role in planning events.	24.9%
2. I like to attend events other people have put together.	47.5
3. Neither	7.8
4. Both	16.9
8. Refused	0.5
9. No Opinion	2.4

8. I have too much to do. OR I have a lot of spare time.

Response	Percentage
1. I am a busy person.	60.9%
2. I have a lot of spare time.	18.6
3. Neither	8.3
4. Both	11.2
8. Refused	0.1
9. No Opinion	0.6

9. I prefer the peace and quiet of home OR I like to get out of the house as often as possible

Response	Percentage
1. I prefer the peace and quiet of home	33.9%
2. I like to get out of the house as often as possible	37.4
3. Neither	2.1
4. Both	26.1
8. Refused	0.3

9. No Opinion	0.3
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10. I like to be around other people. OR I like to do things on my own.

Response	Percentage
1. I like to be around other people.	53.7%
2. I like to do things on my own.	16.7
3. Neither	1.0
4. Both	28.0
8. Refused	0.3
9. No Opinion	0.4

11. I prefer the company of other people my age OR I prefer being around people of all ages.

Response	Percentage
1. I prefer the company of other people my age	6.2%
2. I prefer being around people of all ages.	87.4
3. Neither	1.9
4. Both	3.9
8. Refused	0.0
9. No Opinion	0.6

12. I'd now like to ask you about possible activities at senior centers. For each of the following activities, please indicate if the presence of that activity would make it more likely or no more likely that you would visit a senior center.

	1 More Likely to Visit	2 No More Likely to Visit	8 Refused	9 Don't Know
a) Cooking Classes	40.3%	56.5%	1.6%	1.5%
b) Bingo	31.9	65.3	1.5	1.3
c) Exercise classes	63.2	33.3	1.8	1.6
d) Card games	48.9	48.4	1.5	1.2
e) Musical performance	68.5	26.4	1.8	3.3
f) Classes on using new technology	64.9	30.1	1.6	3.3
g) Computer classes	62.0	34.2	1.8	2.0
h) Craft classes	46.8	49.2	1.6	2.4
i) Woodworking	40.3	57.2	1.6	0.9
j) Health information and screening sessions	66.5	29.0	1.6	2.9
k) Pot luck dinner	54.6	41.4	1.6	2.3
l) Gardening	51.4	46.0	1.6	0.9
m) Classic movie viewings	51.4	45.5	1.6	1.4
n) Book clubs	42.3	53.9	1.6	1.8
o) Informative speakers	67.9	27.5	1.6	2.8

p) Bus trips	58.4	37.3	1.6	2.6
q) Art classes	29.5	67.6	1.6	1.3
r) Walking track	52.2	44.7	1.6	1.4
s) Sing alongs	34.8	62.3	1.6	1.3
t) Group restaurant dining	54.5	42.1	1.6	1.8
u) Dancing	38.9	58.5	1.6	1.0
v) Field trips	63.7	31.5	1.8	3.0
w) Volunteering opportunities	62.5	33.1	1.7	2.7
x) Financial and legal information services	58.7	37.5	1.6	2.2
y) Fitness equipment	54.5	42.5	1.7	1.2

13. Some people prefer attending events or participating in activities that other people plan and organize. Other people prefer to play a role in planning or organizing activities that they are involved in. Thinking about what you might prefer to see in a senior center, would you be more likely to take part in activities or events that were planned by other people or that you took part in planning?

[QUESTION SKIPPED FOR MOST RESPONDENTS BECAUSE OF REDUNDANCY]

14. People like to feel welcome when they visit new places. I am going to read you a list of features one might expect to find at a senior center. For each of those features, please indicate how important it would be in terms of making you feel welcome. Would that feature be very important, somewhat important or not important at all in helping you feel welcome at the senior center?

	1. Very Important	2. Somewhat important	3. Not Important at all	8. Don't Know	9. Refused
a) An attractive exterior	30.7%	46.5%	21.0%	1.0%	0.9%
b) A personal greeting	53.5	34.9	10.0	0.9	0.7
c) An offer of refreshments	30.8	43.2	24.8	0.5	0.7
d) Introductions to others	54.2	34.5	9.9	0.6	0.7
e) Clearly posted information on activities	61.8	30.0	6.9	0.6	0.7
f) A home-like interior	39.8	36.6	21.7	1.2	0.7

15. Senior centers also offer meals as part of the programming they provide. If you attended a senior center program, how likely is it that you would choose to stay and eat? Would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely or not likely at all?

Response	Percentage
1. Very likely	23.1%
2. Somewhat likely	44.7
3. Not likely at all	29.7
4. Would not attend a senior center program	0.5
8. Don't Know	1.4
9. Refused	0.6

16. Would you be most likely to visit a senior center for programs or activities offered in the morning, afternoon or evening?

Response	Percentage
1. Morning	35.2%
2. Afternoon	33.2
3. Evening	18.7
8. Don't Know	10.0
9. Refused	2.8

17. Next, I'm going to read you a list of food options that a senior center might sometimes serve. For each option, please indicate whether knowing the senior center offered that option would make you more likely, less likely or make no difference to come to the center to eat lunch.

	1. More likely	2. Less Likely	3. No difference	8. Don't Know	9. Refused
a) Soup and sandwich	48.3%	14.8%	33.3%	1.3%	2.3%
b) A Salad bar	62.6	10.1	24.2	1.0	2.1
c) A Hot meal	56.4	13.4	26.7	1.3	2.1
d) Ethnic food	32.4	35.3	27.7	2.3	2.3
e) Snack food	31.2	34.8	30.7	1.1	2.1

18. Where are you most likely to learn about activities or events that interest you? Are you most likely to learn about activities or events from other people, from the radio, from the mail, from online, from the Williamsport Sun-Gazette, from the Lock Haven Express, from the Webb Weekly, or from somewhere else?

Response	Percentage
1. Other people	19.6%
2. Radio	7.9
3. Mail	1.7
4. Online	2.5
5. Williamsport Sun-Gazette	38.5
6. Lock Haven Express	10.6
7. Webb Weekly	11.3
8. Somewhere Else	6.1
9. Don't Know	1.7
10. Refused	0.2

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about you personally.

19. As of today, how would you describe your general level of health? Would you say that it is excellent, good, not so good or poor?

Response	Percentage
1. Excellent	30.2%
2. Good	55.6
3. Not so good	11.9

4. Poor	1.6
8. Don't Know	0.2
9. Refused	0.3

20. What is your highest level of education?

Response	Percentage
1. Less than high school diploma	6.2%
2. High school diploma or equivalent	44.2
3. Some College	22.8
4. College Degree	16.0
5. Advanced Degree	10.5
8. Don't Know	0.0
9. Refused	0.3

21. Which of the following best describes your employment status? Are you employed, unemployed, retired, or are you a homemaker?

Response	Percentage
1. Employed –	31.8%
a) Is that employment full time or part time?	
1. Full time	72.8%
2. Part time	27.2
2. Unemployed	1.7
b) Are you currently seeking work?	
1. Yes	46.2%
2. No	53.8
3. Retired	60.7
4. Full-time homemaker	5.2
8. Don't Know	0.3
9. Refused	0.3

22. Which of the following living arrangements best described you now? Do you live with a spouse or partner, live with family other than a spouse or partner, live with people other than family or live alone?

Response	Percentage
1. Spouse or partner	69.3%
2. Other family	6.9
3. Others, not family	1.5
4. Alone	21.7
8. Don't Know	0.4
9. Refused	0.2

Thank you for your time in completing this survey. Your opinions are appreciated. As I mentioned, we are in the process of gathering public input on senior centers for use in future improvements. The results of this survey will be included in the planning for those improvements. Good (morning, afternoon, night).

Appendix F: Follow-up Nonuser Group

Focus Group Notes (Fourth Focus Group)

Review of activities...

Lack of interest in bingo was mentioned
Bingo offered less by other organizations, why not at senior centers?

Music would be popular
But type is important
Should be music that is attractive to specific age group
Up to 1950's

Why centers seem sad...

Seniors do not want to think of themselves as old
Once at center enjoy activity and forget old

Ill health of some seniors makes centers seem sad
Once you learn about people, forget infirmity

Wonder how people become inactive due to ill health
People shut down too early once they retire
Need to reach out before they slow down
Hard to let go of where they were when healthy
Then become depressed

Group activities for people who different activity level

Need to reach out to recently widowed
Always had companionship
Need to encourage to attend
Need to learn how to communicate to these groups

Welcoming...

Especially true for newly widowed to feel welcomed

Information needs to be clearly posted
Need large posters to catch attention

People need to told verbally what is upcoming
Don't tell too far ahead
Need to remind
Tell them two weeks and then remind again one week

Posting of information should be both inside and out

The highlighted activities should be posted outside the center like churches and schools

The information should also be posted at grocery stores, doctors' offices, hair dresser, barber shops, Laundromats

Many seniors have email addresses and so a good way to get information out

Email senior center newsletter

Should have a website with information

Event could be announced at meal time

The calendar of upcoming events should be in the paper with others

Should also be in separate calendar

Need to share information what is up coming with others and then invite to events

Bring someone new

If someone tells you, you know they will be there

If good time, they will come back

Structure of center so ideas are implemented...

Centers have activities but information is not getting the news out the door

Use volunteers to help with spreading the word

Need to get people in off the street

Reach out to churches to have members attend

Churches are full as old people

Be great to reach out to newly retired, but difficult to reach because no large employers

How to communicate message

Be sure to use newspapers

Best to use graphics to get attention

Themed to event or season

Geared to population

Young at heart

No old people, grandma, grandpa

Bobbie soxers

Activities as special events...

Activities should be during the day

Don't go out at night because of vision issues

Identify the specifics of the program

What movie, site visit, technology?

Centers now respond to needs of current users

Centers now need to respond to others
People must communicate exactly what they want

Need leadership group within centers
If people have a say, more likely to do
Center manager acts as facilitator

It is important to have snacks with entertainment
Meals are good because many don't get decent meal
Center meals needed for these folks
But meal/sandwich good to include with activity
Snacks with speaker help people interact

People should make effort to invite others to special events
Users now others who know other potential users

Center managers know who would be best at outreach
But must be event of special interest

Don't be afraid to try someone new, hot dog roast, s'more party

Special event to get people in the door and then back for regularly scheduled events

Use door prizes to attract - Lot's of people will go to places just to enter drawing
Everyone loves prizes
Meals
Gift certificates
Candy bar
Little prizes and good bars
Gift baskets
More is better
Both small and large

Get public relations articles in newspaper
This reach elderly

Make list of potential users that current users know and call them
Could be done by volunteers who like to talk
If they say 'tried it didn't like' say come again

Prizes for those who bring most new people

Need greeters
Explain where everything is
Hope they have a good time
Introduce new people to others
Name tags
Lots of people don't want to be alone
Send thanks for coming postcard

People are willing to volunteer for these new functions

Other media...

Don't listen to much radio because don't like music

Flyers in stores better than radio to communicate

Inviting one to one is best way

Get them to the center once and show them a good time

5-7 people should be involved in planning and follow-up

Special events once a month or quarterly

Sell regular activities when people come for special events

Having centers specialized based on clientele and physical space

So every center won't have every activity

But each center to reach out to everyone for their activities

People can get transportation to go to a center other than their local

The centers should use colleges as sources of events

International students on food and culture

Speakers on subjects

Students as volunteers

People living much longer

Want to be on their own

Want to be independent and active

Have to change image of seniors as ill and infirm

People will come to center if the above model is followed

Centers are more than entertainment, they keep people active

Centers allow sharing of pertinent information among people of a certain age