

Making Seniors Visible: Policy & Advocacy



Seniors Count
Report to the Community
June 2009



Our Dedicated Partners

So much in our lives happens at the community level, and *Seniors Count* is no exception. *Seniors Count* is a perfect example of the success of combining efforts on the local community level to support frail seniors. Without the support of all the partners, such an effort could not be undertaken and certainly could not become as successful and vibrant as *Seniors Count* is today. There are hundreds of organizations, agencies and individuals that have touched *Seniors Count*. The following represent some of the more active partners:

AARP NH

American Red Cross, Greater Manchester Chapter
Bedford Pharmacy
Business NH Magazine
Catholic Medical Center
Child & Family Services
City of Manchester, Americorp Vista Program
City of Manchester, Office of the Mayor
City of Manchester, Planning & Community Development
City Year
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Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center
Derryfield School
Easter Seals, NH
Elliot Health System
Elliot Senior Health Center
Faith Based Action Network of NH
First Congregational Church
Fixit Program, Manchester
Girls, Inc.
Genesis Ridgewood Center
Granite State Independent Living
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Hearthside Realty
Heritage Case Management
Heritage United Way
Hillsborough County Commissioners
Jolicoeur School, Easter Seals, NH
Life Coping, Inc.
Manchester Community Health Center
Manchester Community Television
Manchester Fire Department
Manchester Housing & Redevelopment Authority
Manchester Public Health Department
Manchester Regional Area Committee on Aging
Manchester School District
Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester
Moore Center Services, Inc.
Mount Carmel Healthcare Center
National Alliance Mental Illness, NH
NE Emergency Response Systems, Inc.
NH Bureau of Elderly & Adult Services

NH Catholic Charities

NH Dept. Health & Human Services (DHHS)
NH DHHS, Injury Prevention Program
NH Public Television
Northern New England Geriatric Education Center
Parish of Transfiguration
Pilot Health
Public Service of New Hampshire
Quality Care Partners
Retired Senior Volunteer Program
Rockingham Ambulance
ServiceLink Resource Center of Hillsborough County
Southern NH Planning Commission
Southern NH Services, Inc.
St. Anselm College Meelia Ctr. For Community Service
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish
St. Joseph Community Service, Inc.
Stewart Property Management
The Salvation Army
The Caregivers, Inc.
Trinity High School
UNH Institute on Disability
University New Hampshire
Varney School Apartments
Villa Crest Nursing & Retirement Center
VNA of Manchester & Southern NH
Volunteer New Hampshire
Weed & Seed, City of Manchester
YWCA of Greater Manchester

Red = Committee Representation: Collaborating Council, Coordinating Committee, Evaluation Committee, Home Maintenance Committee, Neighborhood Committee, Bill-Pay Initiative

Red Italic = Both Committee Representation & Flex Fund Partner

Black = Community Partner

Black Italic = Flex Fund Partner



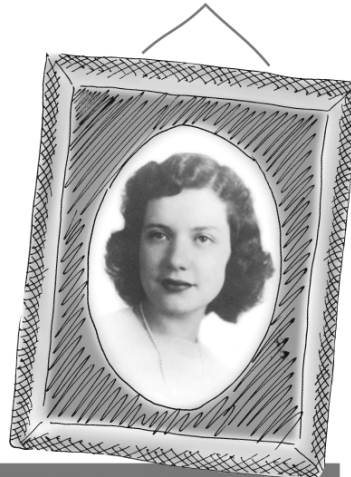
A special thanks to Easter Seals New Hampshire for its support of *Seniors Count* and its spearheading of the initiative.

Arlene Kershaw, Project Director
Yvonne Schulze, Project Facilitator

Seniors Count is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through its Community Partnerships for Older Adults (CPFOA) national initiative.

Seniors Count Report to the Community 2009 Policy & Advocacy

New Hampshire
**SENIORS
COUNT**



PARTNERS TO CHANGE THE FACE OF AGING

Seniors Count is a convener of partnerships that are a catalyst for community-based outreach and action to redefine and ensure independence for older people, and in doing so, create a better life for all.

"As the older population rapidly increases...over the next several years, state-level policy makers and public and private organizations will be challenged to address a wide range of policy and administrative issues in a cost-effective and timely fashion.... We need to...develop a consensus strategy in order to avoid being swamped by the emerging policy battles over the funding of the entitlement programs and healthcare reform...."

—Generations Journal of the American Society on Aging, Aging Policy and the States,
Fall 2008

A Message from Nicholas A. Toumpas New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner

Congratulations to *Seniors Count* for another successful year in leading the way for New Hampshire to “make seniors visible.” *Seniors Count* employs a variety of strategies to mobilize community resources and is a model for other communities throughout the Granite State to emulate.



Seniors Count uses community partnership to strengthen social capital to better provide support and services for aging residents who need help to remain living in their community. Throughout its operation, we have seen that *Seniors Count* works and what it can accomplish.

As a result, the University of New Hampshire’s Institute on Disability, in cooperation with the NH Department of Health and Human Services, has awarded Systems Transformation Grant funding to allow Nashua and Portsmouth to replicate the *Seniors Count* model in their communities. The goal of this replication is for active involvement of local communities as key partners in long-term support reform.

Nicholas A. Toumpas

It is imperative that communities adjust their priorities to work toward a high quality of life for its senior residents. In this report, you will be introduced to the *Seniors Count* policy initiative which helps to pave the way.

A Message from the Chair & Co-Chairs of the *Seniors Count* Collaborating Council and Coordinating Committee

Making Seniors Visible is at the core of the *Seniors Count* philosophy. We have learned that we make great progress toward this goal by employing a variety of approaches. Here are some examples of how we are making our philosophy a reality:

We are bringing community stakeholders together to address the barriers, gaps, issues and concerns seniors face, especially the frail, and providing a community mechanism to allow us to FACE THE ISSUES HEAD-ON. We are also bringing the ‘oldest daughter’ concept (we call it the *Seniors Count* Community Liaison) into the mix of senior services so no frail senior falls through the cracks (h*ll no, we won’t take it anymore!!)

We are giving a face to aging by working with youth in middle school, high school and colleges to learn about aging (our curriculum) and then providing volunteer opportunities to help frail seniors with yard work, safety checks, and regular social meeting. We have created a *Seniors Count* Resource Guide so seniors, their relatives, providers and government officials have a comprehensive list of services at their fingertips.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, we’ve created a policy initiative (this report) that focuses our collective energy on instigating the ‘right’ systems change. During this next year, we will work hard to sustain all the wonderful efforts of *Seniors Count*. Please JOIN US as we build a better world for the seniors living in New Hampshire.

Paul Boynton

Paul Boynton, Chair
Seniors Count Collaborating Council

Bernie Seifert

Joan Tulk

Bernie Seifert & Joan Tulk, Co-Chairs
Seniors Count Coordinating Committee

Seniors Count: Where We've Been & Where We're Going

Eight years ago, the *Seniors Count* initiative was conceived by community stakeholders as a bold collaboration aimed at *redefining aging* in Manchester, and throughout this State. There are approximately 16,000 *frail seniors* in NH, over 1,300 in Greater Manchester alone, and many are “invisible and falling through the cracks”—these frail seniors are our mothers, sisters, community founders, neighbors, and friends. We find this to be unacceptable and as a result, we have set out to “change the face of aging” in NH.

Seniors Count engages the entire community to fundamentally alter the systems that deliver assistance and information to frail seniors and their caregivers, as well as to change the way the community thinks about and relates to seniors. Since 2001, the collaboration has guided this transformation process. The partnership is composed of seniors and their caregivers, public sector representatives, nonprofit senior service providers, community advocates and activists, as well as local business and industry representatives. *Seniors Count* accomplishes its objectives by combining partnership and institutional capacity development with initiatives to raise awareness; to challenge perceptions; to change values; to mobilize resources; and to improve services, policies, and regulations. We locate frail seniors and ensure that they have on-going coordination of formal and informal community services and support.

Seniors Count Accomplishments from the Past Year

Ongoing Initiatives:

- **Home Maintenance:** 325 frail seniors benefited from Seasonal Clean-ups, In-Home Safety Checks, and/or our special weatherization project. Nearly 300 volunteers provided by Southern NH Services worked with the seniors.
- **Neighborhood Initiative:** Active committee has identified target neighborhood, mapped community assets, conducted local meetings and began to identify seniors in need.
- **Community Liaison Initiative:** 81 frail seniors who were otherwise “falling through the cracks” were given ongoing “eldest daughter” support for their comprehensive non-medical needs.
- **Flex Spending Initiative:** Our 21 partners helped 260 frail seniors’ access essential goods and services not otherwise covered by any funder.
- **Short Nursing Home Stay Initiative:** 238 bed-days were used for short-term emergency or planned respite stay in one of our partner nursing homes.

New Initiatives:

- **Resource Guide:** *Seniors Count* partnered with ServiceLink of Hillsborough and Merrimack Counties, Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS), and Business NH Magazine to produce and distribute 15,000 Senior Resource Guides. The guide covers the Greater Nashua, Manchester, and Concord areas. It is available online at www.seniorscountnh.org.
- **Bill-Pay Initiative:** *Seniors Count* signed a contract with AARP and BEAS to establish a volunteer-based Bill-Pay Program to assist frail seniors with managing their finances. Volunteers are thoroughly screened and trained, and may: write checks for the senior to sign, bill paying paperwork; balancing checkbook; sort mail, and ensure bills are paid on time.
- **Sustainability:** Our major grant through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ends May 2010, and accordingly, we have been addressing our sustainability. A subcommittee of the Collaborating Council has been formed to address sustaining *Seniors Count* into the future. Some components are already in place; the committee is also scrutinizing different models for maximum partnership input and collaboration.

Seniors Count Policy Initiative: Overview

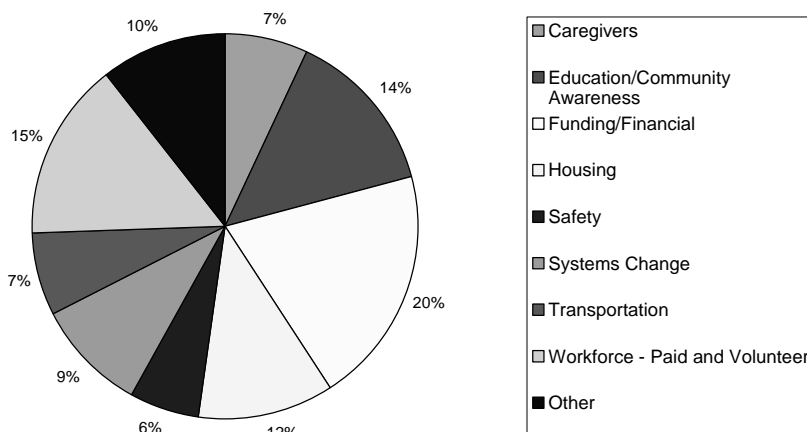
A 12-month Endowment for Health grant supported activities by a Policy Analyst that aided in taking some critical steps toward improving the policy, regulatory, and funding factors to benefit at-risk seniors and to improve the long-term care system. The year's work culminated with a final report to the Endowment for Health and a three-year workplan that the *Seniors Count* Collaborating Council (the leadership group) would use as a template for action regarding policy initiatives.

The overall goal of the project is to improve the policy, regulatory, and funding factors to benefit at-risk seniors and improve long-term care systems.

The Policy Analyst sorted the information obtained from her research, which included approximately 100 identified barriers and many suggested solutions to these barriers. From these barriers and solutions, the Policy Analyst was able to arrange the information gleaned into nine categories as depicted in the graph.

Through a prioritization process, and after several in-depth discussions in different committees (Collaborating Council, Coordinating Committee, Evaluation Committee and Policy Advisory Workgroup). *Seniors Count* focused its policy initiative around the following six distinct categories¹:

1. Caregiver Support;
2. Coordination of Medical Concerns, Community Living/Social Service Concerns and Caregiver Concerns;
3. Flexibility in Policy, Procedure, and Regulations;
4. Education – Community Awareness;
5. Livable Communities; and
6. Limited Resources of the Near Poor.



Breakdown of Barriers Regarding Frail Seniors

Seniors Count Policy Initiative: Issues and Suggested Strategies

The following provides a brief overview of the main elements of the *Seniors Count* Policy Workplan, including suggested strategies. The focus is on frail seniors looking to age in the community and potential strategies to address these issues.

Issue #1: Caregiver Support

Although there is an important need, the options for the safety-net of respite care, either emergency or planned, are limited when a community caregiver is unable to temporarily provide assistance/care for the senior. When these options are not available, the consequences are:

1) unnecessary and costly hospitalizations; 2) insufficient and/or unsafe care due to frustrated caregivers; and/or 3) premature permanent admission to nursing facilities because of caregiver burnout.

Suggested Strategies for *Seniors Count*

To address the respite care issue, it was suggested that *Seniors Count* support the funding of the Federal Lifespan Respite Act, increasing the funding for the National Caregiver Grant, and advocating for legislation to improve respite care options. Additionally, *Seniors Count* will consider supporting incentive plans for families who are taking care of frail seniors. Lastly, *Seniors Count* will continue to work with Department of Health and Human Service to streamline the pilot project for Short Nursing Home Stay Initiative.

¹ To ensure no unnecessary duplication of work, the Policy Analyst identified actions taken by other advocacy groups to address the barriers/issues facing our seniors. If a barrier/issue is being addressed by other advocacy group(s) in NH, *Seniors Count* has pledged to provide support to these groups but removed the barrier/issue as its own priority.

“The need for additional supports for family caregivers, who provide 80% of long term care services.”

—From “Community Listening Sessions” by the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS) and NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) 2009

Issue #2: Coordinating Caregiver, Community Living/Social Service and Medical Concerns

To successfully remain in the community, frail seniors need support in three arenas of concern: caregiver, community living/social service and medical.

Caregiver Issues: Informal unpaid caregivers provide the majority of care for the frail seniors. However, our system does not provide adequate support for caregivers to mitigate emotional and/or financial burnout, possible abuse/neglect, respite, training in care issues, etc. If the caregiver “breaks,” the consequence is that the frail senior loses his/her support and ends up in a nursing home prematurely, inadequately cared for, or hospitalized.

Community Living/Social Service Concerns: Frailty can lead to the inability to handle all the non-medical concerns of daily living. There is a lack of sufficient resource coordination available to the frail seniors in New Hampshire...a service that often necessitates on-going coordinated oversight. Instead, our system offers short-term coordination during a crisis, such as in home assistance after hospitalization, but these are sporadic, time-limited, and related to an acute medical episode, and are often income driven.

Medical Concerns: Frail seniors are especially needy of medical care coordination. As such, the concept of a “medical home” is steadily gaining interest in the public eye. “Medical home” is an approach to provide primary health care that is accessible, patient centered, coordinated, comprehensive, continuous, compassionate, and culturally effective.

Through the experience of serving frail seniors who fall through the cracks, *Seniors Count* has learned that frail seniors need **coordination within and among each of the above three concerns** in order to maximize their ability to remain in the community. Currently, our system struggles to provide consistent, ongoing coordination within each area and has not yet determined how to coordinate among the three.

Suggested Strategies for Seniors Count

Seniors Count advocates that:

- ◆ each frail senior be assigned a Senior Resource Coordinator who would be responsible for ensuring that the senior also has a “medical home” and with coordinating all appropriate services for the senior;
- ◆ every frail senior have a “medical home,” that is one primary care doctor who is familiar with all aspects of the senior’s life; and
- ◆ if there is an informal caregiver involved, that he/she is linked to “Caregiver Home” for proper support such as a ServiceLink caregiver specialist.

Ernie, age 77, who lived alone with multiple health complications, in a house with a leaky roof, front door unable to close and flood water in the basement. He said to us “I see eight different doctors. I work hard to convince them all to keep the number of pills I take down to just a few. One wanted to give me an anti-depressant but I said I just needed help at home, not a pill!” Ernie required coordination of his medical care, connection to a family caregiver (his granddaughter) and continued help with getting necessary services (both formal and informal) such as home repair and transportation.

“Thus, the driving force for a comprehensive approach requires planning in both new and proven ways. It may mean crossing lines into the delivery of expanded services, development organizational collaborations and extending out across a region while also drilling down into the neighborhood level.

—From “Aging with a Comprehensive Approach” by MetLife Foundation, 2007



Issue #3: Flexibility in Policy, Procedure, and Regulations

There is a plethora of federal, state, local, and institutional real and/or perceived rules, regulations, and procedures that affect the way our communities provide long-term care services to frail seniors. With these rules and regulations come unintended consequences or rigidity in interpretation that cause barriers to care for the frail seniors. For example, there exists the “informal” procedure followed by many agencies that do not allow their staff to drive clients in their cars because of exposure to liability, but thereby significantly decreasing staff’s ability to provide wrap-around services for their frail senior clients. Another example is an existing legislation, RSA.151. Its unintended consequence is that it inhibits neighbors from helping frail seniors in the community. The statute requires the licensing of all people who provide in-home assistance to individuals in their homes whether they are doing it for profit or not, thus discouraging “good citizens” from helping others. These demonstrate a disconnect that can occur between the intention of a rule or protocol and the sometimes unintended result when the rule or protocol is implemented.



Dora, 87, was stuck in her apartment. She was wheelchair bound and lived on 3rd floor with no elevator. She couldn't go see the doctor; couldn't bathe because of the high bathtub sides; couldn't buy clothes; didn't even own a pair of shoes! The rent was almost the same as her income. Her only link to the outside was the TV, which broke. She was socially isolated and depressed. Inflexibility of agency policies meant that no one would transport her anywhere unless there was a fire or medical emergency.

Suggested Strategies for Seniors Count

One strategy to address the issues surrounding rigidity in policy, procedures, and regulations is to sensitize legislators to the importance of the need for flexibility within the statutes/rules/regulations pertaining to frail seniors. This could be accomplished through education and by encouraging the legislators to “test” each law against a “checklist” to ensure that the proposed legislation will adequately address the issues it seeks to correct. To this end, *Seniors Count* will partner with legislators to create an appropriate tool.

Issue #4: Education

There is insufficient education of seniors and their families/caregivers, policy makers, and other stakeholders regarding preparing for aging, the stages of aging, the range of choices that can reduce the current risks associated with aging in the community, and the impact policy initiatives have on frail seniors looking to remain in the community.

Suggested Strategies for Seniors Count

As a means to provide education about the above issues, the *Seniors Count* education committee will convene stakeholders to develop education modules and to determine how the modules are to be presented. Also, *Seniors Count* will conduct seminars for legislators pertaining to senior issues so that the legislators can be prepared to create appropriate and relevant legislation.

“Another development in society is there is less obligation to take care of parents: ‘someone else will do it’. More of the population needs to plan for aging and to be educated about the issues.”

—From a *Seniors Count* interview/meeting

Issue #5: Livable Communities

People highly engaged in their communities are more likely to age successfully². AARP defines successful aging“ as involvement with the world and other people; the ability to make choices that affect life, to care for one’s self (or get the help they need), and to pursue interests; and not feeling isolated.

Older people, especially the most frail, are too often invisible to many members of society resulting in misunderstanding the needs of seniors to be part of communities. This issue can be addressed by the *concept of livable communities*. Livable communities have been promoted by numerous organizations, including AARP which describes it as “places where people of all ages and abilities have housing and mobility options and supportive community features that meet their needs to be safe and comfortable and to get to where they need to go...they are places where people can live lives of purpose on their own terms where they choose...it is a key ingredient for independence, choice and control—essential elements for successful aging.”³

Suggested Strategies for Seniors Count

Seniors Count has promoted the concept for livable communities for several years. In October, 2007, in partnership with Dartmouth Community Medical School, we held a forum entitled “*Seniors Count: Imagine a Senior-Friendly Community.*” We also engaged architects, city planners, builders, and local government in several focus groups about the topic. There is a growing consensus among the stakeholders that we must “reinvent” the way we structure our communities to promote a better quality of life for all.

Moving forward to address the issue of livable communities, it is suggested *Seniors Count* assist the Manchester in initiating a Community Planning Board as outlined in HB 717. HB 717 allows municipalities, as an option, to establish civil planning boards if they feel they could use a tool like this to help them strengthen their community’s social and civic well-being. There is flexibility to allow local communities to use these boards in their own ways to make their communities better. Additionally, it is suggested that *Seniors Count* work with zoning board members and other planning organizations to educate them on senior issues.

Issue #6: Limited Resources of the Near Poor

The near poor—individuals who are just above financial eligibility for services such as adult day programs and homemaker services—have limited options regarding community services. An example of this is that seniors with limited fixed incomes often do not have the means to purchase emergency and/or unanticipated items not covered by Medicare. This situation often leaves a senior choosing between heat, rent, food, and medicine, ultimately putting his/her health at risk. Additionally, many services are not available for seniors whose income is just slightly above the Medicaid threshold and for those who do not clinically qualify for Medicaid. This lack of services further compromises seniors because they are needed to prevent deterioration, yet the cost to receive them is beyond seniors’ ability to pay.

“Today’s system needs to be far reaching. There is an obligation both long and short term. We need to bring services into peoples’ reach – not just the very poor but those with not many resources.”

Suggested Strategies for Seniors Count

This is a difficult issue to address because no matter where the cutoff line is, there will always be those who are just above it. One suggestion to address this issue is to enhance community connectivity in neighborhoods, families, faith-based institutions, intergenerational opportunities, and community supports. *Seniors Count* advocates for stronger community involvement and a return to some old fashion concepts such as neighbor helping neighbor and business involvement with helping seniors. *Seniors Count* will advocate for policies and regulations which support these initiatives, making it easier for communities to help themselves.

—From a *Seniors Count* interview/meeting

²Beyond 50.05, A Report to the Nation on Livable Communities Creating Environments for Successful Aging, AARP, 2005.

³Community Chest: Maintaining Mobility...Keeping the Connection, May 2007.

Seniors Count Policy Initiative: Synopsis

“We should not be limited and think just about the legislative environment and regulatory environment. There needs to be an understanding at the local and community level i.e. zoning, access to funding, etc. Part of what needs to be considered is to engage community planning and municipal planners.”

—From a *Seniors Count* interview/meeting

The work done preparing the *Seniors Count* Policy Workplan has sharpened our focus on our priorities. It has also given us the opportunity to think more abstractly about what the stakeholders were saying. Not only did we compile a list of regulatory barriers, but we also took the next step to ask “what is the list telling us,” and then extrapolated the salient issues that we wanted to address. Along the way, some ideas were supported by the findings (such as the need for more education); some were solidified by the findings (such as the concept of livable communities or needs of the near poor); and one was newly created (the concept of a way to envision coordination of medical concerns, community living/social service concerns and caregiver concerns).

Policy issues involve input from and coordination among many arenas:

- ◆ Federal Government (Executive and Legislative Branches)
- ◆ State Government (Executive and Legislative Branches)
- ◆ Municipal and Other Local Entities (Cities, Counties, Town and Commissions)
- ◆ Planning Boards
- ◆ Zoning Boards
- ◆ Non-Governmental Organizations
- ◆ Professional Licensing Boards
- ◆ Advocacy Organizations
- ◆ Special Interest Associations
- ◆ YOU

An overarching issue related to all the barriers is the need for **flexibility** in the system. The sheer number of seniors aging into frailty in our communities mandates that we create regulations that are somewhat pliable so that they can meet *the needs of the frail seniors* rather than just *the letter of the law*. Certainly we must be concerned about safety, confidentiality, risk, litigation, liability, etc, but we also must be smart enough to create a regulatory environment that morally, philosophically, and ethically can address the needs of the frail seniors. This issue opens the door for many healthy, vigorous debates, but they are just the kind of discussions we must be having—sooner rather than later—before the tsunami of the baby boomers crashes around us.

We are all part of the solution and can make a difference on the local level. *Seniors Count* is an open forum for collaboration in New Hampshire to make communities better for our frail seniors.

Join us.

Our Generous Funders

Maximizing the independence and quality of life of frail seniors is everyone's responsibility.

The following key funders have helped put resources behind actions that reflect these values, and in doing so, help ensure the well-being of seniors in our community. That's what it's all about.

INDIVIDUALS

Ronald & Louise Allard
Joannie Artz
Michael & Jennifer Auyer
Clyde & Adele Baker
Dave & Sue Benson
Maurice & Imelda Boisvert
Kenneth & Jean Brooks
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Moore Center Services, Inc.
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Pearl Manor Fund
The Mary Gale Foundation
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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Elliot Health System
Elm Grove Property Solutions
Hannaford's, Manchester
Home Depot, Manchester
Lowe's, Bedford
Public Service of New Hampshire
Retired Senior Volunteer Program
ServiceLink of Hillsborough County
Southern NH Services
Target
Wal-Mart #2246

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help more seniors,
please make a donation to
Seniors Count at
www.seniorscountnh.org

We have made every effort to acknowledge our donors appropriately.
If we have made an error, please let us know.

Seniors Count Collaborating Council

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Jean Crouch, *Seniors Count* Project Facilitator
Susan Fox, Real Choice Proj. Dir, UNH Institute on Disability
Dottie Gove, Dir. Of Home Care Programs, Child & Family Services, Inc.
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New Hampshire
**SENIORS
COUNT**



PARTNERS TO CHANGE THE FACE OF AGING

For more information about *Seniors Count*.

603.644.2240

www.seniorscountnh.org