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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Regional Input will Help Inform Direction of Aging Together**

Aging Together's vision is to assure "Age friendly communities that actively engage, value and support older adults". Community Conversations is an opportunity for all voices to be heard in order to help inform their work.

#### **What are Community Conversations?**

Aging Together's Community Conversations involve group meetings where volunteer participants gather to answer questions or go online to answer surveys. They allow an opportunity for the public to offer opinions and insight concerning access to services and supports for older adults. The results of conversations and surveys help Aging Together prioritize their activities and focus for the three years. Aging Together then partners with other organizations and coalitions to galvanize action in the form of new ideas, ventures and missions in response to the Community Conversations.

#### **Why Community Conversations?**

"It is absolutely vital that our region's older adults participate in this project that's happening now", says Ellen Phipps, Aging Together's Executive Director. "It's those who are hoping to stay at home for as long as possible that have the most relevant perspective for exactly what the challenges of aging well are. Sometimes it is just a matter of needing help to do yard work; or perhaps a ride to an appointment. Or, some assistance with planning for retirement. We are asking what they need and want to live better, including things like staying active after retirement and maintaining a positive, healthy lifestyle."

Just like each person and demographic is different, so is each county. Aging Together has been actively pursuing location venues and methods of distribution that assure inclusivity. "A challenge in one county may not be the same in another", says Phipps. "We have always remained steadfast in the belief that those who work and live in a particular community are best able to define its particular gaps."

2019 was the last year Aging Together conducted a Community Conversations focus project. At that time over 500 volunteers attended to answer questions and identify key challenges, strengths and opportunities affecting the region's aging demographic. An example of a successful outcome is the extensive growth in transportation options throughout the region in response to its demarcation as a primary challenge for older adults who don't drive. "This was a top priority mined from the 2019 Community Conversations", says Phipps. "As a direct result, the Regional Transportation Collaborative was formed in partnership with Aging

Together and other key stakeholders, and consequently there has been extensive growth in transportation availability as well as the successful development of a cohesive volunteer driver program.”

But the aging demographic is also growing, and this means the best response to current challenges will come from a higher number of people participating. Aging Together is partnering with the Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services Senior Centers; faith-based communities, retired veterans meeting halls, senior villages, and others who are willing to open their doors and host conversations. Phipps underscores the cruciality of this. “We really want as many older adults, those living with older adults and those caring for them to be involved in this important process as possible. It’s imperative to the next three years in how we work with our partners to continue making our region the best it can be and a place where everyone can enjoy growing old.”

### **How to Participate**

Everyone is invited and encouraged to participate in a group conversation by just showing up at one of the scheduled meetings. But attending a group is not necessary. To answer a survey questionnaire, go to [www.agingtogether.org](http://www.agingtogether.org) (available electronically or in paper form) or contact Aging Together at 540-829-6405. *If preferred, surveys enable participants to remain anonymous.*

The Community Conversations meeting location schedule can be found below or on Aging Together’s website. Check back as more venues will be added through April.

*The mission of Aging Together is, through partnerships, to connect people to communities and resources to improve quality of life as we age. Aging Together serves the counties of Culpeper, Fauquier, Orange, Madison and Rappahannock.*

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***Schedule diagram follows pg.3***



**DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR 2023 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS.**

No registration necessary. Just show up at one of the following meetings and join in. (If you are not able to attend an open meeting, please fill out the online survey found on Aging Together’s website: [www.agingtogether.org](http://www.agingtogether.org))

For questions about dates or locations for Community Conversations, please contact Anna Rogers at 540-829-6405 or [arogers@agingtogether.org](mailto:arogers@agingtogether.org).

Dates 2023	Time	Location	
February 22	11:00am	Culpeper Library	Silver Citizens meeting
March 9	1:00-2:00pm	Madison Senior Center	
March 21	6:00pm	Reformation Lutheran Church, Culpeper	Includes dinner/ *please RSVP
March 23	12:30-1:30pm	Orange Senior Center	
April 5	12:45-1:45pm	Rappahannock Senior Center	
April 26	10:00am-Noon	Lake of the Woods Orange	
April 27	1:00-3:00pm	Trinity Episcopal Church, Rappahannock	
TBD		Bealton Library, Fauquier	

**Check for updates as more meetings and places will be added through April, 2023.**