

## **Annual Report, 2009**

June 22, 2009, revised August 4, 2009

The Regional Institute on Aging (RIA) is a virtual research organization designed to serve the citizens of metropolitan Wichita, the adjacent counties, the state of Kansas, and, eventually, the surrounding Midwestern states. Highlights of the second year of operation include continuation of the Gridley Hoover Pilot Research Program, completion of the conference Aging on the Plains, the Work Group on Falls and Falling LinKS, development of research teams, and planning for the gift provided through the estate of Evelyn D. Cassat.

Gridley Hoover Pilot Research Program: The RIA, through the generous support of Mr. Curt Gridley and Ms. Tracy Hoover, announced the second Gridley Hoover Pilot Research Program. The program provides investigators with significant short-term funding to collect preliminary

dealt with in "Aging on the Plains" every day in her work in the mid section of the U.S. We will use the same general outline of the conference: Challenges, Tools, Innovations, and Policy.

Planning for the 2009 conference, Aging and Thriving on the Plains, is underway. The vision is to support older adults to successfully age in place in rural and frontier Kansas. The mission is to connect and network with individuals but also with for profit and non-profit organizations; communities; local, county and state government agencies; and universities to recognize older adults and their contributions in building, re-building and maintaining small towns and rural communities. The audience is older Kansans, governmental officials at the local, county and state levels, community leaders, business and professional leaders, aging service and program providers, and university faculty members and investigators. The underlying philosophy of the conference could be framed as follows:

- We recognize that older adults hold a treasure trove of experiences, knowledge and resources that can be brought to bear on issues and challenges in small town and rural America, as well as across the nation.
- We value small town, rural and frontier life and culture. We know that many older adults who reside there plan to remain for the rest of their lives.
- We want to focus on positive messages, talk about towns and communities that are "making it" even though many would expect them to "fail" because of geography, distance, population density, declining infrastructure and tax base, etc. How? Why?
- We are interested in the characteristics of the success stories and how they can be replicated in other towns.

There are several organizations and groups in Kansas focused on the continuation, development, re-development and vibrancy of small towns and rural and frontier communities. The emphasis is often on the economic vitality of the towns, retaining the younger people and growing community leaders.

What is absent is a clear emphasis and recognition of older adults as community members, current and developing leaders. The aims of the conference are to begin to link groups with similar interests and to draw attention to older adults as cross cutting change agents for these organizations and groups. It is hard to imagine a successful small community where people want

2008-09 with key informant interviews, as well as beginning the toolkit compilation. An application was submitted to the Kansas Health Foundation for a Recognition Grant to extend Falling LinKS to Elk County Kansas (not funded). An application for a National Institutes of

to provide to the older facility residents and potentially a reduction in turnover. The work group intends to prepare a grant application for the Health Services and Resources Administration, DHHS.

A Work Group on Disasters and Aging is discussing the development of an application in response to an announcement from the National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Aging: NIH Exploratory/Developmental Research Grant on Behavioral and Social Research on Disasters and Aging. The proposed project will explore the characteristics of general media communications about weather related disasters in populations of older adults in rural and frontier areas of Kansas:

- 1) What information about impending or potential disasters do older adults want to receive?
- 2) In what media and format do they prefer to receive disaster information?
- 3) What spokespeople are viewed as most reliable and truthful by older adults? And, the most critical issue:
- 4) What characteristics of disaster or preparedness information are most convincing to older adults, i.e., lead them to take appropriate, timely, protective measures for themselves and their property?

The goal is to submit an application for the October 2009 deadline. Drs. Radebau9.2 Tm0eo(du)-9(184.7f.hke)4(

Research development workshops may be convened annually by the RIA. The workshops will be led and hosted by WSU RIA, and convened in partnership with programs from the University of Kansas, Kansas State University or local, state or national aging organizations including federal government agencies and community based programs.

Cassat gift funds will be allocated for faculty research development activities. The goal of this competitive program is to provide a menu of research support resources and activities for faculty, all aimed at the development of new highly competitive research grant applications. All components of this program will require a detailed proposal. All proposals will be peer reviewed.

Additionally, Mrs. Cassat's gift supports the Carl and Rozina Cassat Professor in Aging. The