



Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options

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**Grandparents in Harvey Support 2010 Census Campaign;
South Suburban Senior Services Wants Everyone to Be Counted**

The grandparents gathered at Brooks Middle School in Harvey reminisced about the suburbs where they grew up. They talked about the possibilities of better schools, jobs and community programs and seeing Harvey thrive with the stores, movie theaters and businesses that bring life to a community.

They would like to experience this kind of community again, and they want the grandchildren they are raising to experience it, too.

Monique Y. James, outreach and special projects supervisor at South Suburban Senior Services of Catholic Charities had just made a presentation on the 2010 census to these grandparents who are raising grandchildren. Members of the group expressed interest in actively supporting outreach efforts for the upcoming census in order to gain additional support for Harvey and its residents.

“They grasped the importance of counting every Harvey resident in order to ensure that the appropriate funds are allocated to support their city,” James said. “All of them have grandchildren who attend schools in Harvey and most of them are long-time Harvey residents who have seen the city change over the years.”

South Suburban Senior Services of Catholic Charities, a respected nonprofit agency in Harvey, is a Count Me In partner of AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging of suburban Cook County.

The Count Me In campaign is working to boost census participation in select hard-to-count communities throughout Illinois that had low participation in the 2000 census. It is supported by a coalition of 10 leading foundations in Illinois.

A full count ensures that a community receives its fair share of federal funds. Census data help guide planning and funding for schools, roads, hospitals, child care and senior

services and other community services. In addition, census data determine how many seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Since census data are used to apportion the more than \$400 million the federal government distributes each year to state, local and tribal governments, partners in the Count Me In campaign want residents to understand how important it is for everyone to fill out and return their census forms.

“The census affects the allocation of funds for programs,” James said. “These funds, or the lack thereof, directly affect our ability to help the vulnerable seniors in our communities.”

To be sure everyone is counted, South Suburban Senior Services is blanketing the area with presentations, posters, flyers and other efforts. The grandparents meeting at Brooks Middle School understood how important being counted will be to them, their grandchildren and the community. They told James they will actively support participation in the census.

Census forms will be mailed to every household in March. AgeOptions staff are available to answer questions about the census and direct callers to local Census Bureau assistance when it becomes available. For information, call AgeOptions at (708)383-0258, (800)699-9043 or TTY (708)524-1653.

AgeOptions is a nonprofit organization located in Oak Park, IL, that has served the older adults of suburban Cook County and their caregivers as an Area Agency on Aging since 1974. For more information, please visit the Agency website at www.ageoptions.org.

AgeOptions connects adults, aged 60 and over, with resources and service options so they can live their lives to the fullest and remain in their homes as long as possible. As the Area Agency on Aging, **AgeOptions** serves suburban Cook County, which includes 130 communities within 30 townships and a diverse population of 454,000 older adults. **AgeOptions**, a not-for-profit organization, advocates, plans, develops and funds programs and coordinates a network of community-based senior service agencies to ensure an effective and efficient system of service delivery is available. In fiscal year 2008, **AgeOptions** distributed \$12,732,000 to these agencies. Support is provided through the Older Americans Act, Illinois General Revenue Funds, local funds and individual contributions. **AgeOptions** and its network of agencies are the principal source of information regarding senior services in suburban Cook County.