

Press Release, 1st Annual Senior Summit, April 7, 2017

Honoring the Silver Lining Generation

About 250 senior citizens and friends attended the Inaugural Senior Summit on Saturday, April 1 at the Robinson Rancheria Resort and Casino. "That's 100 more than we initially planned for," County Supervisor Jim Steele. "Thanks to our accommodating venue hosts, there was enough food to feed everyone."

In a conference-style approach, the all-day event provided a forum for information and services available to seniors; delivered training for non-profit Boards; and celebrated the contributions of seniors from throughout the County.

Nine seniors received County, State and Federal honors for their volunteer efforts and contributions to Lake County. Deemed "Inspirational Seniors," award recipients Sandi Baroni, Ron Keas, Shari Koch, Shirley Kelsey, Freeda Krukoff, Gene Paleno, Janis Stockton, Mary Veeninga and Jim Westrich were each called on stage to be recognized by County Supervisor Jim Steele; State Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry; and Tribal Chair E.J. Crandell, representing Congressman Mike Thompson.

A key aspect of the summit was introducing the Lake County Silver Foundation, a non-profit entity designed to raise funds in support of Senior Centers and other non-profit entities that provide services to seniors and conduct future annual summit conferences.

Chosen to speak for all senior and support services in the County, Jonathon Crooks, who manages the Lakeport and Kelseyville centers, spoke to the needs of a growing senior populace. "Affecting 30% of Lake County seniors, food insecurity is a serious problem in Lake County," he said. "Senior centers serve only a portion of those seniors and we receive government funding for only about 45% of what it costs to feed this vulnerable population. The rest we have to raise ourselves which is tough and getting tougher in the economically challenged communities we serve. We need new funding sources like the Silver Foundation."

Speaking to another problem facing seniors, Keynote speaker Prescott Cole addressed financial abuses - including agents who sell annuities to the elderly that will never pay out in their lifetime. Prescott explained that these abuses occur because of changes as people age and the trusting nature of the older population.

Event volunteers scurried to process the large number of guests, including those who did not pre-register or who registered late. "We ran out of everything - conference bags, the programs, even name badges," said Janine Smith-Citron, one of the volunteers helping to register guests.

“It’s a bit risky to plan a first time event like this,” said Conference Organizer Olga Martin Steele. “We worried attendance might be low due to other competing activities that day but in the final analysis, we confirmed our thinking, that seniors are a respected segment of our population.” Several guests commented, “This was great and can only get better.”

According to Supervisor Steele, the event volunteers carried the day, working to accommodate a much larger group than anticipated. “We owe a huge debt of gratitude to everyone who helped, especially the core planning group including Senior Center Managers Joyce Overton, Jonathan Crooks, Lori Tourville and Nathan Maxman as well as Joyce Adams and Janine Smith-Citron of Hospice. Bill Shields and Lenny Mathews, behind the scenes volunteers who worked hard, handing out and posting flyers all around the County, also deserve a special note of thanks as does Rae Eby-Carl and Kurt McKelvey who worked throughout the day of the conference.”

The day closed with a raffle of about 50 items as diverse as acclaimed photographs and books to gift certificates, Nordic walking sticks and more. Charged with securing donated items for the raffle, Wanda Quitiquit remarked, “It is so encouraging to see the community support for this event. If I named every donor we’d need an entire page in the newspaper.”

Conference planners also credited sponsors with the event’s success. The bulk of the funding for the event came from major sponsors including the Robinson Rancheria Resort & Casino, Calpine At The Geysers, Clearlake Oaks-Glenhaven Business Association, PG&E, Lake County Senior Centers, Lake County Supervisor Jim Steele, Lake Transit Authority, and the Law Offices of Dennis A. Fordham. At the table sponsor level, Hospice Services of Lake County, Konocti Senior Services, Law Offices of Mary Heare Amodio and the Lucerne Community Clinic also made cash donations in support of the event.

Steele said he had several primary goals in mind when he reached out to the Senior Centers with the idea of an event to change the way we perceive Lake County Senior Citizens:

- To change the community view of seniors and elders. Seniors have lived the longest and have the wisdom of time. They continue to be the bedrock of their community and should be viewed that way. A great example of this view is traditional tribal cultures that honor elders and look to instill this respect in youth.
- To conduct an annual conference style event for seniors and elders to provide a touchstone for their value to society and help senior and elder centers adjust their course toward what is relevant for each generation.
- To provide a professional level training seminar for senior center boards to improve the vitality of each center and attract new members.

- To establish a foundation to seek out of county donations, provide endowment options for seniors who want to direct their gifts to other seniors and conduct an annual professional-style conference for seniors. Feedback from seniors can also be used to inform agencies about the effectiveness of support programs.

“I think we achieved that and more,” said Steele. “I’m ready to begin planning the next summit, hopefully through the an engaged Board of Directors of The Lake County Silver Foundation.”

For information on how you can support the Foundation and the next Annual Senior Summit, call 707-998-1302.