



CATAWBA COUNTY

P.O. BOX 669 Newton, North Carolina 28658-0669 (828) 695-5600 **Catawba County Social Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Margaret Allen, Catawba County Social Services Public Information Officer,
mallen@catawbacountync.gov, 828-695-6583

CATAWBA COUNTY AGING PLAN PRESENTED TO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HICKORY, N.C. — The Catawba County Aging Leadership Planning Team presented its findings Monday, Nov. 21 to the County Commission. The commissioners created this group in 2009 to suggest ways the community can meet the needs of the growing number of senior citizens living in the county.

According to the U.S. Census, Catawba County's age 60+ population is growing rapidly as baby boomers reach retirement age and people live longer. During the last decade, the number of people age 65-74 years old grew by 28.3 percent; residents who are 75-84 years old grew by 14.0 percent; and those 85 and older grew by 43.8 percent. These numbers compare to an overall growth rate in the county of 8.9 percent during the same period. As the county's population continues to age, additional programs and services will be needed to meet the needs of senior citizens, their families and caregivers.

Shuford Abernethy, Catawba Aging Leadership Planning Team member and president of Abingdon Senior Housing Services Inc., presented the team's formal report and aging plan to the commission. The planning team was led by Tami Hefner, Adult Services Program manager with Catawba County Social Services, and Sheila Weeks, Area Agency on Aging director with Western Piedmont Council of Governments.

The team was composed of 114 county residents and included representatives from 65 agencies and organizations. The group studied eight components of a livable and senior friendly community identified by the N.C. Division of Aging and Adult Services. These components included Physical and Accessible Environment, Healthy Aging, Economic Security, Technology, Safety and Security, Social and Cultural Opportunity, Access and Choice in Services and Supports, and Public Accountability and Responsiveness.

The Catawba County Aging Plan lists 38 objectives for the years 2011-2015 in eight different areas. The plan also lists responsible parties and strategies for achieving those goals. Key objectives include:

Establishment of the Catawba County Aging Coalition, a group that will focus on promoting the general well-being of older adults by monitoring and assisting with the implementation of the Aging Plan objectives.

Creation of a local PACE (Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly) organization.

Such a program has recently been established and is located in the former Dale Jarrett building on Highway 70.

Increased Access to Information and Assistance by increasing public awareness of existing resources for older adults, their families and caregivers. A grassroots effort called Senior Information Resources or SIR is working to provide information regarding services and resources for older adults and their caregivers. SIR will work to address and implement the Aging Plan objectives related to Access to Information.

If you would like more information, you may download the plan at <http://www.catawbacountync.gov> or you may contact Tami Hefner at 828-695-5607 or Sheila Weeks at 485-4212 with questions.

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