

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, THURSDAY, June 28, 2012

V.O.I.C.E. Congregations Call for Increased Programming and Transportation Options for Seniors in McLean and Falls Church

Today, 90 VOICE leaders from the McLean and Falls Church communities called on County Supervisor John Foust and the McLean Community Center to increase programs and transportation options for seniors. The public action was hosted by VOICE (Virginians Organized for interfaith Community Engagements) and was attended by members of Temple Rodef Shalom, Dar al Hijrah Islamic Center, St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church, Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Idylwood Presbyterian Church, Rock Spring Congregational United Church of Christ, and Lewinsville Presbyterian Church. Allies from the McLean Chamber of Commerce, the Jewish Social Service Agency and the Aging in McLean Taskforce were also present.

Leaders who had lived in the community for over forty years spoke about developing activities for their kids and investing in strong schools. Now, the county has not kept pace with the growing needs of seniors. As Sharon Levy said, "We have given a lot to our area. Now is time to do something for ourselves." McLean Community Center Programs Director Maggie Shea announced that the community center would add additional classes and lectures for those over 55 starting in January of 2013. Supervisor Foust committed to helping clear away obstacles so the Community Center can hire a staff person dedicated to senior programming. Leaders announced they would continue to work on affordable and efficient transportation options for seniors. Clergy spoke of the religious imperative to respect and honor seniors who should not be forced to leave their communities in order to access needed services. Rabbi Laszlo Berkowits, founding rabbi of Temple Rodef Shalom, ended the action by quoting from Psalm 71, "Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone."

V.O.I.C.E. is a broad-based, non-partisan citizens organization working in Fairfax County as well as Alexandria City, Arlington and Prince William Counties. This initiative began this winter when leaders of V.O.I.C.E. congregation Temple Rodef Shalom heard stories about the difficulties of aging in their community. Leaders joined with other congregations in the area to research solutions to the problems of quality classes and transportation. This action is just the beginning of a larger effort on transportation. Leaders are committed to doing more research over the summer and meeting with Supervisor Foust again in late fall to discuss possible solutions to the lack of affordable and efficient public transportation for seniors.



John Elligers, who has lived in McLean for over thirty years, describes his struggle finding stimulating senior programming in his community.



Roland Finken tells of his difficulties getting around now that he can no longer drive.