

# Senior services top interfaith group's agenda

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by David Holzel  
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A group of McLean and Falls Church activists got most of what they wanted last week, at a meeting during which they pressed local officials to increase services for the area's growing senior population.

Fairfax County Supervisor John Foust (Dranesville) told the 60 people gathered at Temple Rodef Shalom that he would help pave the way for a senior program specialist to be hired at the McLean Community Center. He also agreed that his office will help assess the transportation needs of seniors in the area.

Rodef Shalom hosted the June 28 meeting as part of its association with VOICE, a Virginia interfaith community organization. Representatives of seven additional congregations attended the meeting, called to demonstrate that there is sufficient interest to expand services for residents who want to age in place.

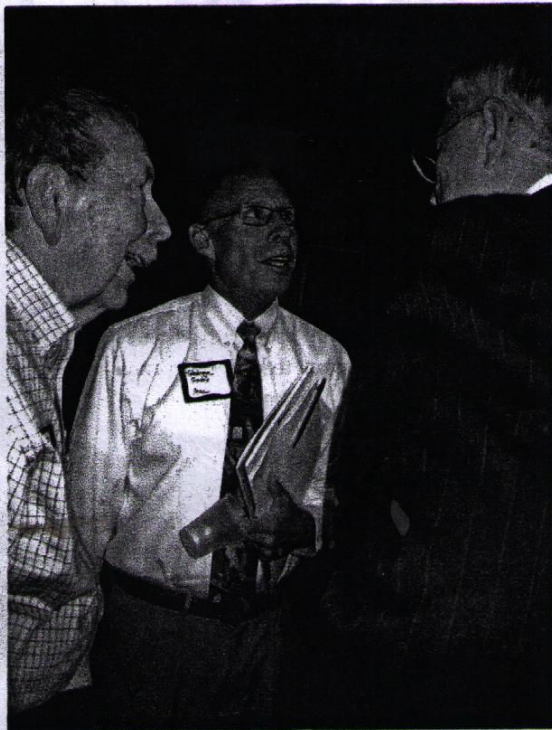
And that population is growing, Sharon Levy, a Fairfax County resident since 1966, told the gathering. For the first time, Fairfax will see more people turning 65 than entering kindergarten, she said.

Levy reminded the group that her generation had built the area's schools and services for children and families. Now, she said, it was time to develop services for seniors.

"We're getting older and we need services, not the kids. Now is the time to do something for ourselves," she said.

One such service is affordable transportation. Organizers are looking at best practices in other counties "and meeting with transportation officials in Fairfax County to figure out more about who sets the rules for existing programs," Rabbi Erica Asch, an organizer with VOICE, said after the meeting. "We also need to find out more about where the senior population lives and what are their transportation concerns and needs," she said.

Organizers say they are also focused on



Temple Rodef Shalom member Roland Finken, from left, talks about senior needs with McLean Community Center executive director George Sachs and Fairfax County Supervisor John Foust.

Photo by David Holzel

"stimulating, enriching classes," according to Andrea Stillman, who co-chaired the event.

The group seeks space in the McLean and Falls Church community centers for "intellectually oriented classes for seniors, not for college kids," Rodef Shalom member John Elligers told the gathering.

In an announcement read at the meeting, Falls Church Community Center said it has space for those classes. Asked if McLean Community Center also had space, its programming director, Maggie Shea, said, "Emphatically."

But when asked if the McLean center would hire a senior program specialist to oversee the classes, executive director George Sachs said, in effect, "Yes, but."

"It may not be immediate," he said. "We don't have any office space for an additional person."

Later, he told *Washington Jewish Week* that he would request funding for the position from the county for Fiscal Year 2014, which begins July 1, 2013. The proposal is due this Sept. 30, he said.