

Empowering Grandparents, Energizing Communities

N4A Annual Meeting

July 19, 2010

St. Louis, Missouri

Karen Kolb Flude

Mather LifeWays

About Mather LifeWays

A unique not-for-profit organization, Mather LifeWays enhances the lives of older adults by creating Ways to Age Well:

- Senior Residences
- Institute on Aging
- Community Initiatives

Served **32,495** older adults in 2009

Community Initiatives:

Making neighborhoods better places for older adults to live, work, learn, contribute, and play.



GRANDFamilies Program of Chicago

– History

- Community need unmet
- Growth and development

– Structure

- 4 support groups
- Housing resource center
- One-stop support for grandfamilies



GRANDFamilies
generations creating a legacySM

Empowering Grandparents Raising Grandkids

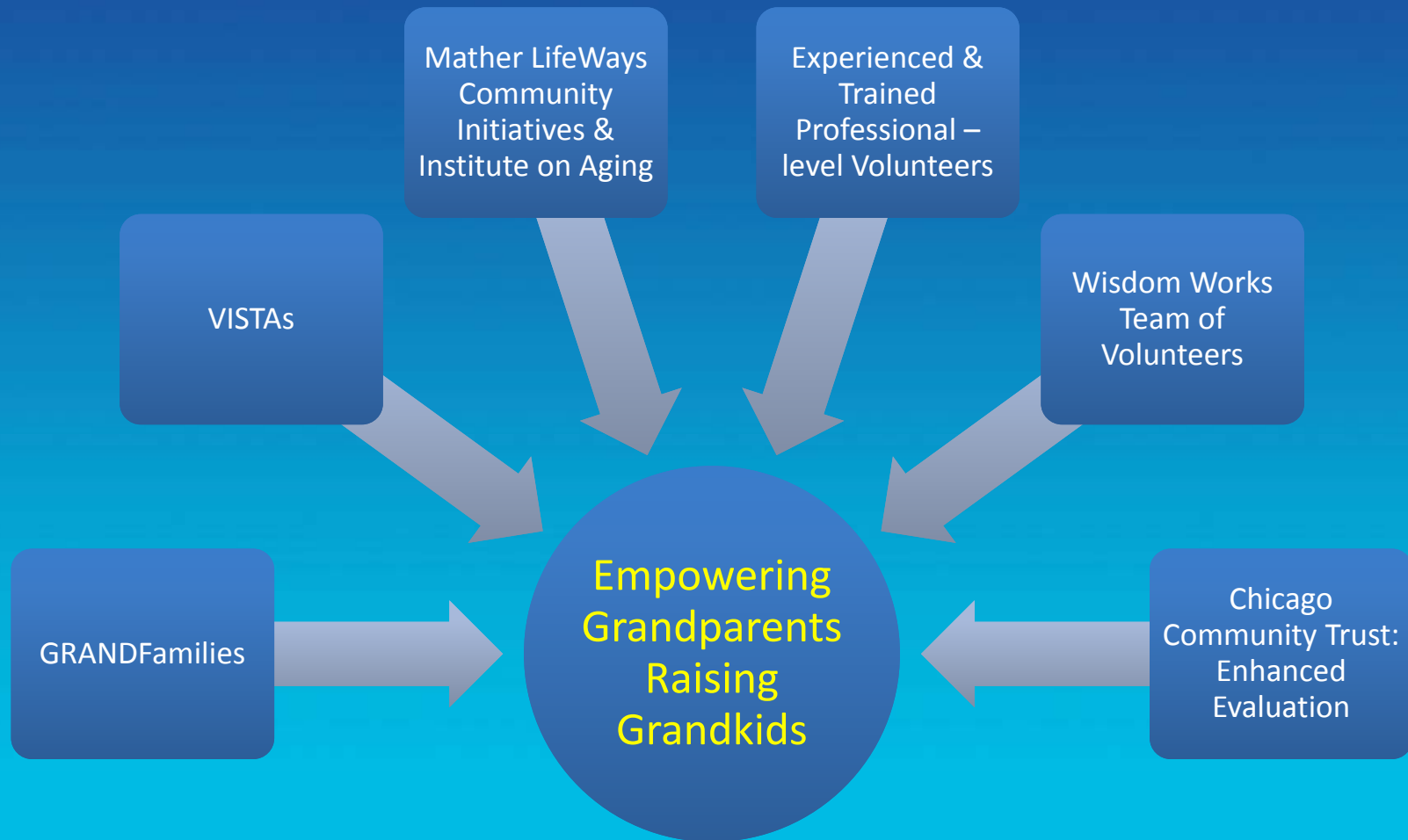
MGCE

Multi-Generational
& Civic Engagement
Initiative

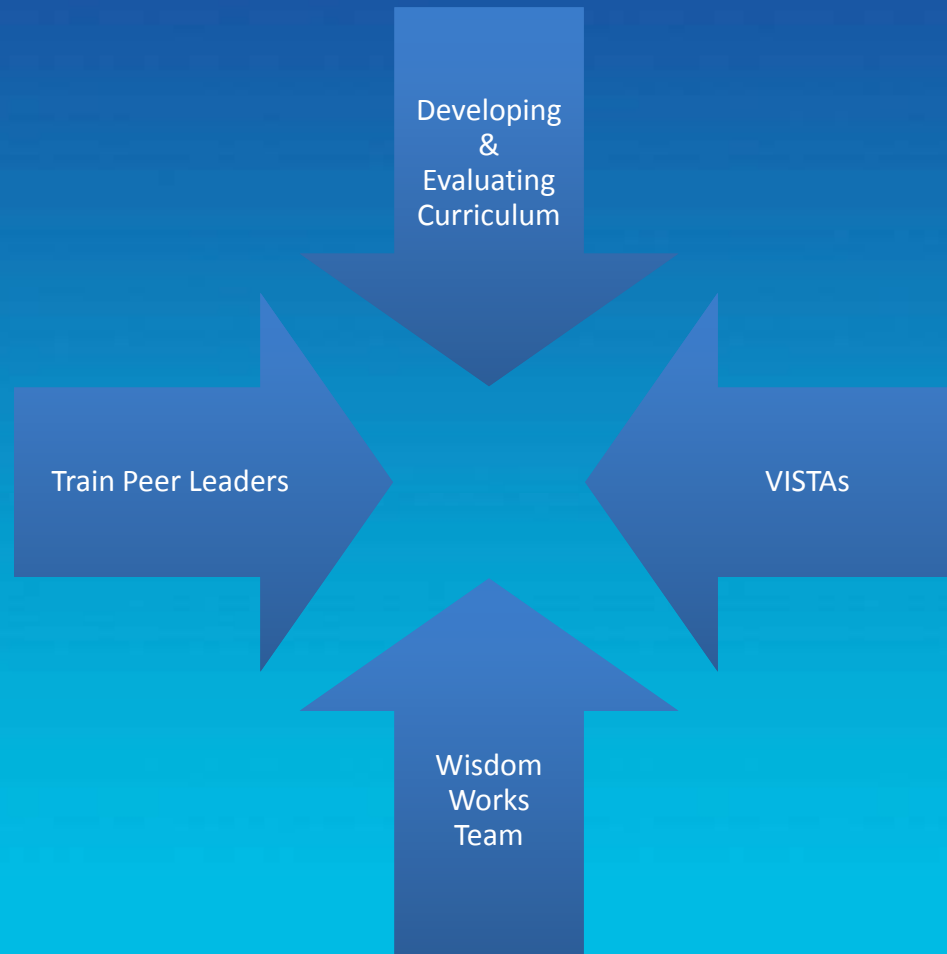
**Wisdom
Works** 
Building Better Communities

“Engaging Experience to
Energize Communities”

Leverage Resources to Meet Need



4 Components to Empowering Grandparents



Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs)

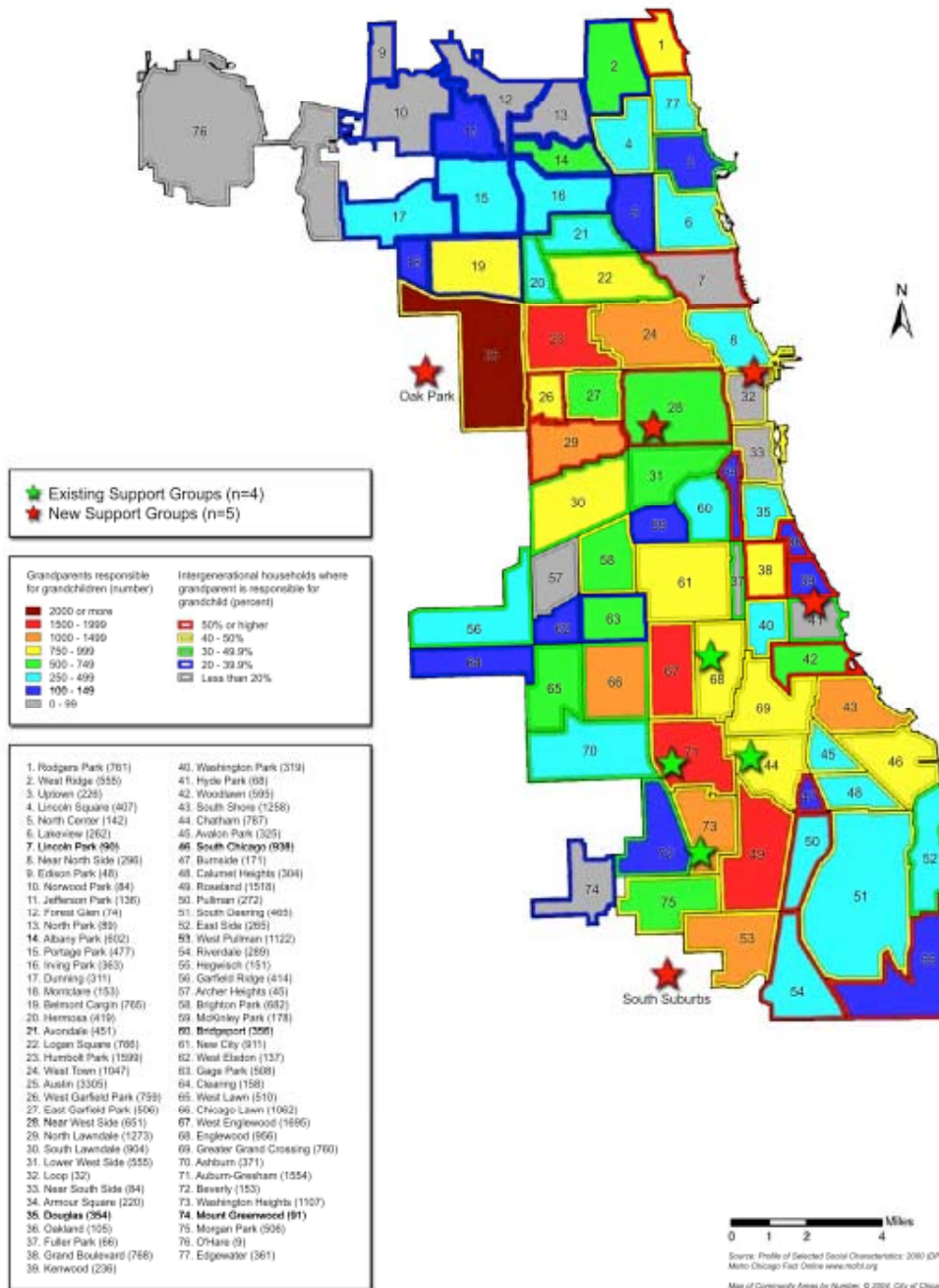


Community Engagement VISTAs

Work with GRANDFamilies to:

- Build capacity
- Conduct interviews
- Create curriculum
- Find resources
- Create toolkit
- Conduct program outreach
- Assist WisdomWorks Team

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Chicago



Map of existing and new GRANDFamilies supports

The Process

10 educational self-help group leaders trained

Leaders co-lead 5 new groups in Chicagoland

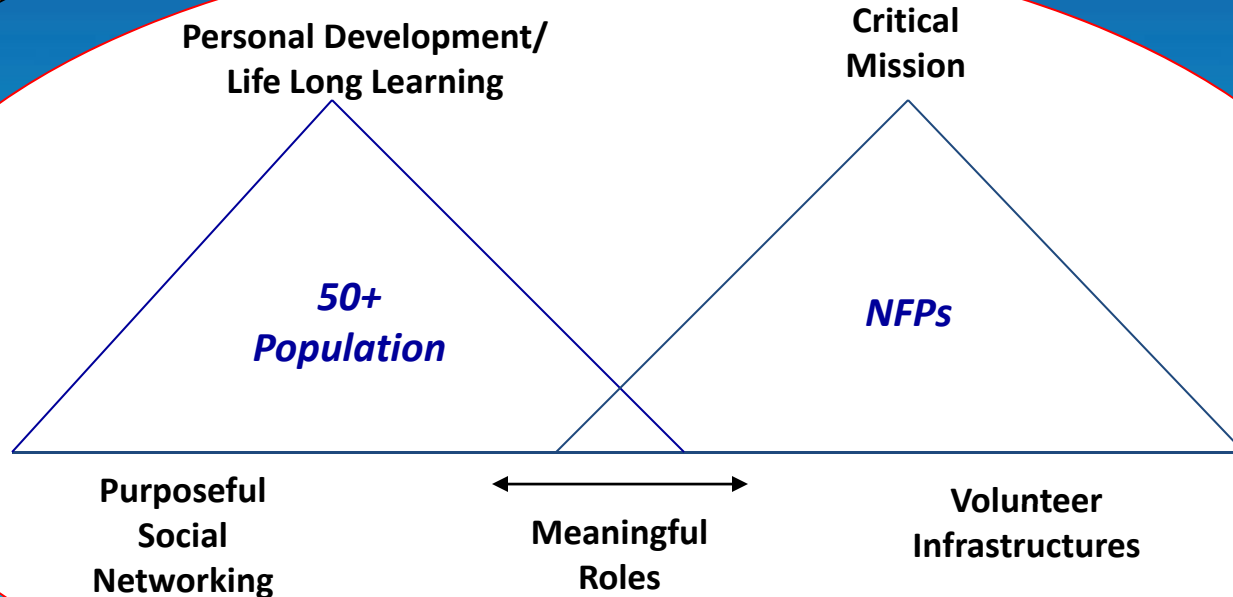
- 125 grandparents receive training
- New leaders are identified
- Evaluation of self-help group and leader training

Leaders: The Key to Success

- Older adults, including grandparents
- Empathetic
- Appropriate environment for leaders
 - Networking
 - Applicability of content to their lives
 - Continuing development and education
 - Make a measurable difference
- Time-specific volunteering
- Ladder for clients becoming leaders

Legacy Leadership Model of Lifelong Engagement

Creating Social Capital



*Developing
NFP
Leadership*

*Enhancing
NFP
Capacity*

Curriculum Design

Building
Leaders:
Leadership and
Skill
Development



Train Leaders:
Issues that
Impact
Grandparents



Peer
Leaders
who Train

Curriculum Content

- Housing
- Finances
- Schools
- Legal Issues
- Intergenerational Issues
- Empowering Grandkids
- Health
- Self-Care
- Retirement, Work, and Grandparenting
- Advocacy
- Empowering Grandparents
- And More . . .

Goals of Curriculum for Leaders and Participants

Create an *experience*

- People become empowered
- Curriculum naturally becomes self-directed
- Recognition of wisdom in the room
- Increased awareness of resources & self-efficacy
- Better outcomes for grandparents
- Better outcomes for grandkids

Older adults as community change agents

Wisdom Works Team (WWT)

A multi-skilled group of 55+ adult volunteers who share responsibilities for addressing a challenge or opportunity in their community.

Through time, the team is empowered to take full responsibility for its own functioning and for results.



Who is in a Wisdom Works Team?

Multi-skilled group of older adults

- Retired
- In transition
- Working

People who want to:

- Change their community
- Engage in new ways
- Learn in new ways



GRANDFamilies WWT Project

Funding was the key need

Project chosen, developed, and
implemented by team

- “GRANDFamilies Friendraiser”
- Video that tells the GRANDFamilies story
- Toolkit supports “friendraiser” parties to raise awareness and develop funds



What does the Experience Mean?

- I do it as a **tribute to my own grandmother**, who raised me
- I like the **learning opportunities**:
 - learning new technology
 - practical knowledge, like how to make a video;
 - learning about other people;
 - learning about issues.
- I like **the teamwork and collaboration** with others who also are here to help others
- I like the **faith in us** - that **older adults can learn new things**
- I like **motivating others**
- I like being able to **use my skills to help others** and my sense of accomplishment
- I like **networking** opportunities;
- I came for some **new direction**
- It's good to be involved in a worthwhile **community effort**
- I like **working with a diverse group of people**, who have a lot of talent to share. I'm **inspired by the others**
- I like the idea of a **defined project with a clear beginning and end.**

Life as an Older VISTA

“My year as an Americorps VISTA volunteer, working with and on behalf of low-income grandparents raising grandchildren on the South Side of Chicago, has been **an extraordinary experience for me at this point in my life**, a point at which many people have already retired. It has brought home to me in a vivid personal sense the profound truths that there are many ways to have a rich life without many financial means and that **remaining energetic and engaged in new experiences and adventures is part of a continuously unfolding developmental process in one’s lifetime.**

The grandparents I have come to know have shown **me the remarkable strength, resilience, and determination of people who, although aging, take on new challenges at a time when they are least expected.** The colleagues with whom I have worked at Mather LifeWays have shown me the way in which **an organization’s outreach to people in need can create transformative opportunities.** I am optimistic and gratified that the comprehensive curricula our team has created for the grandparents -- curricula that address pertinent issues for the grandparents, leadership, and self-advocacy – **will contribute to enhancing the quality of their lives and the lives of their grandchildren and will remind all of us that life is full of new beginnings as we age.”**

For more information

Mather LifeWays

Karen Kolb

847-492-7732

kkolb@matherlifeways.com

GRANDFamilies Program of Chicago

Linette Kinchen

773-651-8800

linette@grandfamilieschicago.org