



Wider Opportunities for Women



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New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc. Takes the Lead to

Achieve Economic Security for Millions of State's Elders

Launches Multi-Year Elder Economic Security Initiative

NEW YORK -- New York StateWide Senior Action Council, Inc., in partnership with Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), is leading a statewide initiative to ensure that New York's elders are able to age in place with dignity and economic security.

The New York Elder Economic Security Initiative (Initiative) will provide guidelines and tools to shape public policies and programs to promote the economic well being of elders. Through a combination of coalition building, research, education, advocacy and a media strategy at the community, state, and national levels, the Initiative will provide important new information to illustrate the basic costs that older adults in New York face and how their financial security is affected when their life circumstances change. In addition, the Initiative will educate seniors about actual and projected living costs to inform their financial, employment, and life decisions, and help local agencies serving seniors set goals, assess needs, and design programs to help older adults age in place. A key component of the Initiative is the Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index), a realistic measure of the income needed for older adults to age in place with dignity.

"NY StateWide Senior Action Council is thrilled to enter into this collaboration with WOW," said Justin Cunningham, Executive Director of the Council. "The development of this tool could not come at a more important time when senior citizens are fighting to ensure that the safety nets which they have paid into all of their lives are maintained and improved not only for their generation, but for those to come. This tool will be widely used throughout New York State not only by our chapters and partners in the field of aging, but also with our collaborators in the areas of social services, families, and the disabled. Together we will effect change."

According to 2007 U.S. Census, over 38 million Americans live in poverty, with 9.5% of adults 65 and older

living in poverty. Older women are almost twice as likely to live in poverty than older men. Poverty hits older women of

color the hardest — 23 percent of African-American and nearly 21 percent of Hispanic older women live in poverty. For women living alone, the rates are even higher.

“These figures are just the tip of the iceberg, given that the outdated federal poverty threshold fails to accurately document the hardship in our nation by ignoring today's true cost of living,” said Joan Kuriansky, Executive Director of WOW. “The National Elder Economic Security Standard measures the income seniors actually need to meet such basic expenses as housing and health care costs. Unlike the federal poverty threshold, the Elder Index is calibrated to household size, geographic area, and life circumstances, and broken down on a county-by-county basis.”

In the years ahead, the Elder Economic Security Initiative will provide important information to policy makers, service providers and advocates in New York and across the U.S. as they develop programs and policies to ensure the economic independence of senior citizens.

For more information about New York State's Elder Economic Security Initiative or to schedule an interview, contact: Joan Grangenois-Thomas at 212-627-2404 or joan@makewavesnotnoise.com

The New York StateWide Senior Action Council is a grassroots advocacy organization founded in 1972. Funded by our member contributions, private foundations and government support for particular projects, StateWide has its main office in Albany. Seniors serve as regional coordinators in some parts of the state. StateWide members elect a Board of Directors of 30 older persons from around the state. For more information, please visit www.nysenior.org.

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) leads two national networks promoting economic security within the United States: the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project (FESS) focusing on the needs of low-income working families and the Elder Economic Security Initiative, addressing what income seniors require to age in place. WOW works in 35 states, the District of Columbia, and at the federal level to promote programs and policies that accurately measure the income and assistance needs of families and the elderly. For more information, please visit www.wowonline.org