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# The Case for CARE

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# What is CARE?

Through connection, consultation, training, research, and advocacy, the Collaboratory for Aging Resources and Education (CARE) promotes issues impacting older adults, policies that support healthy aging, and a better trained senior services workforce.



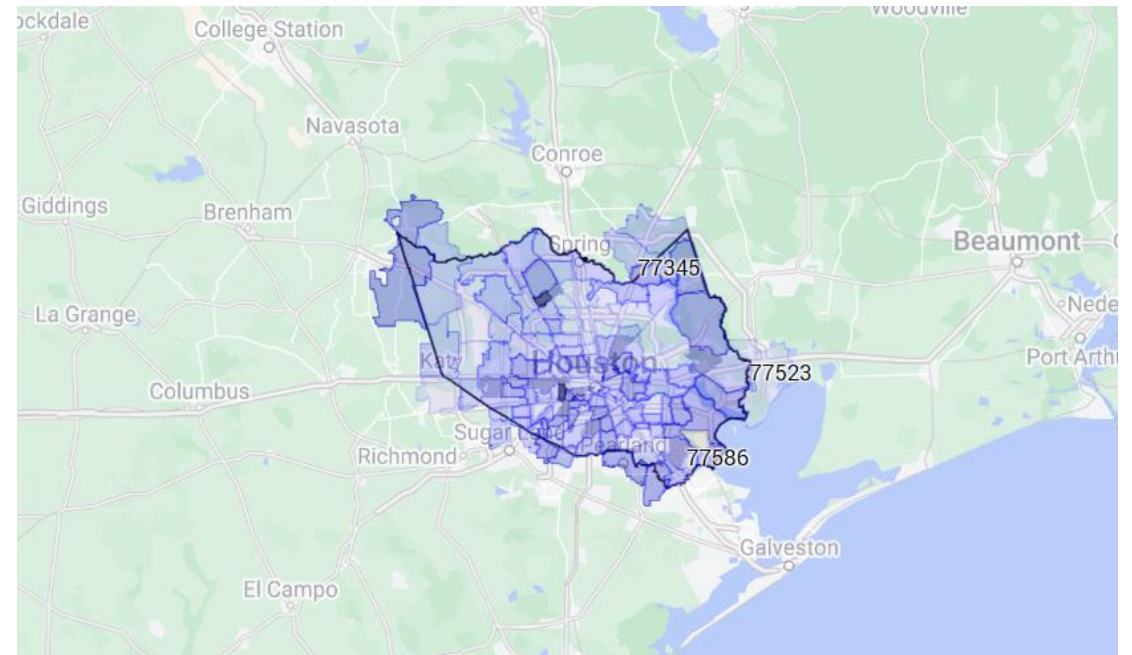
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# Peeling Back the Layers



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**Houston/Harris County – Home to 4.7M  
people; 724K+ adults 60+ (15.5%) – ACS 2020**



# The Challenge

A growing, changing older population that does not receive the societal attention it needs and deserves



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# The Reality

Decades of inequity blend with today's societal challenges, resulting in growing complex needs

- More than 50% of Harris County's older population is from a racial or ethnic minority group
- Almost 1 in 3 live alone
- More than 50,000 residents are 85+ (a 15%+ increase since 2010)
- More 60+ adults than children ages 5-14
- 1 in 10 older adults not a citizen and may be ineligible for safety nets



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# Losing Support at a Critical Time

At the same time, supportive structures for older adults have disappeared

- Changes in funding priorities
- Long-time programs and services have closed
- The sector is more fractured than ever



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# Four Avenues for Impact

- **Connect** people to resources, resources to each other
  - APS Resource Project
  - CARE Helpline
- **Advocate** for resources, structure
  - Data visualization and reports
  - Involvement with regional and state aging efforts



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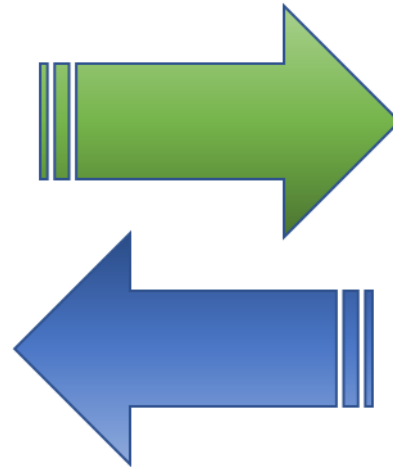
# Four Avenues for Impact, cont'd.

- **Respect** for older adults and what they bring to our community
  - Adopt a Grandparent
- **Educate** older adults, caregivers, and professionals who serve them
  - The Real Fountain of Youth: How Staying Connected Matters
  - Tough Conversations About Aging: What You Should Know Before You Need to Know
  - Social Isolation and Loneliness in a Post-Pandemic World
  - When Two Worlds Collide: Balancing the Roles of Aging Professional and Caregiver
  - Ensuring Equitable Service Delivery: A Primer for Mathphobes and Data Nerds, Too!



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**Addressing a Need and Sharing Lessons Learned:  
Adopt a Grandparent**



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# Our Partner Programs

- In partnership with the University of Houston-Downtown Service, Teaching, Aging, Research (STAR) Lab
- Wellmed Foundation (funder)
- Older participants come from:
  - Americorps Seniors, visually impaired groups, independent living, congregate meals/Meals on Wheels program, cultural or special interest agencies, general volunteers



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# Tremendous Growth...

- Pilot group (Spring/Summer 2020)
  - 22 students/34 older adults (duplicated)
- Last fiscal year
  - 142 students expressed interest; 95 completed the program
  - 98 older adult engagements; 53 unduplicated
    - 60% participated in 2 or more sessions (Fall/Spring/Summer)
  - Older adults ranged from late-50's to mid-90's (AVG: 71)
  - 75% Female



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# ...And Tremendous Satisfaction

- Spring 2022 Cohort – Older Adults (n=38)
  - 100% said they enjoyed talking with their student
  - 97% stated they definitely would want a student to call them again
  - 100% stated that they wanted to see the program continue
  - When asked who got more out of the program, them or the student, 25 of 36 respondents said either they did or the older adult and student equally benefitted
  - Many described helping a student as their motivation



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# ...And Tremendous Satisfaction, cont'd.

- Spring 2022 Cohort – Older Adults (n=38)
  - “I enjoy talking to young people because it makes me feel young.”
  - “[My student] restored my faith in the younger generation.”
  - “Generational differences help me see another point of view.”
  - “We uplifted one another.”
- Spring 2022 Cohort – Students (n=40)
  - Rated the program 1.47 on a 7 point scale (1 being the highest rating)
  - 97% would participate again
  - “I can tell [my grandparent] really likes someone to talk to. Honestly, I didn’t realize I needed it too.” – P.D. in an email reflecting on her experience



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# They Talked About Everything Under the Sun

- Family
- Food (cooking, favorite restaurants)
- Religion (bible study and comparative religion)
- Life goals, milestones, and daily activities
- Recovery
- Career advice



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# They Talked About Everything Under the Sun, cont'd

- “We talk[ed] about things they may be afraid to talk about with their parents.” – 65-year-old GP
- “My college freshman and I talked about the watch party I threw for the popular Netflix show Bridgerton.” – 68-year-old GP
- “I think I had a misconception based on what I have in my life. My grandparent was kind, and very independent. I thought it would be easy conversation, or surface level. We talked very deeply about politics, sexuality, gender and religion. It was refreshing to speak with someone who had a different viewpoint than my own.” - Student



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# In Their Own Words

- “Sometimes if I didn’t have anyone to talk to, it would make my day receiving calls from my student.” – 57-year-old GP
- “We discussed our families, current events, and as always - she provides a multitude of wisdom and insight into everyday life and situations.” - Student
- “It was a special time to be able to talk with a young lady...and learning about her future expectations. It encouraged me to encourage my grandchildren as well.” – 79-year-old GP
- “She said its hard to be lonely and even though she has her children, they don’t take time to be with her. It made me [think about] the way I am with my mother....” – Student



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# In Their Own Words, cont'd.

- “I told her to be herself, and not miss things in her life by being shy. I told her not to be like me and be shut off from the outside life, and a lonely person....I also told another young man, that love can make everything possible. I feel they were no longer feeling down and hung up feeling better after expressing themselves.” – 69-year-old GP
- “The phone call taught me the importance of learning who I am. It also taught me that putting myself first in my early 20s is important as a foundation of my future.” - Student
- “My most favorite moment with her is when I convinced her to go back home during a tornado warning. I was worried about her safety. I felt like I was being more of a grandfather.” – 72-year-old GP
- “I joked about being old in college and he told me he is in his 60s and he hasn't stopped going to school.” - Student



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# Lessons Learned

- “I learned something that I will take with me about life and the opportunity to [exhale].” - Student
- “I learned of how resilient and dedicated she was even in the midst of all her circumstances. By sharing this with me she inspired me to keep going for my [degree].” - Student



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# When asked if the experience was as expected:

- “I thought it was different - from my perspective I saw [this project] as boring, [but] when I got to experience it, I saw that it was different, and I liked that whenever I would talk to [my grandparent] it would make my day better and filled with positivism.” – Student
- “Not really because I didn’t know how close I would get to my assign[ed] grandparent. She trusted me and I trusted her.”  
- Student
- “No, I thought [the grandparent would be] cranky and always trying to give advice. That was not the case. [She] was so much like me [it’s] shocking but I loved every minute talking to her.” – Student
- “No. I was afraid she’d be an old, sad, pitiful, frail lady... in reality, she was...more vibrant and active than I am. She had a life, friends, and hobbies.” – Student



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# Measuring Impact

- Older Adults – 20 question UCLA Loneliness Scale
- Students – 24 question Polizzi Aging Semantic Differential (revised version)
- Results to be shared at Aging in Texas conference



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# Connect with CARE

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