

SPECIAL NEEDS of Seniors/Disabled

According to Census 2002 for Cape Girardeau County:

Seniors (65 years and over) account for 13.8 % (9,460) of the total population.

Seniors (62 years and over) account for 16% (10,963) of the population.

The non-institutionalized disabled population for ages 5 years and older account for 16.2% (10,625) of the population.

Of the 8,548 non-institutionalized seniors living in Cape County, 53.1% (4,542) are disabled.

21.9% (5,907) householders are 65 years and older.

10.1% (2,725) householders are 65 years and older and live alone.

11.1% of the total county population live in poverty, and 4.5% live below 50% of the poverty level.

49.3% (392) of grandparents who live with their own grandchildren under 18 years of age are responsible for raising those children.

The following three pages chart these indicators and more for the county of Cape Girardeau; the cities of Cape Girardeau, Jackson and Scott City; and the state of Missouri. Most of the local data is fairly congruous with the state data. Some differences are noted: Jackson has less poverty, the city of Cape has more; Cape County and Scott City have a higher percentage of disabled persons enrolled in college/graduate school than the state; and the city of Cape has the highest percentage of households with no vehicles, etc.

Although the 24 issues included in the recent survey did not specifically address the needs of the disabled and senior population, all of the issues are relevant for those groups. For instance, shortage of affordable housing, not enough money for food, crime, inadequate public transportation, etc. are common concerns among seniors and disabled persons as well as the general population. When special care needs (medical, dietary, mobility) are added to these general concerns, these two groups face many challenges to maintain independent lifestyles. Many of these individuals require extensive community supports, especially if familial supports are inadequate or non-existent and household income is at or below poverty level.

STRENGTHS

- 1. Area Agency on Aging provides many services for seniors.**
- 2. Hoover Eldercare Center provides day care for "frail" seniors. Project assists seniors with completing and submitting paper work.**
- 3. SADI provides services for the disabled population.**
- 4. Horizon Enrichment Center provides day care for adults living in or near Cape Girardeau with mental retardation and developmental disabilities.**
- 5. Educational needs of the disabled population under 21 are met through area schools and Parkview State School.**
- 6. Employment training and supervision for the disabled is provided through VIP Industries and MRS Goodwill.**
- 7. Senior centers in Cape, Jackson, and Scott City provide nutritious meals, education and fellowship for seniors.**
- 8. Many special interest associations and support groups have local offices to provide education, service coordination and support (Alzheimer's, heart, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, etc.).**
- 9. American Association of Retired Persons is locally active.**
- 10. Aging Committee of the Community Caring Council strives to "inter-link agencies and professionals to better serve older adults within the county".**
- 11. Meals on Wheels program through SEMO Hospital provides hot meals delivered to homes.**
- 12. Kinship Care Network of Southeast Missouri - a support network for grandparents raising grandchildren - was recently formed.**
- 13. ARC - Association for Retarded Citizens provides a wide range of services/support for disabled individuals and their families.**
- 14. Cape Girardeau County Senior Mill Tax has been a source of funding for various senior services.**

CHALLENGES

- 1. Affordable and dependable transportation for daily activities and for special needs**
- 2. Rising number of grandparents responsible for their grandchildren**
- 3. Training for and availability of jobs for disabled persons**
- 4. Feelings of isolation among elderly and disabled populations, especially those without access to services, those living in poverty, those living alone, etc.**
- 5. The issue of Independent Living - affordability of and access to support services to make independent living a reality for the disabled and the increasing senior population**
- 6. Affordability and availability of long-term care**
- 7. Waiting list for some day care programs - not enough funding to expand capacity of existing programs**
- 8. Unintended consequences of laws which establish eligibility for various entitlements i.e. loss of Medicaid when employed, etc.**
- 9. Need for local committee to lobby for the "working poor"**
- 10. Lack of volunteers in the past to serve as "companions" to the special needs population**