

How Age Friendly is Defiance, Ohio?

Jaylyn Renollet

WHAT IS AN AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY?

There are countless definitions for what actually makes up an age friendly community, however, most emphasize the importance of making improvements to various aspects of the physical environment. Some of these improvements include things such as making the environment safe, accessible, and affordable. They also emphasize the importance of keeping the environment both pleasant and clean, as well as having some sort of outside space for different physical, psychosocial, and cultural activities. The importance of reliable transportation and overall community support. These are the key components to having an age friendly community.

HOUSING

The criteria to meet for housing in an age friendly community involves having housing options that are both affordable and accessible, that also include some form of assisted living. These options must also be available in locations that provide access to retail, transportation, and social services. Age friendly housing must also be in a safe and friendly neighborhood, while also having appropriate designs, modifications, maintenance, and family interaction. Some housing options in Defiance, Ohio include Kingsbury Place (Assisted Living), Laurels of Defiance (Nursing Care), Glenn Park (Assisted Living), Brookview (Nursing Care), Island Parkway Manor (Retirement), and Clinton Circle (Low Income Housing). These housing options serve as examples to the wide variety of living arrangements available to the older population in the community. There is an option that meets every standard for housing in a successful age friendly community.

OUTDOOR SPACES

Criteria for outdoor spaces in a successful age friendly community involves having pleasant, clean, and green spaces. These spaces should offer places to rest, age friendly pavements, safe crossings for pedestrians, accessibility, walkability, and cycle paths. However, these are just a few examples of what an age friendly outdoor space should look like. As far as Defiance, Ohio is concerned, there are many options available for a clean and pleasant outdoor space for the older population. Some examples include Kingsbury Park, the Independence Dam State Park, the Defiance reservoir, and an abundance of Golf Clubs. Kingsbury Park holds many community events and has a community pool. The pool is wheelchair accessible and also offers a strictly adult swim time every hour. The dam has many trails winding around, as well as offers both outdoor and indoor seating options. Lastly, the reservoir has two walking trails, and a newly added biking trail.

TRANSPORTATION

In order to meet the criteria for appropriate transportation in an age friendly community, the community must offer a range of options for people to get where they want and need to go. This includes availability, affordability, reliability, frequency, frequent travel stops, age friendly vehicles, safe and trained drivers, parking, and overall passenger courtesy. The main mode of age friendly transportation in Defiance, Ohio is through the Defiance County Senior Services. The DCSS provides transportation for senior adults residing in Defiance County, to things such as medical appointments, therapy, physical therapy, grocery shopping, and more. The DCSS also utilizes outside programs such as 181 Enterprise, which offers both medical and nonmedical transportation to the older community. Overall, there does not seem to be much in regards to age friendly and appropriate transportation in the Defiance community.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The overall social environment of a community is a very important factor in determining whether or not a place is age friendly. An age friendly social environment should consist of respectful behavior, age friendly services, and no economic exclusion. There should be a successful amount of connection between families, neighbors, and friends. In Defiance, the social environment varies greatly from place to place throughout the town. The side of town you are on determines whether or not you will thrive socially, especially when you are a part of the older population. There is a certain amount of economic exclusion, and the respectful behavior is once again determined by where you reside in the town. However, there are a certain amount of age friendly services that get the older population involved in the community. Some examples include classes through the local YMCA, the summer lunch program hosted by the high school in Kingsbury Park, and various community musical and theatre shows, which also make appearances in senior living homes.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

To meet the criteria of having a good level of community support in an age friendly community, there must be a level of encouragement to engage in community life. This can be shown in ways such as adequate options and opportunities for volunteering and employment for seniors, flexibility and accommodations for older workers, and opportunities for new education and skill inquiry that can somehow be used in the workforce. Some examples of volunteer opportunities that are available in Defiance, Ohio include helping in the public library, teaching bible studies at local churches, helping out in food kitchens, joining the Auxilliary. As far as educational opportunities go, Defiance does not offer a good amount. The DCSS has various educational nutritional programs available, as well as small art classes, but not much else.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

Having adequate health and wellness services is very important when it comes to being an age friendly community. One of the main components being accessible care to a wide range of services preventative care, medical care, mental care, palliative care, home health care, and assisted living facilities. Appropriate health and wellness services also present themselves in ways having anything to do with the promotion of positive health behaviors. This can include things such as aerobics classes, tai chi, gardening, and really anything going along with taking care of yourself both physically and mentally. There are a few hospitals and doctors offices located around the town of Defiance, Ohio, as well as mental health resource centers such as the Coping Center, Recovery Services, Maumee valley, and Hope Alive Counseling Services. There is also a local chiropractic center and resources available for any type of physical therapy. In terms of activities, the YMCA offers a wide variety of classes to the older population. There are multiple water aerobics classes and swim lessons. There is also cardio drumming, and multiple workout classes lead by certified instructors.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Defiance, Ohio seems to be on the more age friendly side of things. There is a wide variety of services and events available to the older population. While there could always be more, Defiance is doing fairly well in terms of age friendliness.

REFERENCES

Jeste, D. V., Blazer, D. G., Buckwalter, K. C. et al. (2016). *Age friendly communities initiative: Public health approach to promoting successful aging*. American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry.