



**A Message From
Vice-Mayor Lois Wexler
Broward County Commissioner
District 5**

As I write to you today I am proud to report that the first Elder Services Summit, held Wednesday, January 31 at Signature Grand in Davie, was a great success. The interest in the event was so overwhelming that we were forced to turn people away due to space considerations. However, over 300 attendees gathered to discuss issues of importance to Broward County's elderly residents. Senior residents voiced their concerns about the way services are made available to them, caregivers and service providers discussed the difficulties they faced in caring for and providing services to Broward County's elderly population, and elected officials provided suggestions as to how to better centralize the way different levels of government can work together to streamline the process of elderly care in Broward County.

One of the most important components of the Elder Services Summit was the presentation of the preliminary results of Florida International University's Center on Aging's 2006 Elder Analysis. The presentation provided evidence that a large number of Broward County's Elderly (who comprise approximately 18 percent of Broward County's population) don't utilize available services because they don't know about them or don't know how to access them. Seniors also pointed out that many services aren't affordable and many times they lack transportation to take them where they need to go.

After the presentation of the Analysis' results breakout groups met to discuss specific topics such as the provision of basic needs, the elder special needs population, advocacy, resource development and social marketing, and disaster preparedness and recovery. Specific concerns that were brought up repeatedly include the need to develop a program to help assist low-income seniors with affordable housing, problems finding reliable transportation, and recreational activities for seniors.

Seniors in attendance stressed the importance of a single point of entry and a need for seamless communication within the provider network to increase the ease of access to services for both elders and their caregivers. A large percentage of those in attendance believed that the most significant problem facing the elderly is the lack of communication regarding services available and how to best access those services. Furthermore, it is apparent that there is a need for better integration amongst service providers and those who fund services for the elderly.

This summit was just the beginning of the process: we have identified the needs of seniors in our community and are working to best provide for those needs. Future endeavors are

sure to focus on increasing the awareness of elder services. Much discussion was given to the formation of a single agency that could 1) provide information on the many services that are available to the elderly in Broward County and 2) assist the elderly in accessing these services.

It's clear that we need to help people connect with what's available to them. The government, caregivers, non-profit agencies, the business community, and the media all need to work together to assist this segment of our population. I am proud to have been the driving force behind this event, and I am eager to work with all of the stakeholders finding solutions to the issues that have been raised.

If you would like additional information about the Elder Service Summit or the steps Broward County will be taking towards alleviating the problems raised at the Summit, please contact Margaret Wolter in my office at (954) 357-7005 or send an e-mail to mwolter@broward.org.

Regards,

Lois Wexler
Vice Mayor
Broward County, District 5