
VOICES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ageism in Ashland

The Ashland Senior Center is in crisis. The recent changes and prospective plans by the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission to dismantle the senior center's dedicated programs under the false name of "multigenerational" goals are an attack on seniors and their families.

To ignore the special needs of seniors is ageism. The APRC's elimination of expert senior center staff who provided information and referral, outreach and other social services to cut staffing costs is ageism in action. APRC commissioners and director dismissing input from seniors and their advocates are acts of ageism.

Seniors protested in unity on Aug. 8 and 9 when APRC gave one day's notice of changes that replaced expert senior center staff with regular recreation staff and volunteers. Seniors also objected APRC's plans to move the crucial social services out of the senior center to another location. Yet APRC did not value the seniors' feedback. Evidently the APRC commissioners who have no experience in senior issues believed they knew best and approved the changes in clear spite by saying they came into the meeting to approve them.

The seniors then went to

Ashland's City Council on Sept. 5 for help and were met with "what can we do?" Ignoring the seniors' vital concerns because they have less physical and mental stamina to stand up for themselves is ageism.

When a concern was raised about making elderly seniors give their home addresses during the public forum comment section at City Council meetings, the city's response of "that is what we always require" shows lack of sensitivity to elders' protective needs. To make elderly seniors in their 80s and 90s sit for long periods during APRC meetings until the discussion gets to senior issues is downright uncaring.

For 43-plus years the Ashland Senior Center has provided model social services to provide initial assessments for effective, timely information and referrals to seniors and their families in difficult situations. With one action, the safety net has been shredded. The new recreation staff will not know the difference between handing someone a senior resources booklet and providing specific custom advice. APRC will view it as a simpler, less costly way to operate.

Ageism is alive and well in Ashland.

Sue Wilson
Ashland