

Senior Center Becomes One-Stop Shop

BY MARKESHIA RICKS | JUL 30, 2015 8:35 AM



MARKESHIA RICKS PHOTO

Marge Ottenbreit is a senior citizen on the go. The former bank vice president keeps busy teaching art classes at the Atwater Senior Center in Fair Haven along with other volunteer commitments.

But she knows that not everyone in her age bracket can still get around the way she does.

City officials unveiled Wednesday an integrated approach to delivering health care and social services to Fair Haven seniors that they hope will provide better access and healthier outcomes, including for people with less mobility than Ottenbreit.



Ottenbreit (pictured) gave the pilot effort two thumbs up.

“It will be great for all of this to be in one place,” she said. “I hope people take advantage of it.”

On the third Wednesday of every month, seniors in the community will be able to come to the Atwater Center not only to see doctors and nurses about ailments, but to check their eligibility for food stamps and Medicare and to get information on healthful cooking and eating and how to manage diabetes and high blood pressure.



Seniors who regularly spend their time at the center got a taste Wednesday of what will be available each month as they visited with some of the participating agencies. They had their blood pressure checked by health care professionals from Yale-New Haven Hospital. They met with representatives from the city health department, the Community Action Agency, the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut, the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), and City Seed.



City Community Services Administrator Martha Okafor (pictured) said additional agencies that provide services to seniors have already signed up to participate next month. She said the plan is to use a computer database that the city already has in place to track seniors who are assisted through this pilot program to make sure that not

only are agencies sharing information and following through, but also to see if seniors are getting the assistance they need. The city also hopes to be able to develop data that will tell them if all the effort is working and seniors are experiencing improved health outcomes.



City Elderly Services Director Migdalia Castro (pictured at left in the photo) said in addition to addressing health and social service needs, the city wants to offer more cultural services to seniors that keep them moving and active. She said if the pilot program is successful the city would look to offer similar services at the city's other two senior centers.