

“The Face of Aging in Maine”

Presentation to:

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Slide 1: Introduction

Good morning. It’s a pleasure to be here to talk about “The Face of Aging in Maine.”

My role is actually to describe the economic face of aging while your discussions will likely touch more on the human or community aspects of aging.

Over the next 20 minutes, I will:

1. describe how and why Maine’s population is aging;
2. outline some of the major economic and public policy issues that arise from these aging patterns; and
3. wrap up with some ideas on actions we can take to:
 - mute the disruptions, and
 - seize the opportunities that this major demographic shift presents.

Before I launch into the statistics which, frankly, can be a little overwhelming, I’d like to point out three things:

1. The demographic changes that I will be describing are huge; far-reaching-- touching nearly every aspect of our lives; and inevitable--like it or not; ready or not – the change is upon us.

2. The aging of our population offers both challenges and opportunities.
3. I urge each of you to take some personal responsibility for helping Maine prepare to serve an aging population.

What alliances can you and your organization build to meet the challenges of aging and to seize the opportunities these changes provide?

Slide 2: Births in 20th Century

This chart shows the number of babies born in Maine from 1900 to 2007.

You can very clearly see the Baby Boom generation—those born between from 1946-1964.

Like the nation, Maine is facing a tidal wave of change as this age cohort approaches the golden years of retirement.

Slide 3: Maine Median Age

As the baby boomers have aged, Maine's median age has risen rapidly. In 2000, Maine's population was the third oldest in the nation (Florida was #1 and West Virginia was #2) and Maine's population is aging faster than any other state. From 1990-2000, the median age rose almost five years.

The 2007 American Community Survey estimates that Maine's median age is 41.6 years.

Slide 4: Maine Population 85+

And, the numbers of Maine's very old citizens are also growing rapidly. From 1990-2007, the number of Mainers aged 85+ years grew by over 10,000 – a 56% increase.

I would note that in 2000, 72% of those over 85 were female.

Slide 10: % of Population by Age Cohort

Over the long-term, through 2025, the changes by age cohort are stark.

There are projected declines in the school age and young working age adults cohorts.

The 65-74 age cohort will double and the 75-84 age cohort will grow by 55%.

Think about what this means in terms of demand for housing, healthcare, and transportation.

Slide 11: Age Composition

In 2000, 14% of our population was over age 65 (light blue portion of the pie).

By 2025, fully 21% will be over 65. One out of every five Mainers will be a senior citizen.

Are we ready to serve this population as a state?

Slide 12: Median Age by County

Regionally, the question of “Are we ready?” becomes even more difficult.

While median age in 2007 was 41.6 statewide,

- Androscoggin and Penobscot counties had the lowest median age at 39.4 and 39.5, respectively, and
- Piscataquis and Lincoln counties were the oldest at over age 45 and 45.3, respectively.

Slide 14: Sprawl

I’ve already mentioned that Maine’s population is the oldest in the nation so issues with aging hit us sooner and harder.

Now add to that that Maine is the third most rural state in the nation which increase the difficulty in providing services to this dispersed population.

More sobering is the fact that we are becoming increasingly rural.

Over the past several decades, Mainers have fled the service center communities - where hospitals and services are – and moved out into the suburban and rural areas.

In 1960, 37% of the population lived in rural areas. Now it is over 51%.

Slide 24: Poverty

One encouraging trend is that the poverty rate among Maine’s elder population is dropping.

In 1970, it was 26.1% vs. 9.9% in 2007.

Cost of living adjustments, access to pensions, and much greater knowledge of and use of savings and investment plans have dramatically cut poverty among Maine's elderly.

Slide 26: Old Ladies Bowling

But the best news of all, in Maine and across the US ...

- People are living longer lives,
- They are healthier,
- They are living with fewer disabilities,
- They have greater financial means,
- They are active and engaged in their communities.