



A Community #ForAllAges

May 2019

## Florida Embraces an Age-Friendly Future

By [Debra Jacobs](#), president and CEO of [The Patterson Foundation](#).

Throughout the next decade, Florida's age demographics are expected to dramatically shift as more of us live longer, more engaged lives. It has become clear that our world must similarly evolve into a place that affords a high quality of life and well-being for people of all ages. It's the goal of the global age-friendly movement - a goal now shared by The Patterson Foundation's home state of Florida, [which has become just the fourth \(and largest\) state to receive the age-friendly designation from AARP](#), after New York, Massachusetts, and Colorado.



The Patterson Foundation has long propelled the movement #ForAllAges, supporting the coalition of cross-sector partners (including AARP Florida and the Florida Department of Elder Affairs at the state level) that helped Sarasota become the first county in Florida to join the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities with the launch of [Age-Friendly Sarasota](#) in 2015. At the time, much of the initiative's work focused on helping the community realize its aspirations for community enhancements within [WHO's Eight Domains of Livability](#), which directly influence a person's quality of life at all phases of life.

Through this work, Age-Friendly Sarasota connected with thousands of people to inform the development of an [action plan](#) to guide the community's age-friendly evolution, with a blueprint for optimizations to community features like infrastructure, housing, environment, services, and civic engagement and employment opportunities grounded in high-caliber research.

Meanwhile, several other visionary communities in Florida embarked on their own age-friendly journeys. With the work well-underway at home, Sarasota was well-poised to share its experience with the state's age-friendly communities while serving as a connector for the

burgeoning statewide network. Age-Friendly Sarasota realized this potential in September 2016, when it hosted representatives from 15 communities during the first [Age-Friendly Florida Symposium](#). Over two days, communities learned from and shared with one another to

[Symposium](#). Over two days, communities learned from and shared with one another to strengthen their ongoing age-friendly efforts. The connections formed during this event would serve to weave some of the earliest strands of a statewide age-friendly network within the global movement.

In 2017, Age-Friendly Sarasota engaged the community further through the immersive [Age-Friendly Festival](#), the first event of its kind nationally. More than 4,000 festival attendees enjoyed activities and gained knowledge about age-friendly practices and principles for all ages from more than 125 participating organizations during the day-long event, which served as a model for age-friendly cities and communities across the globe. The themes and opportunities conveyed through the Festival and Age-Friendly Sarasota's continual outreach have resonated with Sarasota County's residents, who recently rated "Aging Well" as one of their top priorities in the [County's Citizen Survey](#).

To convey themes like these to the community in new and inspiring ways, The Patterson Foundation launched its Aspirations Journalism initiative in 2019. In partnership with the Herald-Tribune Media Group, Aspirations Journalism drives thought-provoking stories on several universally relevant issues, [like age-friendly practices and principles](#).

With Florida's new age-friendly statewide designation, the potential of the Florida network to share these and other innovations from additional age-friendly communities has reached a new standard. With leadership at the governmental level through Age-Friendly Sarasota's longtime partner, the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the multitude of partner organizations and entities working within our state's 25 age-friendly communities will have an even greater ability to connect with one another, opening up new opportunities to learn, share, and collaborate toward greater livability for people of all ages.

AARP's Florida State Director, Jeff Johnson, shared this on the new reality this latest evolution ushers in: "This designation opens the way for important partnerships in many parts of state, city and county government, and in the private sector, to make Florida an even better place to live for people of every age. For the more than 8 million Floridians age 50-plus and the 2.8 million AARP members statewide, this is a big step forward."

The vision embraced by one community four years ago is now shared from coast to coast across the Sunshine State, and this latest endorsement will only help it to take root in other communities. The work of this age-friendly state is poised to excel, with each community embracing innovations and opportunities to connect on our shared aspiration for an age-friendly future.

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## Fourth Annual Sharing Symposium

This year marks the Fourth Annual Age-Friendly Sharing Symposium. In 2015, Sarasota County was the first community to join the AARP/WHO Network of Age-Friendly Communities, and in 2016 hosted the first Sharing Symposium.

"The evolution of the Sharing Symposium illustrates the power of connecting, learning, and sharing. Organizational leaders are joining the effort, working together for a common purpose, and helping it evolve and strengthen along the way."





Visions, missions, and goals from multiple arenas are becoming aligned and interconnected. The age-friendly / livable community movement is moving beyond its initial organizational and geographic settings. It's creating a synergy for the common good, and it shows great promise in making our communities more livable [#ForAllAges](#)." -- Bob Carter

At this year's [Sharing Symposium in Miami-Dade](#), sessions included topics

on transportation, regional approaches, pitch talks and best practices, keynote speeches, the Dementia Care and Cure initiative, disaster preparation and response, and statewide partnerships.

Since 2016, the Age-Friendly Network and movement has grown to 27 communities across Florida, and Sarasota is one of only four counties so far to be designated. Another affirmation that Sarasota County demonstrates strong leadership.

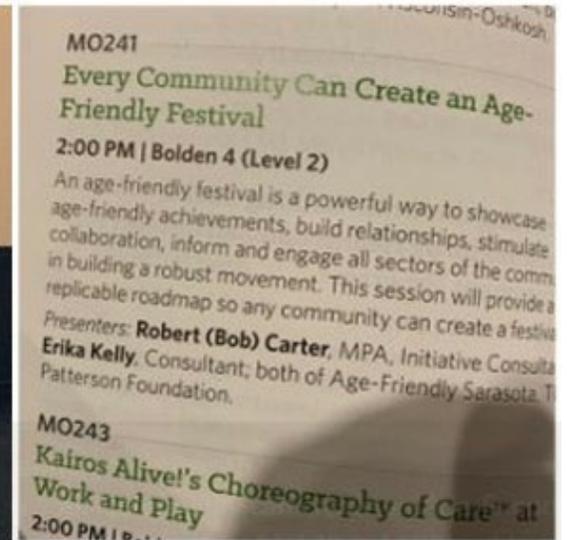
Take one minute to read Bob Carter's symposium RECAP: "[Watching a Movement Grow](#)."

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## Florida is Many Things...

Florida *IS* many things, including the *first* state in the U.S. to host an [Age-Friendly Festival](#).

Recently, Age-Friendly Sarasota consultants Bob Carter and Erika Kelly presented a workshop at the American Society on Aging's annual conference entitled "Every Community Can Create an Age-Friendly Festival" in New Orleans.



"Our main session goal was to show how such events can be powerful community engagement movers -- propelling local age-friendly efforts into stronger community-wide movements. The well-attended session provided a replicable roadmap to creating an event, scalable to any community. It also highlighted the value of the process, with benefits extending well beyond the event itself."

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LOCAL

MORE LOCAL

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## Art, #ForAllAges

[David Burnett](#), a Hermitage Artist Retreat [Greenfield Prize](#) winner, will be exhibiting his work entitled "Fourth Quarter: Senior Athletes and Their Indomitable Spirit," at the Ringling Museum until July 21, 2019 [Other work can be viewed year round at [Patriot Plaza](#)].

"David Burnett's work shows people in their 4th quarter competing in the context of their age. But it is much more. His photographs show how we can pursue life and excellence throughout our life's journey."

-- Hermitage Executive Director Bruce Rodgers

[Civically Engaged #ForAllAges](#)

By [Josephine Eisenberg](#)

"Our community is better when residents share their aspirations for the future... plus it is much more engaging as we build a region #ForAllAges" -- Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation



In her blog, Josephine asks, "Do you ever wonder what really motivates people to become involved in their community and to be civically engaged?"

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