



Ohio University Emeriti Association

February 20, 2025 Luncheon

Prior to our main speaker, President Marty Tuck reported that the plaque project at Emeriti Park to replace the nonfunctioning Kiosk was continuing to move forward. Orders for the plaque have been made, and it is hoped installation can be completed by the university's spring graduation date. Steps are being taken to update the Emeriti directory, and this project was also moving forward. Finally, he noted that the Emeriti Association was again being asked to provide volunteer assistance for the Quilt National exhibition this coming summer at the Dairy Barn Arts Center in Athens. The event will take place from May 28 to August 27. Emeriti volunteers will be needed on Wednesday's (shift time will follow) of each week of the exhibit. Duties will include manning the exhibit reception desk, signing in visitors and answering questions. Contact Marty (tuck@ohio.edu) if you are available/willing to volunteer.

The main speaker was Olivia Degitz who serves on the board of the Athens Community Food Initiatives and is Program Manager of the Friendship Bench Program in Athens County. The Friendship Bench initiative (<https://www.friendshipbench.org/>) is intended to help address mental health needs that aren't being met in the formal health system, due to a lack of professional staff and funding. The model for this program was established in Zimbabwe in 2006 to address an acute shortage of mental health professionals. In this program, local health worker volunteers engage in conversations while sitting on benches placed in public locations with participants who have a need to engage in conversation with a supportive individual. These conversations may assist in helping identify solutions to personal problems and provide a judgment-free option for social interaction. Friendship Benches are in a number of locations across the county (Athens County is the only one in the state to have this program). Engagements through the program are broadly recorded, keeping confidential the names of participants and the nature of topics discussed, but assessing the benefits obtained in conversations.

In closing, President Marty Tuck reminded members that Emeriti Luncheons for the remainder of the academic year are planned for the third Thursdays in the months of March and April.

Notes by Drew McDaniel and Marty Tuck



2020-2024 Community Health Assessment

Social-Ecological Problems⁶

	Percentage
Opportunities for social interaction among adults in Athens are insufficient	36.3%
Worried about family running out of food	13.8%
Worried someone may hurt you or your family	5.7%
Worried about losing housing or are homeless	8.6%
Having Issues with housing utilities (e.g. affording bills)	6.8%
Have insufficient access to transportation	6.6%

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FRIENDSHIP BENCH

Core tenants of problem solving

- The solution comes from the individual, NOT the CHW
- Focus on what is within our control
- Break larger problems down into smaller chunks
- Resist giving advice
- Lead with respect and curiosity
- Build on existing strengths, especially community ties

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FRIENDSHIP BENCH

How to learn more & get involved

- Friendship Bench trainings occur annually
- Wednesday mornings @ 9:00 am Friendship Bench practice
- Come talk to a Friendship Bench listener!

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