

J.A.M. GRAAFMANS, T.S.K. IKONEN-GRAAFMANS, M.J. TUOMINEN, R.K. RANTALA. **A rural information and demonstration centre on products and services for older people.** *Gerontechnology* 2012; 11(2):169; doi:10.4017/gt.2012.11.02.237.00 **Purpose** A Centre for the Aged "Ellinkulma" was built in the center of the town of Juuka (Osake project, funded mainly by the European Regional Development Fund) with the aim to enhance knowledge on aging, voluntary self-care, and networking that are necessary to live independently at home. The aim is to demonstrate good practices for older people related to self-care, living and housing. Apart from this, the Centre aims to be a meeting point for the actors involved, namely: older persons, enterprises in the sector, professionals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are dealing with welfare and health issues and services^{1,2}. **Method** Juuka (1800 km², 5500 inhabitants) is a rural community with a low population density (3,6 people/km²), a high proportion of which is elderly (26% is 65+). The goal of the village is to develop open services to replace institutionalised services. Among other things, this change demands good outpatient services, tailored transport systems, renovated housing and improvements to the quality of housing, thus creating possibilities to participate in every day activities as well as to live at home for as long as possible. The leading principles for this achievement have their basis in new Finnish laws and guidelines of the ministry of social welfare and health care. A municipality has to arrange a new kind of welfare, health care, preventive care services for older people and provide a wide variety of information that can enhance their ability to lead an active life. Aging people need information and knowledge in order to better handle this new situation and they need to network with other actors in the field. There is a need to activate citizens to take care of their own home and environment and to lower barriers. One approach currently used is training citizens, professionals and companies to solve issues concerning aid and accessible environments. Another approach is to create a model of renovating and adapting houses for seamless care to improve the welfare and health system. The Center for the Aged, Ellinkulma's active day center, is a show case living room for inhabitants, associations (NGO) and enterprises. The active involvement of older people themselves to actively develop a sense of communality is key. **Results & Discussion** Seniors, enterprises, NGOs, local actors, local administrations and municipal social services are sitting around the same table now. Previously, there were no preventive activities or centres for seniors, nor was there cooperation or networking between NGOs and other actors. Only minor group activities for seniors for daily activities existed. The centre will get permanent status, mainly organized by the municipality with strong connections to NGOs and entrepreneurs. Cooperation with enterprises will be based on clear win-win principles. The organisation of successful local activities need a good network, a professional coordinator, flexibility, open-mindedness and a positive approach without thresholds. Activities organised in a centre for the local population, representation of enterprises, NGOs and other local actors will facilitate cross-pollination. The knowledge of different local actors is complementary. The Centre has clearly demonstrated that it is hard to overdo information distribution activities.

References

1. European Regional Development Fund. Activity line 3
2. Centre for the Aged "Ellinkulma" in Juuka - combining forces in one Finnish rural municipality. Poster presented at DART, Santiago de Compostela, Spain; 2011; juuanellinkulma.blogit.fi/files/2011/09/poster-dart-workshop-1409-16092011-santiago-de-compostela-espanja.pdf; retrieved February 29. 2012

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