

It takes a village to care for our elders

Special to the Southside Reporter –

In recognition of the theme of this year's Older Americans Month, "Age Strong! Live Long," I want to shed light on why it sometimes can take a village to care for our older Americans.

Older Americans account for 13 percent of the entire U.S. population – a figure expected to more than double by 2030. Eighty percent of older adults have at least one chronic condition and 50 percent have at least two. In San Antonio, more than 14,000 older Americans have chronic illnesses.

With the number of older Americans growing rapidly, it's imperative that we educate our seniors about ways to prevent the complications associated with chronic diseases. Those faced with diabetes, heart failure, and other long-term illnesses need to be provided with the tools to help manage their condition. If left untreated or unmanaged, chronic illnesses can debilitate and prevent our older Americans from living a full and productive life.

A recent study in a leading medical journal suggests that care coordination, community-based support and patient self-management are the keys to helping our older Americans better manage their health.

What is care coordination? It's preventive care, including regular doctor visits and help with managing medications. It's providing personal attention as seniors are hospitalized and follow up care upon discharge. It's also addressing gaps in care, and providing personalized health education and counseling.

It's sad to think that many older Americans are missing out on this important support. We must rally together to educate our older Americans and support programs available in San Antonio that are designed to better their quality of life.

But, it's going to take a village to do it.

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