

Forming an Elder Circle

In the summer of 2004, the Conscious Aging Network of New Mexico decided to organize some type of support/discussion group for elders. In July of that year a planning meeting was held at the First Unitarian Church in Albuquerque. Some 25 people who had previously expressed an interest in conscious aging activities (several had attended workshops given by CAN-NM members) attended this meeting and enthusiasm was high to initiate the group. The format decided upon by the group was to meet monthly for a potluck breakfast, social interactions and an educational program, with facilitation and leadership from within the group. Anne O'Neil and Nancy Gettings volunteered to get the group started. Gary Carlson stated that future meetings might be held at the Unitarian church. The group decided to call itself the Elder Circle, which reflected the concept of age and coming together. The first monthly meeting was held in September of 2004 and meetings continue to be held on the first Saturday of the month with a potluck brunch, check-in from those present and program/discussion. The members are a diverse group of dynamic individuals involved to the fullest in life and living. Attendance varies between 10 and 25 members. Most of the discussions have been led by members of the group with an occasional outside speaker. Topics have included: Volunteering in the community, creativity, building and maintaining support as we age, readers theatre, downsizing, alternative housing for elders, end-of-life planning, energy needs and conservation, and reports of members' worldwide travels. The Elder Circle has now been meeting for some two and a half years and continues to be a solid group for supporting elders through this stage of their lives. Anne O'Neil continues to coordinate the meetings with Steve Poland acting as co-chair. New members are welcome, but because our membership has remained relatively stable, we have not publicized the group widely since it began.