

Press Release  
April 5, 2010

## Fremont's Community Ambassador Program for Seniors Receives National Multi-Cultural Aging Award

The City of Fremont Human Services Department is a proud recipient of the American Society on Aging's Network of Multicultural Aging (NOMA) Award for its **Community Ambassador Program for Seniors (CAPS)**. NOMA, a constituent group of the American Society on Aging, is a national community of individuals and organizations concerned with diversity and working toward cultural competence on all levels.



From left to right: Ouida Williams, outgoing NOMA Chair, Tom Nelson, AARP Chief Operating Officer, Asha Chandra, CAPS Program Manager, City of Fremont Human Services, & Karen Low Graham, incoming NOMA Chair

The NOMA Award was granted to Fremont because it has demonstrated high-quality and innovation, in addition to developing best practices and implementing programs that meet the needs of a multicultural aging population. The award was presented to Asha Chandra, CAPS Program Manager, at the American Society on Aging's national conference on March 17 in Chicago, IL. The Award was sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

"We are fortunate to have received this prestigious award," states Chandra. "This is truly an honor, not only for our department, but also for the ambassadors who are dedicated, passionate volunteers committed to sharing their knowledge and experience in serving older adults in their respective ethnic and faith-based communities."

One challenge unique to Fremont is the extraordinary diversity in its senior population: more than 12 percent of residents are over age 60, almost 47 percent of residents are foreign born and more than 57 percent speak a language other than English in their homes.

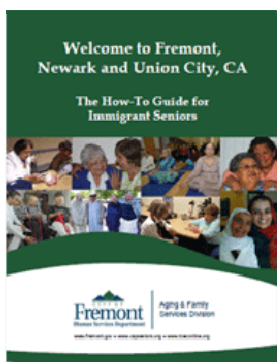
"Immigrant seniors' needs are exacerbated due to language, cultural and transportation barriers," explains Chandra. "As a result, creating community-driven models to reach normally isolated cultural and faith-based groups has been a key to our success."



The City of Fremont Human Services has had a proven track record to be community driven and progressive, by creating cutting edge programs.

Fremont's Community Ambassador Program for Seniors responds to this challenge by reaching out to seniors and their families. Through its volunteer ambassadors, CAPS builds capacity to serve seniors in their own communities, in their own language, within their own cultural norms, and does so where seniors live, worship, socialize, and learn. The Ambassadors serve as a bridge between the formal network of social services and faith based and cultural communities. CAPS Partners include the Taiwanese Community Help Association, India Community Center, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Muslim Support Network, Centerville Presbyterian Church, Sikhs Engaged in Volunteer Activities, and St. Anne Catholic Parish.

"CAPS fosters an impressive level of trust among ambassadors and city staff, between ethnic leaders and local service providers, and between ambassadors from very diverse cultures and religious backgrounds," states Suzanne Shenfil, Human Services Director. "Ambassadors help immigrants connect with the larger community and help access the services to which they are entitled. It is a win-win situation for the ambassador, the senior, the family and the service providers." To date, 88 ambassadors have participated in extensive training and ongoing monthly meetings, and have served over 700 clients. The next CAPS training will begin on April 13, 2010.



In addition, a **How-To Guide for Immigrant Seniors** was recently published as part of the CAPS Program. The Guide has been developed to help older adults and their family living in the Fremont, Newark, and Union City locate community resources and social services. The Guide, while useful to anyone, is directed to recent immigrant seniors who may not be familiar with the US system and its rules and regulations. It assists in better understanding how to apply for health insurance, purchase a new car, or open a bank account, for example.

To learn more about the CAPS program, visit [www.capseniors.org](http://www.capseniors.org), or contact Asha Chandra at [achandra@fremont.gov](mailto:achandra@fremont.gov).

**About The City of Fremont Human Services Department**

The City of Fremont Human Services Department works to support a vibrant community through the creation and maintenance of services that empower individuals, strengthen families, encourage self-sufficiency, enhance neighborhoods, and foster a high quality of life. The Youth & Family Services, Aging & Family Services, Fremont Senior Center, and Family Resource Center are part of the department.

**About American Society on Aging and Network of Multicultural Aging**

American Society on Aging (ASA) is a multidisciplinary professional association that develops leadership, knowledge and skills to address the challenges and opportunities of a diverse aging society. Members come from a multitude of professions, ranging from the aging network to business and healthcare, to form a larger community whose purpose is to learn, network and exchange ideas and connect with others who work with older adults. For more information about ASA and NOMA, please visit [www.asaging.org](http://www.asaging.org).