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**For Immediate Release, Please**

**Brookline Stores Embrace Age Friendly Business**

On a casual walk through Brookline's Coolidge Corner or any of the town's other shopping districts, one is likely to see decals proclaiming stores and other businesses as "age friendly". Although these stores welcome everyone, they go out of their way to be specifically hospitable to older people.

Age friendly businesses attract seniors by offering services that are attractive to them. These services may include the option of shopping by phone or on-line. They may offer discounts or employment opportunities for older adults or provide safety features, such as clearly marked steps. The special services and other features of being an age friendly business also are helpful for customers of all ages!

Brookline business owners are enthusiastic about the age friendly movement, which was initiated by BrooklineCAN, an all-volunteer organization, and the Brookline Council on Aging.

Currently, nearly 50 businesses, large and small throughout Brookline, are designated as age friendly. They include banks, including five Brookline branches of Brookline Bank.

Sasha Liang, manager of the Coolidge Corner branch of Brookline Bank, jokes "You're never too young or too old to give money to a bank. Brookline Bank is accessible to all people." He notes that the bank has increased staff awareness around assisting customers of all ages.

"Magic Beans," a baby and toy store on Harvard Street, proudly announces it is an age friendly store by displaying the age friendly decal in its front window.

Magic Beans manager, Chelsea Abbott, recognizes that grandparents make good customers. She says, "Our sales people float around the store; engaging with customers and helping them find items that suit their needs." Abbott also notes the store's bathroom is accessible to everyone and is easy to locate. "It's a straight line from the front door to the bathroom at the back."

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The first Trader Joe's store outside the west coast was established in Brookline in 1997 and continues to be one of the chain's top stores. "Captain" Micah O'Malley (manager) of Brookline's Trader Joe's, notes the business model of the national company is to be "friendly to everyone." O'Malley adds that each store represents its neighborhood and reflects all ages, all types.

The age friendly entrances to Trader Joe's include doors that open automatically whenever a shopper approaches. This feature is helpful for people in wheelchairs or needing other mobility support, as well as for shoppers carrying bags of groceries. The store also provides bathrooms available to everyone.

Brookline's famed Coolidge Corner Theatre "offers programming for virtually every age group and interest", says Katherine Tallman, Executive Director & CEO since 2013. "Programs include Senior Matinees, Kids' Shows, Big Screen Classics, Science on Screen®, and recordings of live performances from London's National Theatre Live and acclaimed dance and opera companies." She adds, "The Coolidge contributes to a sense of community, which is increasingly recognized as important to health and well-being."

The Coolidge has four accessible film exhibition areas. All offer assisted listening and visualization broadcast technology, which is described in detail on the theater's website. Venues on the second floor are accessible via elevators and chairlift.

The Courtyard by Marriott Brookline and real estate company, Chobee Hoy Group at Compass, also have joined the program. Brookline Booksmith, Simons Shoes, Focal Point Options, and Eureka Puzzles all declare they are age friendly.

David Leschinsky heads Eureka! Puzzles on Beacon Street in Coolidge Corner, where he has had store locations for 14 years. He says, "There is no age limit on thinking. There is no age limit on having fun! The audience for Eureka is age agnostic. We serve all ages, no limit, no particular age, no labels".

Shoppers throughout Brookline should look for the "Age Friendly" decal on doors or windows of participating stores. The decal proclaims that the business actively encourages seniors to shop there.

Brookline's Age Friendly Business undertaking grew out of the town's age friendly initiative. In December 2012, Brookline was accepted as a member of the World Health Organization's (WHO) international network of Age Friendly cities. Brookline was the first municipality in New England to join the network and the ninth in the US.

In 2018, BrooklineCAN (Brookline Community Aging Network) invited businesses to join its Age Friendly Business Campaign. The aim was to encourage Brookline businesses to go out of their way to be hospitable to older people and people of all ages and abilities. The campaign recognizes businesses for the age friendly features that they offer. Even more, the campaign enlists businesses in an effort to become more age friendly.

Collaborating on the Age Friendly Business Campaign with BrooklineCAN and the Brookline Council on Aging are the Brookline Chamber of Commerce, the Coolidge Corner Merchants Association, and the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB).

Recently, the Coolidge Corner Merchants Association updated its shopping map to identify businesses that specifically identify as being age friendly.

Businesses, wishing to be identified as age friendly must do more than merely agree to be age friendly. A business not only must complete an application, it also must agree to a check list of action items that demonstrates that people of all ages and abilities are both welcome and comfortable in their establishments.

Among the dozen items included on the age friendly business check list are:

- Does your company website include a customer assistance phone number that is easy to find and do you list easy to find contact information?
- Do you have safety accommodations, including adequate lighting; clearly marked stairs, inclines or drops; ramps; wide aisles; and easily opened doors?
- Do you train staff to assist customers with access and functional needs (e.g. reach shelved items, speak clearly, read labels/menus)?
- Do you have discount programs for seniors?
- Are you particularly proud of any of your offerings to seniors?

Paul Saner, a resident of Brookline for 30 years, is co-chair of the Economic Development Advisory Board with Anne Meyers. Saner notes, "BrooklineCAN's Age Friendly Business campaign provides an educational opportunity for the business community. The Age Friendly Business program can point out types of barriers businesses may have and what they can do to make practical improvements. For example, a business could mark the edges of stairs and add more lighting. Making these small improvements is the right thing to do and it enhances the bottom line since seniors are a very powerful economic demographic."

He adds, "Age Friendly is not for seniors, only. It's good policy for people of all ages."

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