



Kent County, Michigan
Senior Odyssey 2011-12

Thank you for your interest in Senior Odyssey! This exciting program was created at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at University of Illinois. It has been brought to Michigan through the collaborative efforts of **Senior Neighbors, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College and Creativity Unlimited of Michigan** (Michigan's Odyssey of the Mind Program). Partial funding for the program has been provided by the **Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan** and the **Grand Rapids Community Foundation**.

Based on Odyssey of the Mind (OotM), Senior Odyssey engages cognition in the context of decision-making, creativity, collaboration, evaluation of ideas and competition. Teams of 5-7 seniors, led by a coach or peer leader, work together to develop solutions to problems, fostering creativity and intellectual stimulation, as well as opportunities for socialization. The response in West Michigan to Senior Odyssey has thus far been overwhelmingly positive. Participants have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to step outside their comfort zones and have a platform where their knowledge, life experiences and creativity come together.

In order to get started on this journey, each team will require the following:

A team leader or coach- There will be trainings available for coaches. This coach will organize and frame the team meetings, ensure the team follows all necessary guidelines, and engages in the spontaneous and long-term problem solving activities, and be the designated lead person for the team.

Supplies- Since each team creates a skit where they act out a solution to the long term problem and practices spontaneous problem solving, a range of "supplies will be required. Typically, the supplies are an assortment of odds and ends found in most basements, closets, senior centers, or thrift stores. They can range from craft items to random props for spontaneous problems and long term problem solutions.

Meeting space- Each team is expected to hold weekly meetings, and will need a location to do so. Also needed is storage space for the supplies and props required for its weekly activities and skits.

Program Materials- Senior Odyssey materials are available free of charge from the University of Illinois Adult Learning Lab. Interested individuals should visit the website www.seniorodyssey.org.

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Odyssey of the Mind Annual Membership- Each year the national OotM organization introduces a new set of long-term problems for members. Currently an annual membership costs **\$135.00**. This membership gives you access to the OotM long term problems and rules. In addition, each team that wishes to participate in the annual local competition will pay **\$35** for a local membership giving them access to coach trainings, support and guidance from experienced Senior Odyssey organizers, representation in the statewide OotM organization, local competition eligibility and other benefits.

Problem costs- In order to equalize the playing field, each long-term problem has a specific limit on what can be spent in creating a solution (**\$125-145**). However, most teams *do not come close* to spending this amount. Many supplies, as mentioned can be found in basements, closets, garage sales, and thrift stores.

Each Senior Odyssey season will culminate in an area wide event, showcasing the talents of all the teams involved. This competition will be held towards the end of May, **tentatively** scheduled for May 19, 2012 so plan accordingly.

Should you have other questions, please feel free to contact me at (616) 233-0283. On behalf of the Senior Odyssey (of Michigan) visionary and leadership teams, I'd like to express how excited we are to move forward with this journey. Thank you for your interest in being a part of it. Please fill out the enclosed form to register your team.

Sincerely,

Julie Lake, MPA, CTRS
Health Promotion Coordinator

Senior Odyssey of Michigan's Visionary Team:

Julie Lake- Senior Neighbors

Barbara Hohman- Senior Neighbors

Priscilla Kimboko-Grand Valley State University

Melissa Peraino- Grand Valley State University

Melvane Tardy- Grand Valley State

University/Johnson Center for Philanthropy

Cathy Weisbeck-Grand Valley State University

Mike Faber- Grand Rapids Community College

Kristen Miles- Creativity Unlimited Michigan