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Ohio Gov. John Kasich touts role for older Ohioans as productive component of society

By Robert Higgs

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Gov. John Kasich today lauded older Ohioans as a resource to be tapped as a productive part of society, while touting the need for programs to help the elderly keep physically fit, mobile, connected.

Speaking at a luncheon sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons, Kasich said growing old doesn't mean growing unproductive. Seniors can play a valuable role, offering expertise and lessons from experience.

"We want to be able to communicate to all of our seniors that you can be such a great participant in improving our culture, for everyone," Kasich said.

"At the heart of it all, our seniors, me included, feel that we need to pave the way for the success of our children."

Health care, and keeping seniors fit with exercise and good nutrition is a key part of that, Kasich said. And the state has a role to help promote health and fitness, he said.

The goal is to "change the idea of what it means to be older and to try to get people who are older to think differently," Kasich said.

The Ohio Department of Aging has some initiatives toward that end in the works that should be ready later in the year. There is no specific timeframe, he said.

Bonnie Kantor-Burman, director of the Aging Department, said one program will focus on efforts to prevent falls, which can often be debilitating for older persons. It should be ready by September.

Another, meant to increase access to transportation for seniors after they drive is just a concept, at this point, Kasich said. But allowing people to be mobile is important toward keeping them active in society.

"I don't think God created a retirement program. I think the lord wants us to serve humanity." Kasich said.

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