

DEERFIELD VALLEY SENIOR NEWS



Volume 1 Issue 3

DEERFIELD VALLEY AGING IN PLACE INITIATIVE

Our mission is to provide
for the wellbeing of our
aging population.

WHY WE CHOSE A COVERED BRIDGE AS AN IDENTIFYING IMAGE FOR OUR NEWSLETTER:

We decided that a covered bridge would be an apt symbol of our efforts to help elders because both historic bridges and older citizens are admirable examples of enduring strength and continuing usefulness performing the service of spanning gulfs: the bridge crosses a topological gulf, while elders' lives span chronological gulfs. With some thoughtfully applied support and a bit of ongoing maintenance, both the bridge and the elder can continue aging gracefully in place while remaining assets to their communities.

WILMINGTON HAS SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL

Jennifer Fitzgerald Interview by Claudette Hollenbeck

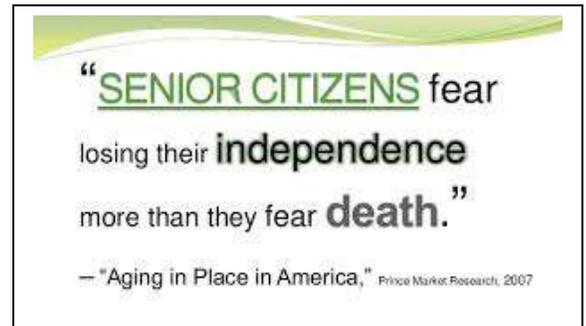
We have one of the two remaining Town Nurses in the whole State of Vermont. Whitingham has the other one. In the 1950s, at the beginning of the polio epidemic in Vermont, the Commissioner of Public Health asked Select boards throughout the State to hire town nurses to assist local doctors in caring for the mostly rural populations. Back then doctors delivered babies, dealt with injury and death on their own, often far away from hospital facilities. It was not until the 1980s that Home Health Agencies were formed to reach out to people at home. I interviewed Jennifer Fitzgerald our Energizer Bunny of a Town Nurse to hear about her 33 years in this job.

CH: How did it all start for you?

JF: In the summer of 1982 I filled in for Cheri Crawford who was the nurse at that time when she had her baby. She did not want to go back to work after that, and I took on the job. It was a 20 hour a week job then. It is 15 hours now.

CH: I gather the job has changed and evolved over the years.

JF: Yes, after the Southern Vermont Home Healthcare program began out of Brattleboro, patients who qualified could get their home care paid for by insurance and did not have to pay the \$1.00 fee. I worked around the agencies doing the things not paid for. It went from bathing, changing dressings, blood pressure and blood sugar tests and toenail cutting to primarily an advocacy role and care for the chronically ill and those with a life threatening illness who were actively engaged in treatment. The Home Health nurses took over most of the acute care work.



CH: I have watched you in action now for probably 15 plus years and, frankly, I marvel at what a networker you are. You are as good as any Social Worker I have ever known. How did that happen?

JF: Well, thanks, but I just kept learning as I went along. The needs of each patient taught me to research and find new options. I took the Hospice training and became a Hospice volunteer and that opened my eyes to a whole range of issues for the chronically ill and dying patients. Much of my work now is shepherding patients along through the various systems, getting them resources and aid from Senior Solutions, Social Security, Vocational Rehab, Memory or Dementia care, etc. It is not easy for folks to even know where to start when they need to get help.

CH: You seem to have a sort of Community Vision, and Lord knows you *know everyone* in town. It always tickled me to hear you say something like “we can ask the middle child in that family to help with care for grandma. The older one is too busy and the younger one has issues with grandma” How you know all that intra-family dynamics amazes me. No Bayada nurse would have a prayer of knowing all that.

JF: Well, I lived here and raised 4 kids here. My husband was a teacher at the High School. All that community data just keeps accumulating. I also have served on several Boards in the area over the years.

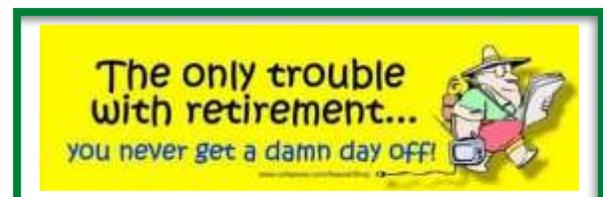
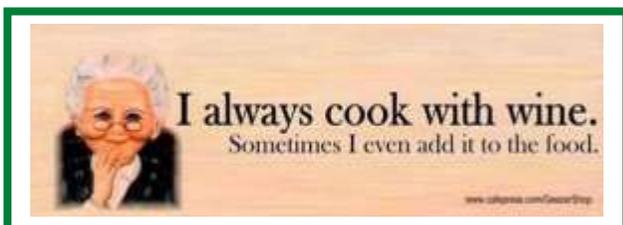
CH: Yes, I remember it must have been 15 or more years ago that you started the Elder Services Task force. I was on that committee too. We managed to get a Senior Center going. But it folded.

JF: I think we were just a little ahead of our time. I am working with Mary Fredette, Director of The Gathering Place in Brattleboro to set up a satellite program here in the Valley. That way 18 or more elders who currently have to drive to Brattleboro for a day center can get care right here in town. It may end up in the old high school building or some other building. Maybe with the Day Center for elders we can resurrect the Senior/Community Center idea again, nearby.

CH: Where do you get all this *energy*? I get tired just trying to follow you around.

JF: I just love my work. There is nothing like seeing people in their own setting. It is quite different from the in hospital work I have done. I suspect I like to solve puzzles, figuring out how to make a situation work.

CH: I hope you won't retire anytime soon. Your unique combination of strengths and talents has been a huge benefit to Wilmington. I thank you



THIS AND THAT:

LOAN CLOSET: We have a Loan Closet housing all sorts of durable medical equipment. If you need to borrow a walker, wheelchair, specialty cane or a commode call us and leave a message at 802-451-6941 or you can email us at svdvaginginplace@gmail.com. Aging in Place is here to help!

RANDOM THOUGHTS AS WE AGE: I still have a photographic memory, I just don't get same day service! Seniors want to serve rather than be served.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT



TGP is a non-profit Adult Day and Home Care service proudly serving the seniors and disabled adult residents of Windham County and the surrounding communities since 1989. The Gathering Place is true to its' mission to "provide Adult Day and other services to promote empowerment, independence and quality of life for elders, adults with disabilities and their caregivers. We are dedicated to fostering collaborative community partnerships."

Seniors and adult disabled individuals of a variety of ages, races, religions and socioeconomic status enjoy the benefits of the Center and its services. TGP's myriad of services and activities are designed to bring health, fun, laughter and companionship to the lives of our participants and peace of mind to their families. Our diverse programming allows TGP to serve a variety of age groups across the continuum of life. TGP is both a cost-effective way to minimize the stress of providing care at home and an affordable alternative to facility placement.

In addition to the full schedule of activities TGP offers a host of benefits to those attending such as health oversight, transportation coordination to and from the center and medical appointments, nutritious continental breakfast, lunch and snack, access to therapy and salon services and personal care according to need.

Funding for our program comes from a number of sources that include VT Medicaid, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Respite funds, private pay, and an income sensitive sliding fee scale. TGP is reliant on fund raising efforts to assure continuation and continuous improvement of our services. Funding from USDA, United Way, individuals, grants, and town funding is vital and helps TGP cover the costs of care and social activities, provide caregivers with respite, support and education, support transportation options, and continue the participant sliding fee program for those in need.

By 2017, the number of Vermonters over the age of 65 is predicted to exceed 123,000, by 2030 1:4 will be over 65 and 25,000 statewide will be over 85! To meet the needs of this ever-expanding demographic, the TGP staff and Board have worked diligently to update existing and renovate underutilized space in Brattleboro while exploring other options for expansion.

About a year ago, following a call from a passionate community member, TGP began exploring the possibility of a Deerfield satellite location. That dream is moving closer to fruition through the passion and fundraising efforts of Deerfield Valley residents. More information to come!

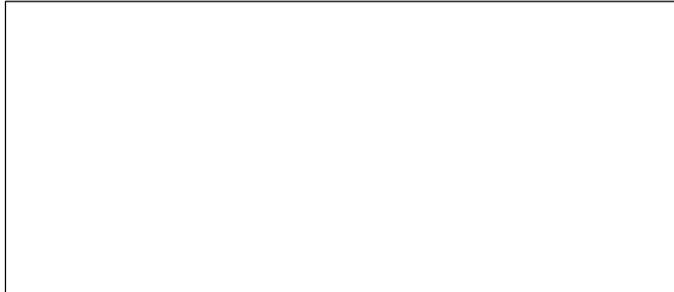
In the meantime transportation is available from all towns in the valley to our Brattleboro location. TGP is conveniently located on 30 Terrace Street in Brattleboro. The center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00AM to 5:00PM.

For more information, to join us for lunch and a tour, or to discuss our services further call 802-254-6559.

DV AGING IN PLACE INITIATIVE

PO Box 1076

Wilmington, VT 05363



exchanging services
creating connections
strengthening communities
hour by hour

Brattleboro Time Trade allows for the exchange of time credits, a type of community currency that anyone can earn by using their time, resources, skills or energy to help others. Each hour of service provided to another Time Trade member earns one time credit. You can spend your time credits on services provided by any of the other members of the Time Trade. "In a

larger sense Brattleboro Time Trade is about building community. We should all share our talents and our needs with our neighbors."

Our Mission

Brattleboro Time Trade provides a forum to facilitate the exchange of goods and services for the benefit of the community. The Time Trade creates a system that connects unmet needs with untapped resources. By promoting the skills and knowledge of each member and enabling reciprocity, the organization empowers each of us to share our wealth of experience with others, thereby enriching the local economy.

See more at: <http://www.brattleborotimetrade.org/about-btt> Tel (802) 246-1199 Email:

Outreach@BrattleboroTimeTrade.org

Who-Hoo!



**YOU'RE ONLY
AS OLD AS
YOU REMEMBER
YOU ARE**

Contact Us

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Please send article suggestions to Mary Towne, Editor, at the above address.

Please share with others! Send your email address to receive electronically.

"Powerful Tools for Caregivers" is a 6-week class series starting September 15 in West Brattleboro. RSVP by Sept 3. For info & registration: 1-800-642-5119 or www.seniorsolutionsvt.org/2015/07/powerful-tools-caregivers