

DEERFIELD VALLEY SENIOR NEWS



Volume 1 Issue 1

DEERFIELD VALLEY AGING IN PLACE INITIATIVE

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

WELCOME.

Welcome to the initial mailing of the “Deerfield Valley Senior News”. This new periodical is designed to give information and make everyone aware of services to senior citizens in our valley so that they can “Age in Place”. What does that mean?

Most of us, as we grow older, require some outside help to keep us living in a manner to which we have become accustomed. It may be medical help, financial assistance, family counseling, travel help, exercising, group socializing, or another personal need. Whatever your need, we can help you find a solution. We don’t provide the service, we help you find it and put you together, making it easier for you to “Age in Place”.

There are many service providers in the valley, and many residents who could use their services. They don’t always get together. Our goal is to make that easier for both. In addition to direct help, we are putting together a “Directory of Services for Seniors” which will cross reference needs with providers. For example:

NEED

Transportation to Doctor
Drug Abuse Counseling

PROVIDER

Senior Solutions – Senior Helpline
Deerfield Valley Community Partnership

Contact Phone

(800) 642-5119
(802) 779-4718

The newsletter will regularly contain detailed reports on medical issues and local support services of interest to seniors, and we solicit your questions and comments.

Bill Herbert

“Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength.”

- Betty Friedan



OUR BEGINNINGS

Let me share with you a short chronology of local efforts to make this area more livable and enjoyable for all of us as we move into our “golden years”.

Bill and Carol Herbert set up a table in the gym lobby at Wilmington High School on Town Meeting Day last year. They greeted entrants and gave out bright red “File for Life” refrigerator magnets to keep important information easily accessible in case of a medical emergency. I introduced myself and learned that Bill became a member

of the Deerfield Valley Rotary and shepherded this as a Rotary project. Bill dispersed these throughout the Valley, with information to obtain more if needed.

After that casual meeting, Bill and Carol invited me to join them several times for coffee to learn more about services for folks over 60. Bill had previously enjoyed working 8 hours/week for the Council on Aging in Harvard, Massachusetts. His focus was learning "how" people over 60 learned about services in this rural area and which services were meeting the greatest needs of folks over 60. His enthusiasm and interest grew into accompanying me to a Senior Solutions Advisory Board Meeting (I am the Council on Aging representative for Wilmington) and attended the quarterly "Cares Groups" meeting which informs members about local initiatives for "Seniors" living in their Southern Vermont towns. As Bill and Carol acclimated to full-time living in Wilmington their enthusiasm grew into a commitment to claim a space for "Seniors" at the Old High School Building in Wilmington.

Mary Fredette, Executive Director of the Gathering Place, (an Adult Day Program in Brattleboro) toured the vacant High School in June looking for accessible space to accommodate the folks that live in the Deerfield Valley that were traveling over the mountain to her program. She was immediately enthused so contacted me to learn more about the area and how we might grow a satellite program in Wilmington.

As a result of that meeting Mary and I facilitated two focus groups in the Wilmington Town Office meeting room which generated enthusiasm around the idea of creating a "Livable Community" in which seniors could "age in place". Interested Valley residents met at Pettee Memorial Library the first three Wednesdays in December to strategize and build interest to grow programs to make that happen.

Attendees spoke at Selectboard meetings in Wilmington, Marlboro, Halifax and Whitingham sharing their concerns that our local population was aging, yet young people were leaving to find jobs that pay a livable wage. We hoped each town might see this as an opportunity to plan now to meet the increasing needs for seniors to age in place and create local jobs in the process. Like the Cares Groups along the West River Valley each of these towns had uniquely varied ways that tended to this issue but all were interested in learning more. A small group of interested residents worked with Bill, Carol and myself to ask our Wilmington Selectboard for funds to initially create a newsletter, a resource guide and establish an official loan closet for durable medical equipment. Ultimately we obtained a \$5,000 grant in Wilmington to begin this initial project

We know that families that skied here in the 70's had positive experiences which led to a second homeowner boom which led to some of them retiring here and becoming an integral part of our community bringing energy and fresh ideas with them.

So welcome to our premier edition and look forward to 5 more Newsletters this year. Let us know your interests or concerns and send them to the "Ask Bill" column to be featured in our later editions. We are so-o-o thrilled to have Mary Towne, newly retired Administrative Assistant to the Town of Wilmington to educate us in this initial effort! And our feature writers will be Claudette Hollenbeck and Selma Schiffer.

It is our hope that many of you will access this newsletter online to save postal costs, or read it at local libraries or meal sites. We are also grateful to partner with Cindy Hayford, Director of the Deerfield Valley Community Partnership to reduce mailing costs for hard copies of these newsletters. We DO NEED your help to identify folks over 60 that rent homes or apartments in the area since that information is difficult to obtain in this era of protecting privacy. Our goal is to be inclusive NOT exclusive!

I am truly excited to enjoy the incredible energy and diverse ideas brought to this "Aging in Place Initiative". Won't you join us?

Jennifer Fitzgerald RN, Wilmington Town Nurse

AGING IN PLACE - VERMONT STYLE

I am old, and getting older (and crabbier) daily. I want to stay in the Deerfield Valley until they cart me out feet first. (Good luck with the driveway boys!) I am also a long range planner and ruminator. So, I joined the local Aging in Place Committee to see what that group was doing to ensure my own future here. What a hardworking and dedicated crew they all are. They are planning a senior newsletter with information on resources, maybe a local senior hot-line, a senior webpage and a whole raft of other projects. Liaison with the Gathering Place from Brattleboro which is trying to open a satellite here in the valley at the old high school is part of their mission.

I think we should have a designated space in the Deerfield Valley News dedicated to senior issues. I am going to list off just a few of the concerns that could be addressed therein for “people of a certain age”, whether long time local or retired second home owner, as the trusty old body starts to complain:

I want to stay in the Deerfield Valley until they cart me out feet first.

- **Adequate Housing:** The time comes when stairs are a problem. Lugging an unwieldy bag of laundry to the washing machine in the basement begins to look like hiking down the Grand Canyon trail in flip flops. Living on one level helps as does a carefully set up bathroom with safety aids.
- **Medical Care Availability:** If the Health Center gets its wish and moves to larger quarters in the old high school maybe some health things will get easier and more coordinated. As the tsunami of aging seniors rolls down on the United States and us here in southern Vermont, there will be a huge need for in home caregivers. I'm pretty sure most of us want to be able to stay at home and receive our care there if at all possible. It would help a LOT if that got coordinated locally instead of via Bayada Nursing in Brattleboro, or the state VNA which is all the way in Springfield. We now have the SASH Program (Support and Services At Home) with its offices at Butterfield Common in West Dover working on some of that. The two folks who are running it, Becky Arbella as Coordinator and Jill Robart, as the nurse, are already finding out how much time and gas money is involved in operating this as a rural program. Elsewhere in the state, the SASH programs are located in some version of a downtown, central housing settlement with relatively little community outreach necessary.
- **Financial Security:** It costs a lot to live where we do. Heating, taxes, not to mention snow plowing/shoveling, eat up a big percentage of income. It hits seniors very hard as they are usually on fixed incomes. If your major investment is your home, the threat of having to sell out because of high bills or a health crisis/nursing home stay, is very scary.
- **Transportation Issues:** The MOOver is a great help but it cannot go everywhere. If one can no longer drive, where will a senior turn for help? You need to have friends and neighbors to help and that brings me to the last point.
- **Social Connection:** There are now piles of studies that report socializing improves health, wellness, and longevity. So, how does one manage that here especially in the deep, dark winter? Ten years or so ago a group of us tried to start a Senior Center here in the valley. Maybe we were too early because it pooped out for lack of interest. However, if all the gallant plans for the old high school pan out, there could be a Community Center on site. The list is endless.....

I have touched on only a few fragments of the issues facing retirement age folks. I would like to write a regular column for the Deerfield Valley News on aging issues and available, but maybe little known, existing resources. I was a Social Worker and Family Therapist for 35 years and I just cannot shut it off! I want to be USEFUL, while I still can. There is so much to share.

Claudette Hollenbeck



Did You Know? In addition to the scheduled bus service, the MOOver provides special door-to-door transportation for community members who are age 60 and older, as well as individuals any age who have an ADA defined disability? Eligible rides include transportation to senior meal sites in Jacksonville, Halifax and Readsboro, shopping in Bennington on Wednesdays, non-emergency, non-Medicaid medical appointments, and also to The Gathering Place in Brattleboro. Service is provided either by a lift-equipped bus or a volunteer driver in their personal vehicle. Registration and advance reservations are required.

Our drivers are trained to meet the special needs you may have, and the service is FREE. Call us at 464-8487 for more information or to schedule a ride.

In order to receive future issues, please call us or send your name and mailing address to us at the above address! Send your email address to receive electronically. **Please fill out and return the enclosed survey!**

Thank you to Deerfield Valley Community Partnership, PO Box 1688, Wilmington, VT 05363 for partnering with us to distribute this newsletter.



Contact Us
DV Aging in Place Initiative
PO Box 1076
Wilmington, VT 05363
802-451-6941
svdvaginginplace@gmail.com
www.dvaginginplace.org (coming soon!)
Please send article suggestions to Mary Towne, Editor, at the above address.

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