



# DEERFIELD VALLEY SENIOR NEWS

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## DEERFIELD VALLEY AGING IN PLACE INITIATIVE

The role of the Aging in Place Initiative (AIP) is to identify issues and needs of seniors in the Deerfield Valley and advocate to get those needs met. We are not a direct service provider. We have been instrumental in getting others (many of whom are on the AIP Committee) to start and then manage various initiatives. The Medical Device Loan Closet (802-451-6941), the Caregivers Support group (802-464-5156), the Cancer Support Group (802-464-0309), the Men's Coffee Hour (802-464-0309), an AIP column in the Deerfield Valley News, a Resource Guide for Seniors, and these periodic Newsletters which have been available in hard copy as well as online on our website <http://dvaginginplace.org>, and on the Chamber of Commerce kiosks.

Soon the valley will have its own branch of the Gathering Place, the senior daycare facility in Brattleboro. It will be on site in West Dover where the Chinese restaurant First Wok used to be. The SASH program (Support and Services at Home) which has its office at Butterfield Common in West Dover (802-464-0438) has been in existence now for several years. AIP hopes to collaborate with SASH and the Gathering Place in the future. One need that has been identified recently is volunteer drivers. This winter, which has been so difficult and unpredictable (is there any other kind in Vermont?) has intensified this need.

The Current out of Springfield, Vt. (802-460-7433) is allied with the MOOver here in the valley and provides rides to doctors' appointments. They require 48-hour notice. It is a wonderful service, but what about trips to the grocery store, to visit friends in the hospital, to meetings or appointments that are not for medical purposes? Seniors here are often stuck for a person to call for this favor. AIP is going to try to ally with RSVP or some other organization that can cover the volunteer drivers for insurance and liability and set up a list of folks willing to help their neighbors. Wish us luck. If you would like to be a volunteer driver call 802-464-5156 and we will put your name on the list.

## 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.

## LIFELINE: A SAFETY NET FOR SENIORS

If you are a single person “of a certain age” living happily home alone as many of us seniors do, it makes quite a difference to have the back-up rescue option of some sort of quick response gadget. The lovely ladies in the photo happen to be using Lifeline, and there are many other companies that offer similar services. They have chosen the bracelet rather than the traditional necklace form of the device.

The alert system works off a thing that looks like an answering machine attached to a telephone inside your house. It covers a 500-foot radius so it works outside the house to that distance as well.



Let's say you take a tumble in the garden or in the shower. You press the button and a disembodied voice appears out of the ether and says, “Are you all right John or Mary?” If you can answer and say, “Oops, I hit the button by mistake” they politely say goodbye and that is that. If, however, you can answer “I've fallen and I can't get up,” then they will first call the neighbor or friend you have listed previously when you signed up or Rescue. You can shout out your wishes and they follow them. If, however, you don't answer, then they deploy Rescue immediately.

I know family members are delighted to have this device in use. It cuts down on a lot of worries about senior welfare.

The Lifeline device costs \$39.00 per month and is waterproof.

### MORE RULES FOR A GOOD OLD AGE:

1. Read newspapers, watch the news. Go online and read what people are saying. Make sure you have an active email account and try to use some of those social networks. You'll be surprised which old friends you'll meet. Keeping in touch with what is going on and with the people you know is important at any age.
2. Never use the phrase: "In my time". Your time is now. If you're alive, you are part of this time. You have been younger, but you are still you now, having fun and enjoying life.
3. Laugh. Laugh A LOT. Laugh at everything. Remember, you are one of the lucky ones. You managed to have a life, a long one. Many never get to this age, never get to experience a full life. But you did. So what's not to laugh about? Find the humor in your situation.
4. Take no notice of what others say about you and even less of what they might be thinking. They'll do it anyway, and you should have pride in yourself and what you've achieved. Let them talk and don't worry. They have no idea about your history, your memories and the life you've lived so far. There's still much to be written, so get busy writing and don't waste time thinking about what others might think. Now is the time to be free, at peace and as happy as you can be!

AND REMEMBER: Life is too short to drink cheap wine...!!!

## WILMINGTON SUPER SENIOR SUE SPENGLER

by Claudette Hollenbeck

**CH** – Maybe not everyone in the valley knows what makes you a Super Senior, but they all know you by sight. Everyone has seen that Subaru station wagon with the two giant blonde heads of your champagne colored Golden Retrievers hanging out the windows. They are your trademark. How long have you lived here?

**SS**- People think I have been here forever and continuously but I have only lived here full time since 1991. I lived here originally from 1965 to 1973. After I left in 1973 life took me to St. Louis, then to New Jersey, and back to Connecticut.

**CH** – Tell me how your community service locally began?

**SS** – When we moved back here in 1991 my husband made me promise I would not get involved in town politics and governance as I had in previous places. I still wanted to do something useful and when in 2004 I met a checker at Shaw's who was living in a converted hunting shack with no heat, I decided to do something for the people who fall through the cracks. Barry Reardon gave us \$2,000 as seed money and we started Deerfield Valley Community Cares. Mary Jane Finnegan, Susie Haughwout, Ann Herrmann, Ginny Studer, Carolyn de Leo and Ginny Kuhnert made up the Board of Trustees.



**CH** – As I understand it, you focus on fuel assistance, literally keeping local folks warm in the winter.

**SS** – Yes, we spend between \$80,000 and \$96,000 per winter to help families make it through our Vermont winters and we must raise that money somehow every year. Jim McDevitt, who organized the Dover Propane buying group, asks everyone who signs up to donate \$50 (tax deductible donation) to DVCC and he raised \$50,000 for us last year.

In 2005 we started the Best Dam Walk as a fundraiser, and of course we did those four nude calendars. They were a great success. I apply for 7 or 8 grants a year. Somehow, we make up the difference.

**CH**- That sounds like an awful lot of work behind the scenes.

**SS** – It's a lot of evening phone calls. People call in January and say I am out of fuel and I don't have the money yet to pay for a delivery. I've been doing this for so long now that I am pretty aware of who has a real need and who should not be relying on this fund. Most people who call are very uncomfortable about having to ask. Most do not ask for help directly – they are referred to us by a friend or neighbor, or someone in the school or medical center, and sometimes from the fuel companies. There is no paperwork. Nobody knows who gets help and it is especially needed for seniors on a fixed income when some unexpected expense comes up.

It took a lot off my shoulders to have the Rotary, in 2015, take over the fund-raising part of the work. They now have a committee to fund-raise for DVCC. I don't know how much longer I can do this. I am hoping someone else will step forward soon to do my part.

**CH** - It would appear to me that you certainly deserve to be called a Super Senior, a person who makes our case that most seniors want to serve, not be served.

## DV AGING IN PLACE INITIATIVE

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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.*



The average person over 50 years of age cannot do it!



### Check for Alzheimer's - Pretty Amazing

The following was developed as a mental age assessment by the School of Psychiatry at Harvard University.

Take your time and see if you can read each line aloud without a mistake.

- |                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. This is this cat. | 7. This is old cat.      |
| 2. This is is cat.   | 8. This is fart cat.     |
| 3. This is how cat.  | 9. This is busy cat.     |
| 4. This is to cat.   | 10. This is for cat.     |
| 5. This is keep cat. | 11. This is forty cat.   |
| 6. This is an cat.   | 12. This is seconds cat. |

Now go back and read the third word in each line from the top down.

## 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](mailto:svdvaginginplace@gmail.com). Aging in Place is here to help!

**CANCER SUPPORT GROUP:** Wilmington: Cancer Survivors Meeting. Second Wednesday of each month, 5:00 pm at Southern Vermont Medical Center, Deerfield Valley Campus. For information call [\(802\) 464-0309](tel:8024640309)

**CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP:** Free and available to anyone who is the caregiver of a chronically ill person (cancer, dementia, mental illness, alcoholism, etc.) Meets every other Sunday at 4 p.m. in West Dover at Congregational Church. Call (802) 464-5156 for more information.