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Message from the President/Board Chair Emily Slunt

2020 has been a challenging year in so many ways, and we still need to be more careful than ever as coronavirus cases are at their highest levels in our area of Virginia. There is hope for the future, however, and we anxiously await news of vaccine availability. We also know we are a resilient society, and we will look at the impact of the pandemic and the societal and political issues that have become evident as we move forward to build stronger communities and become more united.

More than ever, the mission of LOWLINC and the value of staying in place in your home and community have been validated with the terrifying dangers of COVID-19. But also, for LOWLINC particularly, members and volunteers have become more acutely aware of the health risks associated with social isolation and loneliness. We found ways to stay connected with our members even though we could not have our favorite luncheon outings and larger gatherings, such as picnics and special dinners. Phone Buddies

became a new activity enjoyed by all the participants. Members appreciated the home-cooked meals for both Thanksgiving and Christmas, as many were separated from their families. And we held social events using video conferencing.

The health, wellness, and safety of our members will always be a priority for LOWLINC. The trend towards telemedicine is an outcome of the pandemic that will continue. Discharging patients from hospitals directly home as soon as possible is another new trend. Using health monitoring devices, such as those for which we received grant support and gave our members in 2020, older adults will be able to communicate with their health care providers from their homes, providing measured health status and potential early diagnosis, treatment, and possibly prevention of hospitalization. LOWLINC's talented home maintenance volunteers have been invaluable in maintaining the safety of our members with home visits for maintenance and repairs.

As we reflect on the mission of LOWLINC, I want to recognize the contributions of Carolyn Rourke, LOWLINC's Board Chair for the past two years. Carolyn is a truly dedicated individual. She is committed to LOWLINC's members, and many of our members can attest to the special care she has provided. Through her expertise with technology and her background in business, Carolyn has also contributed to building a very firm foundation and organizational structure for LOWLINC. We are fortunate that Carolyn will remain on the Board as Secretary and continue to be a resource and active volunteer.

I am moving forward as the new President/Board Chair with Carolyn's mentorship and a very capable Board of Directors. We will be looking at strategic planning as we begin the new year and continuing to reach out to our Lake of the Woods community. Community outreach and partnerships are ways to make the Lake the best community for every age group. Thinking of others is a way to stay positive and hopeful. Let's continue to take care of each other, and especially our older adults, who also have much to contribute to our community.

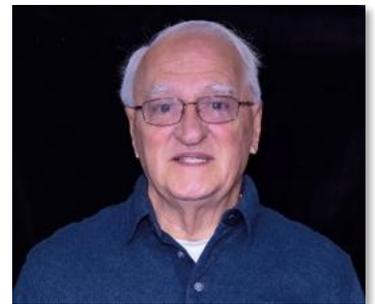
Founding Board Members Retire, New Board Members Welcomed

by Carolyn Rourke, LOWLINC Secretary

This year has ushered in greater-than-usual changes for LOWLINC leadership as founders Mary-Jane Atwater and Jeff Flynn retired from the Board after six years of service. Jeff served as President 2015-2020. Mary-Jane was Board Chair 2015-2018 and Secretary 2015-2020. There would be no LOWLINC without Mary-Jane and Jeff, along with third founder Joe Sakole, who had previously retired from the Board.



LOWLINC's beginnings date back to 2014, when this trio started to discuss how Lake of the Woods' older adults could help each other age in place independently and safely while maintaining continued connections to our community. After innumerable meetings and much preparation, LOWLINC was launched on January 1, 2016. We salute these pioneers who had the vision and determination to make their idea a reality and to build the solid foundation that will sustain our organization in the future.



LOWLINC Board of Directors for 2021. We are pleased to present the LOWLINC Board of Directors who will serve in 2021. Three new board members will join six continuing members to round out the nine-member Board.



Steve Hein. Steve retired from professional life at the end of 2016 after a 20-year career as a Coast Guard officer and a second career in marketing and executive management positions in northern Virginia, most recently as Chief Operating Officer of the nonprofit Germanna Foundation in Locust Grove. Steve is a graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and holds an MBA from Strayer University. Steve's mom and dad, Lynn and Carol, moved to Lake of the Woods in 2000 and were inaugural members of LOWLINC. Steve saw first-hand how LOWLINC and its volunteers made it possible for his mom and dad to remain in their "Lakeside Hideaway" home and enjoy life as much as possible in their later years. He hopes to help LOWLINC continue to do the same for others.

Jean McLallen. After enjoying five years as a weekender, Jean moved to Lake of the Woods full time in 2006, when she retired as Director of Finance at the Arlington Free Clinic. Prior to that, she worked in financial reporting for MCI and WorldCom for ten years and was active as a volunteer in Fairfax County and Arlington during her 34 years in Northern Virginia. She studied Liberal Arts at Vassar College before transferring to Cornell University to receive a BS degree in Hotel and Restaurant Administration. She was the Director of Public Relations at The Drake in Chicago before moving to Virginia and becoming active in a hospitality consulting firm with her husband.



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Carol Simpson. Carol retired in 2019 from Aging Together, a partnership organization serving older adults and caregivers in Orange, Culpeper, Madison, Fauquier, and Rappahannock counties. She was Aging Together's Executive Director for three years and worked with LOWLINC in that capacity. Carol holds a Master's degree in Biostatistics from Georgetown University. She was the first paid Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Washington and grew the organization from 1.5 full-time equivalent staff to 13 in her eight-year tenure. Carol also worked for assisted living facilities in the DC area, and wrote a book for caregivers of those with dementia. (*Editor's note: See Carol's article about dementia on page 5.*)

New Officers and Continuing Board Members



Emily Slunt
President/
Board Chair



John Beisheim
Vice President/
Treasurer



Carolyn Rourke
Secretary



Vicky Fleming



Donalda Lovelace



Mary Jane Oldham

2020 Member Services Summary

The service landscape in 2020 was much different from previous years, as we modified operations because of the pandemic. In-person services were much reduced, while phone visits and errand running increased dramatically. The majority of the 1,707 friendly visits in the chart below were "Phone Buddy" conversations between members and volunteers. Thank you, LOWLINC volunteers, for your continued support and dedication during this extraordinary year!



Volunteer Spotlight

Phone Buddies by Mary Jane Oldham, Volunteer Committee Chair

The Phone Buddy Program, where a LOWLINC volunteer commits to have one or more weekly phone calls with each member on their list, was started on April 1, 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program's purpose is to connect with members, offer updated information, listen to their concerns, and simply engage in friendly conversations. The program has helped members remain informed about COVID-19 and take appropriate measures to protect themselves. The calls help both member and volunteer overcome feelings of stress, loneliness, and boredom. Volunteers ask if there is anything LOWLINC can do to help them, and they let the members know about the services available. Since April, 30 volunteers have made 1,567 Phone Buddy calls, representing 452 hours of conversation.

There are currently 43 member households receiving these calls. Feedback from the members has been very positive, with these comments to volunteers: "I feel that I have made a new friend;" "I look forward to your call, you always like to listen;" "This call is my therapy;" and "It's good to know someone cares."



Carleen Delio

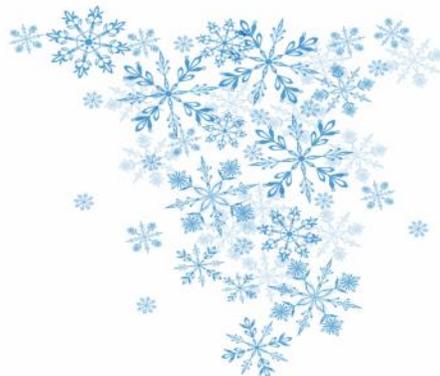
Ramona Ison and Carleen Delio have been Phone Buddies since July and already feel that they are the best of friends! Ramona says that she went from days of hearing from nobody to getting calls several times a week from Carleen, and she really looks forward to them. She says that it's nice to have a friend who asks about her and her family and lets her know that her opinions still very much matter. As a retired school teacher of 32 years, this kind of validation is important to Ramona. These calls have resulted in several socially distanced friendly visits in Ramona's home.

Carleen has always enjoyed talking on the phone and feels that she really gets to know people better that way. She says that both people can feel relaxed, joke around with each other and be themselves. She is very interested in the person's thoughts, experiences, and family life. Carleen says that her phone buddies are not just people on a list to call but truly friends with whom she looks forward to having a conversation at least once each week.



Ramona Ison

LOWLINC salutes our volunteers and members who are Phone Buddies!





Part II: Seven More Myths and Facts About Alzheimer's and Dementia by Carol Simpson

As I mentioned in the Fall issue of *NewsLinc*, I started working with people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia and their families in 1987 as Director of the DC area Alzheimer's Association. We've learned a lot about these disorders over the years, but myths still abound. The following, a continuation of Myths 1-7 in the Fall issue, will shed light on some additional misunderstandings about dementia.

Myth #8. Alzheimer's can affect anyone – it's an equal opportunity killer. Fact: It isn't possible to predict who will get dementia, but research shows that individuals with less education, women, and those with heavy alcohol use, heart disease, sleep apnea, diabetes, smoking, or depression are at higher risk for getting the disease. It is interesting to note that rates of dementia vary by country. India, Cambodia, Singapore, and Georgia (in Russia) have the lowest rates; the U.S. has one of the highest. For more information on world health differences, read *The Blue Zones* by Dan Buettner.

Myth #9. There are drugs that slow or stop the progress of dementia. Fact: Aducanumab from Biogen is the first medication developed to slow down the advance of Alzheimer's disease, but the FDA did not approve a clinical trial to test its effectiveness. All other drugs currently available are used to treat the symptoms of dementia – memory loss, sleep disturbances, troubling behaviors, etc. They do not affect the underlying brain changes and therefore will not change the overall course of the disease. Needless to say, there is no cure.

Myth #10. Alzheimer's is a modern disease; it didn't exist in the past. Fact: This is a tough one. Dr. Alois Alzheimer identified the disease in 1906 and described the brain changes he found on autopsy of a woman with the symptoms of dementia. The words "senility" and "dementia" were used prior to 1906, but people with these diagnoses were not counted until more modern times. Even in the last 100 years, it's been difficult to accurately gauge the prevalence. So, dementia existed, but we don't know with certainty if it's more common now than in the past.

Myth #11. "If you think you have Alzheimer's, you don't." Fact: We used to say this, believing that the memory loss associated with dementia would protect the afflicted person from realizing their deficits. However, we now know, unfortunately, this is not true.

Myth #12. If I'm diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, my life is over. Fact: Typically, a person with dementia can live meaningfully for many years by eating well, exercising, staying socially connected, keeping the mind active, and correcting any sight or hearing problems.

Myth #13. "Reality orientation" helps. Fact: When I started working with people with dementia, reality orientation was a popular method. It entailed repeating information over and over, such as "Today is Wednesday, it is 2020, and the weather is snowy." The premise was that constant repetition would help the person "learn" the correct data, but it caused more agitation than success. One of the most positive developments since the 1980s is effective care strategies for people struggling with the symptoms of dementia, including entering their reality instead of insisting they enter ours.

Myth #14. Since dementia is primarily a disease of older adults, no one cares about finding a cure. Fact: Although government funding has lagged behind that of other disorders, scientists and pharmaceutical companies are working diligently to find significant treatments and cures for dementia. With almost 50 million individuals with irreversible memory impairment worldwide, the researchers who uncover a cure will not only be rich, but also gain global acclaim.

NEWSLINC

Members Corner

Madelyn Smith: 100 Years Young by Mary-Jane Atwater

If you were to visit LOWLINC member Madelyn Smith on a typical day, you'd most likely find her watching multiple channels of TV news, working on a *New York Times* crossword puzzle, or chatting on Zoom with her lifelong friend, Gerri Fowler, whom Madelyn met at age four.

However, on November 28, those pursuits were sidelined as Madelyn celebrated her 100th birthday, in person with her local family and on Zoom with other family members and, of course, with Gerri Fowler, who will join Madelyn as a centenarian in March. Living to be 100 is remarkable and Madelyn herself is an inspiration. We had the opportunity to chat with her on Zoom a few days before her birthday.



Madelyn's high school graduation photo

Born Madelyn Stewart on November 28, 1920, Madelyn grew up in Rozelle, New Jersey, the only child of Frances and David Stewart. After graduating from high school in 1940, she earned a scholarship to attend Virginia State College (now Virginia State University), the state's first institution of higher learning for Black Americans, where she studied sociology. "I worked as a secretary while attending college, but I did plenty of partying, too," Madelyn admits with a grin.

After college graduation, Madelyn attended the University of Pittsburgh where she studied social work, but she had to leave before graduating to care for her mother, who had cancer. During this time, Madelyn met and married James H. Mosby. Madelyn's mother passed away at age 43, a few months before Donald Mosby (now Lovelace), the only child of Madelyn's marriage to James, was born.

When Madelyn's marriage to James ended in divorce, she returned to Pittsburgh and worked as a social worker in the Department of Social Services, followed by a move to Washington, D.C., where she was secretary to the president of American University and, later, secretary to the head of the physics department at Howard University. It was at Howard University that she met Carter Smith, who was working on his master's degree in physics with a mathematics minor. Madelyn and Carter married in 1953, moved to San Diego for Carter's job at General Dynamics as an aerospace engineer, and soon welcomed two children, Carter Jr. and Leslie.

When Carter and Leslie were young and Donald was a teenager, Madelyn was an active volunteer in her church and a women's auxiliary that raised funds for the non-profit San Diego Adoption Agency. For a few years, when the younger children were in middle school, she worked at San Diego State University and then as a social worker for the Department of Social Services. Throughout this time, she was drawn to politics and served as campaign manager for the first African-American elected to the San Diego School Board. "You can't get around politics," says Madelyn. "I got involved and helped with a number of campaigns."



Madelyn and Carter

The Smith home was the local gathering place on holidays and special occasions for other Black families who, like the Smiths, had no other family in San Diego. Madelyn recalls that she got "cooked out" from all the entertaining, but it's clear that she has many fond memories of the years in San Diego.

Cont'd on page 7

Madelyn Smith *(cont'd from page 6)*

When they retired, Madelyn and Carter, now 96, moved to be closer to Carter's mother and brother in Durham, NC, and then to Lake of the Woods in early 2020, where they live with their daughter and LOW-LINC board member Donalda M. Lovelace. Carter and Madelyn have four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

When asked which events during her lifetime stand out, Madelyn points to the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King. "We mourned their loss and looked for others to take their place as national leaders," says Madelyn. Her keen interest in both local and national politics has led to a lifelong interest in following the news. "I guess I'm a news junkie," she says. "My friends were news junkies, too. I like to be current on what's happening so there are no surprises." Madelyn says the people who most influenced her were Martin Luther King and local people active in politics. She points to the fax machine and computer as important inventions during her lifetime.



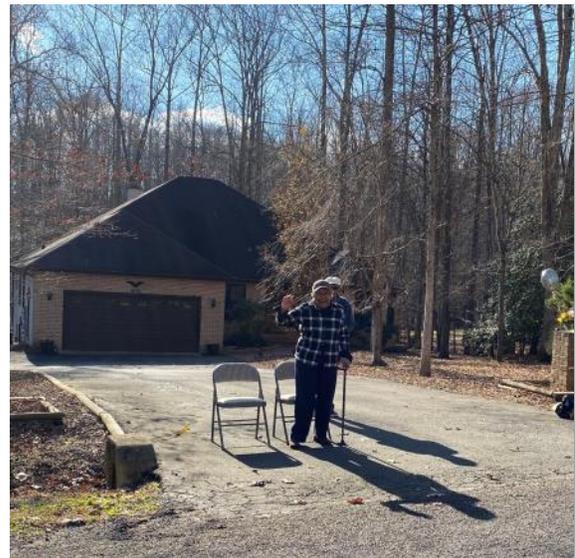
Madelyn and Carter at a birthday party several years ago.

Madelyn has some smart advice for living a long life: "It's a hard lesson, but don't take on more than you can do and certainly don't take on other people's problems. You may want to help, but sometimes helping can be overwhelming." Anticipating her birthday a few days after our interview, Madelyn said, "I'm going to spend my birthday loving my children, seeing friends, and enjoying life. I've got fantastic children and love being around them. I refuse to worry; Life is just too short to worry."

The LOWLINC family wishes Madelyn a very happy 100th birthday! LOW-LINC organized a celebratory drive-by on November 28, with honking horns, balloons, and lots of waves.



Cars line up as Carolyn Rourke passes out balloons for Madelyn's 100th birthday drive-by.



Madelyn waves during the birthday drive-by.

Did You Know?



... With a grant from Orange County CARES Act funding, LOWLINC purchased contactless thermometers and oximeters for member households. These medical devices are useful during telemedicine visits with health care providers and for home wellness checks. LOWLINC volunteers delivered them to members' homes in mid-December, packaged in a gift bag with name badges, a refrigerator magnet, and instructions for using the devices.

... With COVID-19 keeping many members at home and unable to celebrate the holidays with family and friends, LOWLINC volunteers prepared and delivered delicious and festive holiday dinners to our members -- 15 meals on Thanksgiving and 27 on Christmas Day.



... LOWLINC members met on October 22, 2020, for LOWLINC's Annual Meeting and welcomed Orange County Deputy Ron Kesner, who spoke about Orange County TRIAD programs for older adults.

... On January 6, 2021, LOWLINC co-founder and former board member Mary-Jane Atwater was elected to the board of the Village to Village Network (www.vtvnetwork.org). The Network is the national association of the village movement that provides expert guidance, resources, and support to help establish and sustain aging-in-community villages like LOWLINC.



LOWLINC Board:

- Emily Slunt, President/Board Chair
- John Beisheim, Vice President/Treasurer
- Carolyn Rourke, Secretary
- Vicky Fleming, Member
- Steve Hein, Member
- Donalda Lovelace, Member
- Jean McLallen, Member
- Mary Jane Oldham, Member
- Carol Simpson, Member

LOWLINC Committees and Programs:

- Communications: Steve Hein, Chair
- Fundraising and Donor Engagement: Carol Simpson, Chair
- Member Outreach: Ted Cryblskey and Carolyn Rourke, Co-chairs
- Preferred Service Providers
- Social Activities
- Volunteers: Mary Jane Oldham, Chair
- Member Intake Program: Donalda Lovelace, Lead

- Newsletter:** Mary-Jane Atwater, editor
- Carolyn Rourke: contributing editor
- Marilyn Davis, production and layout
- Elizabeth McGillicuddy, copy editor

LOWLINC (Lake of the Woods, Living Independently in Our Community), is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit fee-based service organization whose mission is to enable LOW's older residents to remain safely and independently at home. Our operating model is based on the nationwide village model.

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