



Village of Takoma Park Newsletter

July – September 2016

Helping Neighbors Age in Community

Message from the President

Dear members of the Village of Takoma Park,

There is a great tradition in American communities of mutual help. Our concept -- Neighbors Helping Neighbors Age in Community -- tells the members of The Village community that we are stronger together, that you are not alone, and that we can try to help you. The Village of Takoma Park aims to channel intergenerational support to senior neighbors and persons with disabilities who wish to live an active, dignified life, as part of our community, in their own residences. We emphasize companionship and mutual help, and want members to feel comfortable about continuing to live in their homes.



As we have developed The Village, the focus has been on seeking information about needs and creating responsive services. A primary need is transportation. We responded with VillageRides, which provides transportation to medical appointments, exercise classes, church, and shopping. The program is now supported by 28 volunteer drivers, but more are needed to respond to rapidly increasing demand. Informing people about resources for senior issues was another need, leading to our monthly seminars, now called "Aging Well Network". And to respond to social isolation, another expressed need, our Friendly Visitor program provides calls or visits, if requested. Currently we are exploring the feasibility of a small home repair program.

To develop programs for all these needs is not a simple process. Finding and training volunteers, developing and testing policies, finding grant support, obtaining insurance, scheduling services, and advertising for these services all take time. The Village of Takoma Park is grateful for the group of dedicated volunteers who help to make the services possible, as well as essential support from numerous agencies: the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Jewish Council for the Aging, Senior Connection, the Takoma Foundation, Montgomery County Council, the City Council of Takoma Park, and the City's Lifelong Takoma. We're also grateful for an infusion of energy and expertise into our leadership, with four talented individuals joining our Board.

- Wolfgang J. Mergner

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Facts and Figures:

Number of active members
(as of 8/20/16): 135

VillageRides Statistics for April – June 2016:
Total rides: 226
Volunteer hours: 138.5
Miles driven: 648

Number of volunteer drivers: 28
Number of riders: 60

Friendly Visitor volunteers paired with the homebound: 11

News Alert!

Effective September 1, call 301-646-2109 to request a ride through VillageRides (not 301-255-4212). Please update your phone book if you use this service!

VOLUNTEERS/SERVICES

Small Home Repairs

In response to a frequently expressed need, the Village of Takoma Park is preparing to offer small home repairs to its senior members. A Village member who requests a small home repair will receive a visit to evaluate the needed repair. If within the range of our volunteers' capabilities, the Village will recruit a volunteer to provide the service. If beyond the capabilities of volunteers, or beyond the scope of what we can provide, the Village will apply to the "Design for Life Coalition" (a newly-formed collaboration of the County's Dept. of Aging and Disability with Habitat for Humanity, the Seventh Day Adventist Church and Montgomery College design students and faculty), or will make other suggestions. If interested in volunteering, please email villageoftp@gmail.com to request more information. Members who volunteer will receive an orientation. More details will follow once we are ready to launch this service.

Friendly Visitors/Callers

The Village currently has 11 volunteers providing visits to Takoma Park seniors or homebound residents. Do you know someone who might welcome this service, or would you like to volunteer? If so, please contact the Village of Takoma Park at 301-646-2109 or email Sandy Egan at sandyeganretired@gmail.com.

Next orientation for Friendly Visitor volunteers:
Thursday, September 15, 2016, 1:00 – 2:30 PM
Takoma Park Community Center, Hydrangea Room.

"In February of this year, I met the person whom the Village had chosen for me to visit. Now, almost six months later, I am pleased to say that I have gotten to know a wonderfully warm, intelligent and friendly person. We enjoy talking about current events, our life experiences and our good fortune in each having a black cat. This has been a rewarding experience for me and I'm gratified that my new friend has told me the feeling is mutual."
- Friendly Visitor volunteer

VillageRides

"Now I won't have to go hungry!"
- Village member after receiving a ride to the grocery store from a VillageRides driver

The 226 rides provided in the 2nd quarter of 2016 reflected a 30% increase over the 1st quarter of 2016. The purposes of the 226 rides in April-June were categorized as "spiritual" (65), "social" (47), "medical" (43), "shopping" (42), "personal" (14) and "community events" (15).

Hats off to volunteer Clair Garman, our most active driver, who volunteered for over 79 rides between April and June. Sandy Egan, tireless and dedicated coordinator of volunteers, is a close second with 44 rides during that period. Clair is 3rd from the right in the photo and Sandy is on the far left.



To learn more, to volunteer and/or to register for or request a ride, call 301-646-2109.

Next orientation for VillageRides drivers:
Tuesday, September 13, 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Takoma Park Community Center, Lilac Room.
Call 301-646-2109 to register.

Note that Village membership is required for both drivers and riders, due to insurance regulations.

EVENTS

INDEPENDENCE DAY: It didn't rain on our parade!



Kudos to Village President Wolfgang Mergner, Board member Kathie Baker, Volunteer Coordinator Sandy Egan, and Cherwanda Oliver for representing the Village of Takoma Park in the City's annual Independence Day Parade, which went on as scheduled despite threats of heavy rain. Sandy led the way behind the wheel of her "VillageRides" car, followed by Wolfgang and Kathie on foot with the Village banner, Cherwanda, and a group from the POSNA (Parents of Special Needs Adults) support group.

AGING WELL NETWORK EVENTS:

Despite the lack of availability of the Community Center during June and July, the Planning Committee succeeded in lining up alternate sites for Aging Well events. Many thanks to the Committee and the many volunteers who helped with the logistics of these events – food, setting up tables and chairs, etc.

JUNE:

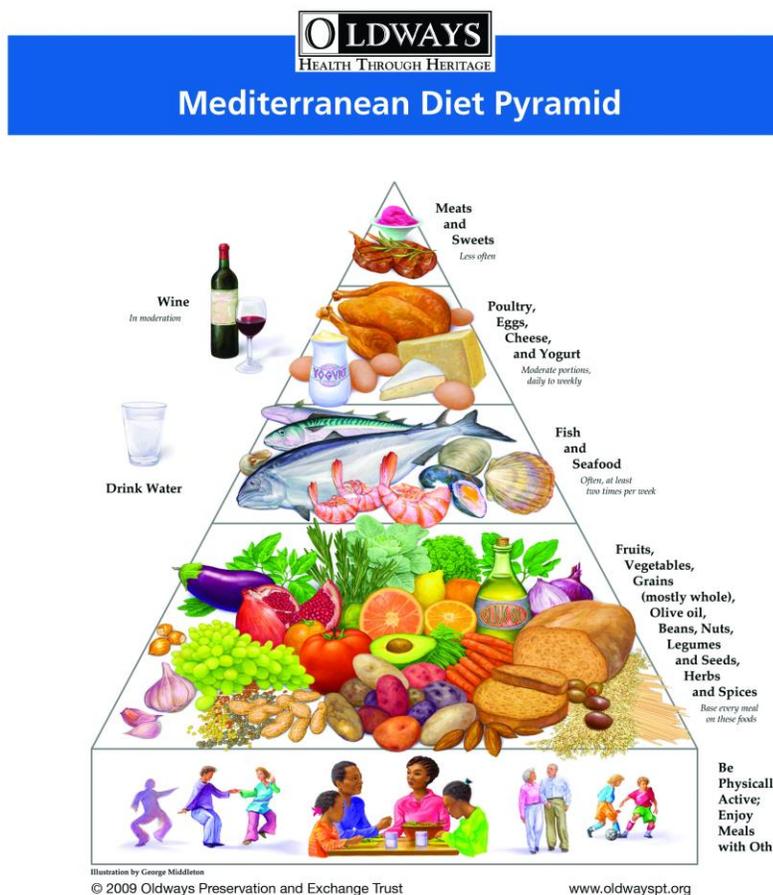
On June 28, about 28 people gathered at the meeting room in Hampshire Tower Apartments for a discussion led by Diane Vance of the Alzheimer's Association. Ms. Vance provided a variety of informative handouts -- one on the benefits of the Mediterranean diet; a workbook from the Alzheimer's Association entitled "Healthy Living for your Brain and Body; Tips from the Latest Research"; and a sheet describing factors that increase or decrease the risk of cognitive decline.

Her tips for offsetting or delaying cognitive decline:

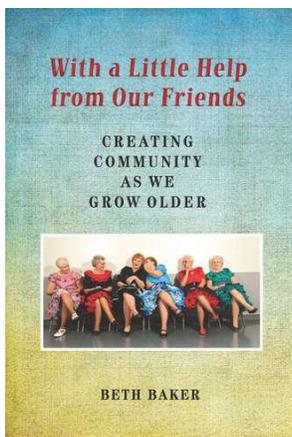
- 1) Stay physically active
- 2) Eat wisely (e.g., the Mediterranean Diet)
- 3) Keep your brain active
- 4) Socialize and maintain relationships

Want to test your mental fitness and exercise your brain? Check out the free online games and assessments at the AARP website:

stayingsharp.aarp.org/games



JULY:



The July meeting took place at Heffner Park Community Center on Tuesday, July 26. Over forty people ventured out in record-breaking heat for a dynamic discussion led by Takoma Park author Beth Baker on the subject of her 2014 book *With a Little Help from our Friends; Creating Community as We Grow Older*.

Beth spoke about a variety of housing arrangements for elders, some of which bring services to the facility -- housing cooperatives; home sharing; and co-housing. One of her favorite models is a non-profit organized by Generations of Hope. Elders move into a community where families are adopting foster children. The families and the elders work together to form a supportive community in which to raise the children. Everyone benefits. A nearby example is Genesis House on Georgia Ave in Washington, DC. It opened in December 2015. www.genesisdc.org

She also talked about informal examples of neighborhoods organizing to provide mutual assistance, her own Takoma Park neighborhood of Sherman Avenue being an excellent example. That street has a longstanding tradition of neighbors coming together to support each other. One resident, a recent victim of a badly broken ankle, was transported to the meeting by a Village of Takoma Park VillageRides driver, and described how her neighbors have been helping her, checking on her, bringing her groceries and prepared food, and providing transportation.

A couple who attended the session shared their feeling of isolation in their Takoma Park condominium and their concern about being able to continue to afford to live there. The Director of Housing Programs with CHEER (Community Health & Empowerment through Education & Research) connected with the couple and a Village Board Member who lives in the same condominium and discussed the possibility of organizing a meeting to help bring residents together.

Many thanks to Beth Baker for sharing her knowledge and insights and for leading a stimulating and fruitful conversation. For more information about Beth, her book, and this topic, see www.bethbaker.net and her "Aging in Community" blog at nextavenue.org/writer/beth-baker. *With a Little Help from Our Friends* is available for sale, or you can borrow a copy at the Takoma Park Maryland Library (call number 362.16 BAKER).

AUGUST:

The August meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 30, from 10 am to 12 noon. **Topic:** "Role of Physical Exercise in Aging Well." **Presenter:** Fitness instructor Kent Brown. **Location:** Takoma Adventist Church Center's Fellowship Hall, 6810 Eastern Ave., Washington, DC (on the Southeast corner of Laurel and Eastern).

Meetings of the "Aging Well Network" are held monthly, usually on the last Tuesday of the month from 10 am to noon, and are a collaboration between the Village of Takoma Park and Lifelong Takoma. They cover a wide variety of topics of interest to elders and provide an opportunity for gathering with other community members, enjoying simple food and discussing common interests and issues.

Look for more details in emails to members and on the Village's website (villageoftakomapark.com), Facebook page (facebook.com/villageoftakomapark), and the Lifelong Takoma website at takomaparkmd.gov/government/lifelong-takoma/.

Have ideas for topics or potential speakers? Email Karen Maricheau at kmaricheau@takomaparkmd.gov.

ABOUT VILLAGES

If you have questions about “The Village” — what it is, how it started, its goals and activities, and about “villages” in general – you are not alone. Here’s some background information:

Origins of the Village Movement

The beginnings of The Village concept are generally attributed to the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts, in 2001-2002. A group of neighbors and friends worked together to provide access to activities and services to support residents’ desire to stay in their own homes as they aged, and their lifestyles and needs changed. The Village movement is a consumer-driven, grassroots effort that is growing rapidly. According to Village to Village Network, there are now 205 active villages and 150 in development in the U.S., with some in other nations as well.

What Do Villages Do?

All Villages share a primary goal: to provide support that helps people remain in their homes and connected to their communities as they age and their needs change. A core value for Villages is an essential respect for the dignity, and optimal functioning and involvement, of their consumers. Villages have many different models for organization and services, which generally include providing information about and referral to services; creating collaboration between individuals, groups, and agencies; and recruiting, training, and utilizing volunteers. Villages are generally created by elders for elders, and are self-governing and self-supporting. They also generally charge some sort of membership fee to help cover expenses. Fees vary greatly from Village to Village, depending on how that Village is organized, including whether they have paid staff or are run by volunteers, and the services provided.

Origins of the Village of Takoma Park

The origins of the Village of Takoma Park can be traced to Takoma Park residents Wolfgang and Gertrud Mergner’s involvement with the County’s Senior Mediation Program, and their emerging sense that it was not actually conflicts that presented a problem for seniors, but more the lack of access to resources. They decided, therefore, to conduct a breakfast meeting to learn about Takoma Park seniors’ needs. They began by talking to the City Administration and Mayor, and then, in September 2011, invitations were sent out for a breakfast meeting. To their surprise, 69 seniors came, formed a large circle, and they all talked. All of their statements were recorded, and those statements became the basis for a plan. That first meeting evolved into a monthly event, initially called “Seniors and Those Who Care for Them,” and now known as “The Aging Well Network”. And thus, the Village began.

According to the Mergners, there were many people who supported the beginning in a variety of ways, but what most carried the idea forward was the spirit of those who attended the meetings. The result is a vibrant and rapidly growing organization, The Village of Takoma Park, an all-volunteer, grassroots organization of neighbors helping neighbors.

Learn more

As Villages expand and grow, so does literature describing them. Here is a small selection (including works by local authors Beth Baker and Jane Bennett Clark). You'll find them all listed (with links) on the Village of Takoma Park website. Look for the "Resources" page and click on "About Villages".

Tara Bahrapour, "Through a growing number of senior villages in the D.C. area, aging in place becomes easier," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 6, 2014. wpo.st/egVs1

Beth Baker, "The Village: Neighbors Helping Neighbors" in *With a Little Help from our Friends: Creating Community as we Grow Older* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014), pp. 29-39.

Beth Baker, "Will We Really Be Able to Age in Place? New models of support for aging Americans show promise," August 18, 2015, nextavenue.org/will-we-really-be-able-to-age-in-place/

Jane Bennett Clark, "The Benefits of Retirement Villages," *Kiplinger's Personal Finance*, November 2015.

Kerry Hannon, "Washington: The ideal place to grow older," *The New York Times*, July 20, 2016. nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/washington-the-ideal-place-to-grow-older.html

Wikipedia contributors, "Elder village," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elder_village (accessed August 18, 2016).

Websites

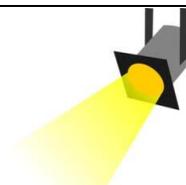
Montgomery County Dept. of Health and Human Services provides information on the village movement. montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/Villages/resources.html

Village to Village Network (VTV) is a national membership organization created to help communities establish and manage their own villages. See their website for more details on the history of the Village movement and its core principles. vtvnetwork.org

Washington Area Villages Exchange (WAVE) is a consortium of local Villages that meets regularly to share ideas, resources and support. wavevillages.org

SPOTLIGHT ON THE BOARD

Meet four newly elected Village board members! Together and individually, they bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the Village leadership.



Marisa Cruz is a senior medical officer working in health policy at the Food and Drug Administration. She has worked in both local and federal government on a wide range of public policy and public health issues, focusing on advocacy for vulnerable populations. Marisa remains active in clinical care as an adult endocrinologist, and through this work has developed an interest in the health challenges facing seniors. Although they are relatively recent transplants to the Takoma Park area after seven years in San Francisco, Marisa and her family have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know and contributing to this community.

Joseph Khabbaz, a native of Sydney, Australia, worked as a Chartered Accountant (CPA's equivalent) for a leading Australian accountancy firm before leaving the corporate world to study at the Andrews Theological Seminary for the ministry. He now serves as Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Sligo Church. He and his wife Christina enjoy overseas mission trips, playing basketball and spending quality time with family and friends.



Ruth McGoff is originally from Massachusetts, where she worked for seventeen years within the Child Welfare system and had management responsibility for the State's adoption and residential programs for foster care children. Ruth has been a resident of Takoma Park for over thirty years. During that time she served as Director of Social Services and Case Management at the Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington, Virginia. She was also a Board member at the Arlington Free Clinic for ten years and was active on their fundraising committee.

Retired since 2013, she participates in the Village of Takoma Park's Friendly Visitor program and, as a Board member of The Village, hopes to use her knowledge of social services programs to assist members of the Takoma Park community.

Laurie Welch has lived in Takoma Park for 31 years. She is a physician who has worked for many years to diagnose and treat occupational disease in workers and to identify occupational diseases through early detection medical screening programs. She has also conducted research to identify new diseases and better understand how to change the workplace to prevent disease. She has volunteered for more than a decade as a physician with Mobile Medical Care, an organization that provides care for uninsured low income Montgomery County residents, and for 3 years served as medical director, also as a volunteer. She has been on the board of several non-profits, including Lumina Studio Theater of Takoma Park. Laurie is eager to offer her expertise and energy to the Village of Takoma Park, to help towards a sustainable program to support our diverse community.



Watch the Village website and future newsletters for more board profiles.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

JOIN OR RENEW:

Sign up or renew online at our website – villageoftakomapark.com.
Don't have access to a computer?
Call 301-646-2109 to request a membership form.
Membership dues are \$10 per year per member.
Pay online at our secure site or mail your check to:
Village of Takoma Park, c/o 104 Tulip Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912

VOLUNTEER:

Volunteers are essential to the success of the Village.
There are two types of volunteering, both important:

- Direct service to members
- Volunteering to help the organization

In most cases you may serve on a regular or periodic basis, giving as much or as little time as fits your schedule. Anyone age 18 or older is welcome.

Note: Our insurance coverage requires that all volunteers join as members as well.
Let us know if the \$10 annual dues are a hardship.

To volunteer, go to villageoftakomapark.com, **Join** and **Member Signup**.
Then contact Sandra Egan at 301-646-2109 or sandyeganretired@gmail.com.

SUPPORT:

Village of Takoma Park is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organization.
We rely on grants and donations to supplement income from dues.
All contributions are tax-deductible.

Donate online by credit card at villageoftakomapark.com or send a check payable to
Village of Takoma Park, c/o 104 Tulip Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912.

We greatly appreciate your support.

Mission Statement:

Village of Takoma Park's mission is to provide intergenerational support to seniors and persons with disabilities who wish to live actively in the Takoma Park community by:

- providing assistance, advice and neighborly support;
- facilitating access to needed service providers;
- advocating on behalf of Village members and informing them about relevant issues and policies;
- organizing and managing Village volunteers who provide services and assistance; and
- collaborating with the Lifelong Takoma program, Montgomery County, and other organizations

Officers

President: Wolfgang Mergner
Vice-President: vacant
Secretary: Martha Feldman
Treasurer: Gertrud Mergner

Additional Board Members

Pazit Aviv
Kathie Baker
Marisa Cruz
Doris Duarte
Andy Kelemen
Joseph Khabbaz
Erwin Mack
Ruth McGoff
Laurie Welch

The Advisory Board

Bruce Baker
Seth Grimes
Peter Kovar
Moses Wilds
Deborah Zuckerman

Ex Officio

Paula Lisowski
Karen Maricheau

Committee Chairs

Communications: Linda Carlson
Finance: Hank Prenskey
Membership: Wolfgang Mergner
Programs: Karen Maricheau
Service Delivery: vacant
Volunteers: Sandra Egan

Newsletter editors

Linda Carlson and Paula Ottinger

The Village of Takoma Park has fostered the development of two support groups and helps to promote them.

Movement Disorder Support Group. Contact wolfgang.mergner@gmail.com or 301-646-2109.

Parents of Special Needs Adults (POSNA). Contact Mary Jane Muchui at muchui@aol.com.