

VILLAGE OF TAKOMA PARK NEWSLETTER, # 4, October 2015



NEWS:

2nd Lifelong Takoma Day, October 10, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM. If you need help getting there, the Village can give you a ride. Call [301-646-2109](tel:301-646-2109).

Mark's Kitchen holds a fundraiser for the Village of Takoma Park on Tuesday, October 20. If you eat lunch or dinner there, 15% of the proceeds will be donated to the Village of Takoma Park, helping the Village so it can deliver its services. Please mark your calendar.

Takoma Park Street Festival has been rescheduled for Sunday, October 18, 2015. Stop by our booth to get a free refrigerator magnet!

When the Journey Calls for a Ride by Trey Johanson, VillageRides, a project of the Jewish Council for the Aging, tjohanson@AccessJCA.org, [301-255-4247](tel:301-255-4247)

Need to get around: When Seniors no longer drive, life can shut down in a hurry. Victoria (not her real name) has managed a degenerative chronic illness her entire adult lifetime. But, last month she did not have the strength to push down on the brake pedal and "luckily" crashed into a telephone pole, injuring no one but the car. Until that moment Victoria could go where she wanted whenever she wanted, like most of us. Gradually or in the blink of an eye, many of us will find our freedom of movement limited as we enter the "Third Age." Living in the DC area, we are fortunate to have a full menu of transportation options. However, for some it's not so easy just to switch to the Metro. The same physical and cognitive limitations that make driving dangerous for some seniors can also rule out most public transportation.

Using a walker: "What about the lady who has a walker?" asks Clair Garman, a Volunteer Driver for the Village of Takoma Park. "Effectively, she has to run a marathon to get to a bus stop at the end of her street." For a person who is physically frail or who is cognitively impaired, what's needed is a little help from family, friends, and neighbors. With the loss of transportation independence, maintaining a social life, taking part in recreational activities, going to worship, and running basic errands like grocery shopping and trips to the doctor suddenly become logistical nightmares. So, when your elderly parent or grandparent needs a ride, where do they turn? If you're available, of course they can turn to you. But, family caregivers quickly learn that they cannot do *everything*. If you can't help, either because you are overwhelmed or because you live too far away, who can?

Villages: All over the country, elderly Seniors are turning to neighbor-to-neighbor support networks, called "Villages," to help them continue to live in the homes and communities they know and love. And, the service they request the most is transportation. It's no wonder. Getting out of your home can literally save your life. Research studies have

determined that the elderly are about one and a half times more likely to die earlier than expected if they are socially isolated. (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, vol. 110 no. 15, Andrew Steptoe, April 2013, 5797–5801)

Fear of isolation: Of the top fears about aging in America, men's #4 aging fear is “Losing Wheels” and women’s #5 fear is “Being Dependent on Others” (Paula Spencer Scott, caring.com). Both men and women alike dread becoming a burden. While for many men independence is a value on its own, for many women, who have traditionally been caregivers, the prospect of a role reversal is especially uncomfortable. The physical and cognitive limitations that can occur when we grow older should not be a barrier to having *choice and control* over the quality of your life, or be a reason to move out of your own home. Many older people just need a little help and support with daily tasks in order to lead full, active and safe lives. In March of this year, Beth Baker, author of “With a Little Help from our Friends: Creating Community as We Grow Older” responded online to a March 5th Washington Post article by Fredrick Kunkle, She wrote...

“As I like to say, aging-in-place is only as good as the place you're aging in. What if it leaves you isolated and lonely? What if it's inaccessible, if you have mobility problems? What if you can't get to a store or the library? ... a better goal is aging-in-community-- however we define that. Whether neighbors helping neighbors, house-sharing, co-housing--there are all sorts of promising choices out there.”

Transportation a number one issue: Again and again, we hear it and, a 2013 Montgomery County survey of Senior Villages confirmed that the most requested service in Senior Villages is transportation (Montgomery County Commission on Aging, Summer Study 2013—Survey of Senior Villages). When it’s time to turn over the car keys, the reality of available transportation means planning well in advance and scheduling plenty of time for routine trips.

Social Isolation: The need for transportation is a daily one. Can you imagine how you might feel if you needed to ask for rides every day? Can you imagine being a caregiver or volunteer coordinator who is asked for rides you cannot provide? Sadly, our elders often face social isolation in addition to the natural, physical limitations of aging. The success story is that Volunteer Drivers in the Metropolitan Washington area do provide thousands of free rides each year, enhancing the quality of life for our elderly and disabled neighbors. And, Village Seniors know that their community volunteers are dedicated, compassionate neighbors who will treat them like family. So this article ends with an appeal. Begin, *simply begin*, to be a part of the solution by volunteering to give “the Gift of a Lift” to Seniors in your community. If you’re one of those people who thinks you’re just too busy to volunteer, this is your chance to make a big difference! Can you provide just one ride per month? Every ride helps!

To find out how you can help, call **VillageRides at [301-255-4212](tel:301-255-4212)**. **VillageRides** is a program of the Jewish Council for the Aging®, funded by the Transportation Planning Board of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The program serves people of all faiths, ethnicities and walks of life. **The Village of Takoma Park has offered 298 rides to residents of Takoma Park since October 2014.**

The Villages that offer Village Rides: (1.) Village of Takoma Park, (2.) Bannockburn Community, (3.) Burning Tree Village, (4.) Olney Home for Life, (5.) Potomac Community Village, (6.) Silver Spring Village, (7.) Wyngate Village

If you are seeking rides for a Montgomery County resident **who does not live** in or near one of these Villages, please contact Connect-a-Ride for available transportation options. The Connect-a-Ride number is [301-738-3252](tel:301-738-3252).

Takoma Park Volunteers call [301-646-2109](tel:301-646-2109), it is a gratifying gift.