



Letter from Maureen Grannan, Newton at Home Executive Director, published in the ***Newton Tab*** March 22, 2017

Marian Knapp is correct in her assessment of the growing social isolation among Newton’s aging population. ([TAB editorial, March 8](#)) She states that there are several ways to counter this isolation from big community initiatives replete with a broad range of programs and social opportunities to individual neighborly efforts. But as she points out, the latter are frequently ineffective because many seniors are not open to taking advantage of them. At Newton at Home we have had great success in overcoming this barrier by marrying the two approaches in one comprehensive initiative. In essence it is an expansion of Ms. Knapp’s neighbor helping neighbor model. And it works.

Newton at Home, a private nonprofit membership organization for seniors living in Newton, harnesses the dedication of more than 100 community volunteers (neighbors helping neighbors) who can serve as valuable bridges to the wide range of social opportunities, connections and services we provide. Many of our members join because they seek transportation, help with grocery shopping, or minor home maintenance and repairs. Our volunteer “neighbors” deliver these services.

For those who are unable to get out, volunteers can make home visits or offer friendly daily check-in calls. Our volunteer Winter Buddies are in contact with members during storms and make sure they are prepared in advance. These one to one connections with caring volunteers are the secret to breaking down that isolation that is so prevalent in the lives of many seniors in our city.



It is true that it can sometimes be hard for people in this age group to form relationships or ask for assistance. But we have found that our volunteers are our best enticers. Many have built very personal relationships with the members they serve and provide the extra encouragement some folks require to take that big step through the front door.

We have a wealth of social resources for seniors in Newton – not just at Newton at Home, but at our senior center, our library, our department of Parks and Recreation, our YMCA and much more. But getting seniors to these resources, as Ms. Knapp suggests, isn't always easy. Volunteering in one of the local agencies that serve seniors and building those personal relationships is an excellent first step. I urge individuals, families and groups to set aside some time to assist a senior. It is an enriching experience for all!!

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