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Newton at Home has been organized to enable Newton residents to age at home comfortably, independently, and with peace of mind through a membership-based organization that offers access to comprehensive practical services and fosters social support and a sense of community.

For more information call 617-795-2560 or go to <http://newtonathome.org>

Letter from our Acting Executive Director

Greetings,

As we begin to move away for the holiday season into the cold, but hopefully bright, days of January, I encourage you to develop your New Year's resolutions of getting out more. Participate in NAH events and become an active NAH volunteer, working with members, or in the office, or serving on a NAH committee.



However, for the inevitable snowy times, we have created the Newton

at Home Winter Buddy Program. Winter Buddies will call their neighbors as a storm approaches to make sure they have necessary supplies and then check back as the storm passes to see if all is well at their house. We are still looking for volunteers to make calls and for members who would like a friendly check-in. In Massachusetts, winter lasts well beyond the beginning of January so there is plenty of time to be part of this program. If you would like to participate, please contact Bonnie Katz at 617-244-0694 or email her at bkatzdesign@gmail.com. This is one

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Students repair objects and build connections

By Naomi Shore

Carpentry students at Newton North High School, led by their instructor Garrett Tingle, are using their training to benefit Newton at Home members. In the process, they are learning that it's "cool" to give back to the

community. Tingle explains that going off site to a member's home "is a terrific problem solving exercise" for his students. At the same time it "conveys to an older generation of citizens of Newton that we know you are out there and we want to help



Angelo Cedrone junior NNHS is fabricating a rail system for the Dauwalters and (inset) Mike Ethier and Angelo Cedrone have just completed installing a cellar sash for member Virginia Gross

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Acting Executive Director *(Cont'd)*

more way that we promote connections between our volunteers and our members to build community for everyone.

I want to report briefly on the excellent Annual Meeting that we had in December (see photos on page 4). I was struck by the energy and enthusiasm pervading the room. President Tamara Bliss introduced the professional staff and the 2012 Board of Directors, which includes three new members. We reviewed and made available our Financial Report, for fiscal year 2011, July 2010 – June 2011. Garrett Tingle spoke about the partnership between the Newton North High School Carpentry Program and NAH (see article on page 1).

We then divided into eight discussion groups so that each person could have the chance to answer three questions: 1. What do you like best about Newton at Home? 2. What is one thing we could improve upon? 3. What are three activities or program ideas that you would most like us to provide?

We are still thinking about all the responses we received and how we can implement your very constructive ideas and suggestions. If you were unable to be there for the discussions, we encourage you to answer the three questions and send your responses to NAH.

Here are some of the recurring themes that we heard.

Many people like their volunteering experience best and members expressed appreciation for all the ways volunteers had helped them. Many also like the “cheerful” responses to their phone calls and the care and concern evidenced by the staff and volunteers in the office and in the field. Overwhelmingly, the service people most appreciate are the rides, both to medical appointments and to cultural events. Several also mentioned the museum trips and other cultural activities.

Areas we could improve include recruiting more volunteers to lead classes, to provide advice on financial matters in a one-on-one setting, to become walking partners. Some suggested that we use more electronic and social media methods to find volunteers and remind members of upcoming events. Several thought that our handling of the service provider list could use some change, such as more recommendations, more vetting, and more feedback. There was also a request

Students build connection *(Cont'd)*

you out with our skills.”

When NAH members contact the office with requests for repairs that involve carpentry skills. Tingle and two of his students go out to the home. Under his guidance, students provide an estimate for time and for the materials they have priced at a local lumber yard. By mid-December, the students had looked at five jobs and completed two of them. They plan to continue doing this, at least one day a week, all year.

So far they have encountered a variety of repairs, including replacing a rotted out cellar window frame, building an exterior hand rail, and repairing a sticking door. One of the more unusual requests came from Maggie Blacher who had a very old wooden music stand that she needed lowered. She was greatly attached to this music stand, but it had always been too high for her to play her violin comfortably. The students took the stand back to the shop at the high school and made the necessary adjustments.

Maggie reports that it is now perfect!

“This program is a real jewel,” says Acting Executive Director Maureen Grannan. Feedback from NAH members for whom the students have worked has been uniformly positive and the students understand that they are offering a very valued service.

The carpentry program is our first intergenerational program, but NAH plans to develop several more.

Before the students even left school for members’ homes, Julie Plaut Mahoney, our Coordinator of Volunteers, went to the high school and conducted a comprehensive training session for about 30 students. She reports that the students asked good questions and genuinely seemed excited about a chance to help the older generation.

Julie emphasizes that intergenerational volunteering includes NAH members giving something back to the kids, too, and to each other. “One of our ethical goals as an organization is to encourage all of our members

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Help us assure that Newton at Home not only grows but thrives. Please send your tax deductible check to NAH by mailing it to:

Newton at Home
206 Waltham Street West Newton, MA 02465

Volunteer Spotlight

By Naomi Shore

Thanks to all of our dedicated and talented volunteers, 90% of members' requests are fulfilled by volunteers.

Carol Connolly

Carol is both an NAH member and a very active volunteer. She says that she truly enjoys spending one-on-one time with our members as she drives them to medical appointments at local medical centers, from Newton-Wellesley Hospital, to Mass Eye and Ear, and in between. Sometimes, she not only drives but sits in on the appointment to become a second set of ears.



Driving to appointments occasionally brings an added benefit besides good conversation. While one of her passengers was being seen by her doctor in Cambridge, Carol got a chance to wander around and explore an interesting area she had not been through recently. Another time, after an appointment in Brookline, she and her passenger both decided to stop at the farmer's market on their way back to the member's home.

For a good while, Carol had a standing date once a week to go walking for two hours with a gentleman in his 90s. They covered all sorts of topics as they walked, and Carol marveled at his active mind. In general, she finds that her interactions with our members have enriched her. She is awed by how members in their late 80 and 90s have retained their enthusiasm and zest for life and are engaged with the world. Being with them "makes me feel like a kid again."

Carol is very flexible in her time commitment to volunteering and says "whenever they call, if I can, I do it."

Tom Battillo

Tom started volunteering for Newton at Home in July. He has been out of work and was looking for something to do while assessing his life. His wife learned about NAH first and thinking it might appeal to him told him about the need for volunteers. He reports that she was right. This kind of direct service gives him great satisfaction, while sitting on committees and talking about issues does not.



Tom frequently drives NAH members to the airport and also drives people to a wide variety of places, including medical appointments and the theater. He does some handyman work, brings things down from the attic, puts heavy items in a car, takes in lawn furniture. In all these interactions, Tom finds our members to be interesting and nice. An added benefit is that his assigned tasks take him into areas of Newton he otherwise would not visit. He adds that seeing so many members set off on international trips is inspirational.

Tom gets his volunteer assignments through a phone call or email. He estimates that he is able to respond positively about dozen times a month, and he looks forward to continuing to volunteer for NAH.

New After-Hours Service

Newton at Home has arranged for HouseWorks to provide homecare services such as personal care, home-making, medication assistance, etc., to members who encounter unexpected situations at times when the NAH office is closed. Based in Newton, HouseWorks has provided home-care services to other villages and other clients in the Boston and Washington, DC areas for over ten years.

Under its agreement with NAH, HouseWorks will provide after-hours coverage for calls made to the NAH office on evenings, weekends, and holidays. It will notify NAH staff of calls placed by our members. In addition, NAH members will be able to arrange urgent home-care services directly from HouseWorks at a 10 percent discount. We expect the details involved in implementing the agreement to be worked out in the near future, and we will have more information for members at that time.

Acting Executive Director *(Cont'd)*

for a members' column in our newsletter so members could offer tips to others.

Additional program and activity suggestions included setting up various kinds of book clubs to answer different needs, and more cultural trips. Another proposal was to create a member roster to enable NAH members to find other members in their neighborhood. There were many valuable suggestions and we are continuing our review and our planning process for the future.

Sincerely,

Maureen Grannan, RN, MS
Acting Executive Director

What We've Heard from You ...

Edith Goldberg: "You wouldn't have believed the scene at my house yesterday! Tom and Joe hauling all kinds of things out of my attic for donations to Big Brothers. Then a car arrived with nine girls, rakes, leaf bags and a leaf blower! They raked and blew my whole yard and then Joe came back this morning to tidy up a couple of spots that he was not happy with. I am so grateful for all of the help and support!"



(L) Sarah Plaut Mahoney and (R) Gabrielle Gilpin rake leaves

Sylvia Lehrich: "Cathy Paris was so wonderful! She really helped me organize all of my things so that I can find everything now. She was so pleasant and helpful."

Rhona Swartz: "I just wanted to say thank you for a wonderful, wonderful day (Peabody-Essex Museum trip). Bob Lerner, our driver is quite charming. Thank you again for all of the planning that went into that trip. I know that everyone enjoyed it."

Kathy Mccarty: "What a great job Ryan did helping me with my computer problems."

Students build connection *(Cont'd)*

to find ways that they can give back to others and by doing so build our community," says Julie. And that is happening. For example, Maggie told Tingle and his students that she had an elaborate wooden swing set in her back yard that they would be welcome to take and deconstruct to help them learn about its making. Tingle plans to pick it up soon.

Another member spoke to Tingle about welding equipment. She is an artist whose medium is welded steel. Her eyesight has become impaired so she would like help finishing her last projects. Tingle has promised to get the welding instructor at the high school involved to help her finish her pieces as she would like, and she, in turn, has said that she will donate her equipment.

Some other NAH members are talking to Tingle about mentoring students in skills related to starting and running a small business. We expect the connections between our members and the students at the high school will continue to grow as this program continues.

Photos from our Annual Meeting

L-R: *Duscha Weisskopf, Glenn Morris, Carol Connolly, Renata Selig, Frank Stieger and Sue Flicop. (Reading) Waltrud Lampe*

