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Our Mission

Newton at Home is a grassroots organization currently in the planning stage. Our mission is to enable Newton residents to age at home comfortably, safely, 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.

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President's Letter

During the early conversations about Newton at Home, our founders sought to establish a membership-based organization that would provide social and cultural activities, vetted preferred providers, and the convenience of connecting to a broad range of programs and services with just one phone call. Since then we've been developing the specifics of this initial vision, and I'm pleased once again to share our ongoing progress toward our goal. In April we announced NAH's annual membership fees: \$660 (\$55 per month) for individuals and \$780 (\$65 per month) for households of two or more. These fees were determined after an extensive study of the services and fees of existing Villages and detailed projections of the expenses needed to operate NAH. Our fees are on a par with those of other Villages offering similar services. Any household in Newton in which at least one member is 60 years of age or older will be eligible for NAH membership. NAH is committed to a Membership Plus program, which will offer reduced-rate memberships to residents with modest incomes and will include a voucher to be used for services.

The cycle of funding a Village has three phases. In the initial concept phase, expenses are minimal and are covered by the founders; after launch, expenses are much higher and are paid for through membership fees and some fundraising. In our current development phase, however, we are incurring a fair number of expenses such as printing, technology, and insurance. In

addition, we need to hire an executive director and rent office space at least four months before we launch. Yet donations still remain our only funding source.

Not only do we need to cover these pre-launch expenses, but the experience of other Villages indicates that we will need about \$100,000 in the bank before NAH can open. So far we have raised \$12,000, and we are planning a major fundraising campaign that will enable us to raise the rest of our startup funds in the next six months.

To be successful in our fundraising, we will be seeking 10 to 15 gifts of a minimum of \$5,000, dozens of medium-size gifts between \$1,500 and \$5,000, and many smaller gifts. Larger gifts may be paid off over more than one year. Members of the NAH Board and Fundraising Committee will be speaking with potential donors in the next few months. We are also committed to raising additional funds for our Membership Plus program that will enable lower-income seniors to join NAH.

You can support our fundraising by participating in our Membership Deposit Campaign.

As the first step in our fundraising drive, NAH recently launched a Membership Deposit Campaign to demonstrate to potential donors that there is significant interest among Newton residents for the services and activities NAH is planning. We are now asking you as prospective members to indicate your desire to join NAH by making

President's Letter (Continued)

a small deposit toward your future membership. You can participate in this campaign by sending us a check for \$50, which will be held in escrow and applied toward your membership fee if and when you join. Our goal is to have 100 deposits, and I am delighted to report that the initial response has been very positive; we received 40 deposits within two weeks of announcing the campaign at our April 6th community forum. If you would like to make a membership deposit, please send a check for \$50 to PO Box 590033, Newton 02459, mark the check as "member deposit," and include your name,

address, and email. Please consider making a membership deposit. It will greatly facilitate our fundraising efforts and help us meet our goal of opening for business in early 2011.

As always, if you have suggestions, questions, or would like to volunteer, send me an email at president@newtonathome.org.

Many thanks for your continued interest and support.

Tamara J. Bliss, President

A Glimpse of What's To Come

by Dorothy Anger

Preferred Provider Services

This is the second in a series of articles highlighting various services and opportunities that Newton at Home members will enjoy.

We've all experienced them: those unforeseen events that demand timely professional help. A water heater that suddenly dies, a fall on the ice that makes driving impossible, a cleaning lady who cancels just before out-of-town guests are due to arrive. Life is full of unexpected surprises, and sometimes we don't know where to turn for help.

Not so if you are a member of NAH! Because with just one phone call to the NAH referral desk, you will be able to tap into our extensive list of reliable, reasonably priced service providers who can solve your problem quickly and efficiently. We call it "Preferred Provider Services," and you won't find it anywhere else. That's because NAH will not only pre-screen and check references on each and every provider on our list, we will also suggest specific vendors based on your particular needs and requirements.

While Preferred Provider Services can be great in a pinch, it will be an indispensable resource for countless other occasions as well. Need someone to prune those overgrown shrubs, remodel the bathroom, drive you to a family celebration, cut your hair at home, fix that faulty electrical switch, or wash your windows? For most requested services, we will be able to recommend one or more providers who can deliver the quality services you need, many offering discounts that NAH will negotiate in advance.

How will we build this dream list of reliable vendors? We plan to start by asking hundreds of Newton residents like you to give us the names of their most reliable electricians, plumbers, landscapers, tax preparers, beauticians, contractors, caterers, home health care agencies, and other service providers. Once we receive these valued recommendations, we will contact all the vendors to screen their professional credentials. Any prospective vendor who would enter your home will be CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) checked through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and required to provide proof of insurance and licensure. A final check with the Better Business Bureau will ensure that vendors have a spotless record of service. Only businesses that meet these standards will be added to our list of preferred providers. What's more, after your job is completed, NAH will call you to find out how it went, so your input will help determine whom we recommend to others.

For NAH members, access to a preferred provider will be just a phone call away. Tell us what you need, and we will give you the name of one or more vendors who can do the job. The end result is that you will get a professional referral you can count on to deliver quality service at a reasonable price. It's just one more way that NAH will make living in your community and staying in your home easier.

If you have a vendor you would like to recommend to NAH, please email info@newtonathome.org. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Did You Know...?

Dr. Ikram Farooqi is showing me around the Seha Medical & Wound Care Clinic at 65 Walnut Street in Wellesley. The clinic treats patients with non-healing wounds, a condition that many older people face as they age and their skin becomes thinner. "By and large," Dr. Farooqi says, "within six to eight weeks, we are able to close the wound." The national average is a shocking three to four months. The nurses at Dr. Farooqi's clinic all have special training in the treatment of wounds and diabetic ulcers. Dressings must be changed two to three times per week; they use special dressings and footwear, and a particular way of bandaging. Dr. Farooqi can arrange for nurses from a home care organization to provide care in the home while the wound is healing.

Dr. Farooqi has an air of quiet confidence, just right for a gerontologist who has been working in the field for 12 years. He trained in internal medicine in Washington, D.C., and completed a fellowship in geriatrics at Albany Medical Center. Over the years, he has become a specialist in wounds that are not healing.

Dr. Farooqi is originally from Pakistan, where his grandmother lived at home and died at home. His personal bias is for people to stay in their homes. "Enjoy it as much as you can," he says. "At all costs do it." He feels that people have more control, tend to sleep better, and have a better quality of life if they stay in their own home.

The biggest stumbling block he faces is putting together services for his patients. Unfortunately, some of them "fall between the cracks." By that he means that in order to be eligible for services,

they have to be homebound, but they cannot just stay at home all the time. Dr. Farooqi works with people, setting up visiting nurses, taking the whole patient into account. He says of the clinic: "It is like a second home, literally, for some people." He talks to his patients and educates them.

Although Dr. Farooqi has seen patients with terrible bedsores coming from the best hospitals in the country, he is cautiously optimistic about changes in health care. "Things are changing a little bit. . . it's coming that if something starts in the hospital, the hospital will be responsible to pay for it, so they are paying a lot more attention, to prevent it."

We learned of Dr. Farooqi through our rapidly growing network of volunteers, whose comments and suggestions have become an integral part of NAH.



From left to right: Millie Robbins, Dr. Ikram Farooqi, Sylea Davenport and Rosalynn Tayag.

How Doing Good Is Good for You

by Rebecca Kornblatt

Volunteering, it appears, makes you happier and healthier. A growing body of research suggests that altruistic behavior not only feels good but actually improves physical and mental health. Volunteering has a positive effect on people's mental state, research has shown, especially as they age. A 2009 study by Washington and Johns Hopkins universities involved volunteers over 55 who tutored elementary school students. They showed measurable improvements in physical

and mental health compared with other adults of similar age and demographics. A separate, small-scale study suggested that these volunteers' activities could delay or even reverse brain aging. Volunteer work that integrates cognitive, physical, and social activity may be more effective than mental exercises like doing crosswords to slow brain deterioration as people age, according to a Hopkins researcher.

How Doing Good Is Good for You (continued)

by Rebecca Kornblatt

Researchers hypothesize that volunteerism enhances a sense of belonging, increases a sense of purpose, and improves the perception of competence. Volunteering helps older adults in particular stay active in the community, and it prevents social isolation.

Volunteering affects physical health as well. In a 2002 Boston College study, patients with chronic pain did better when they counseled other pain patients; they experienced less depression, intense pain, and disability. These peer volunteers reported that making a connection and having a sense of purpose were particularly important. Further, in a review of 30 scientific studies, the Corporation for National and Community Service found a significant connection between volunteering and good health. Their meta-study showed that volunteers have greater longevity, higher functional ability,

lower rates of depression, and less heart disease. One five-year study of more than 1,500 elderly couples found that people who provided hands-on support (including help with transportation or shopping) to friends, relatives, or neighbors were half as likely to die as their non-supportive counterparts. Older adults who engage in more hours of volunteering report higher levels of well-being regardless of race, gender, or social integration. And, studies emphasize, just a couple of hours of volunteering a week makes the difference.

Exactly how altruism affects better health is not yet understood, but it may be an antidote to stress. A 1988 *Psychology Today* article coined the phrase “helpers’ high” to

describe the way people feel after helping others. The magazine’s surveys indicated that the physical response from volunteering was comparable to the effects of rigorous exercise or meditation. The strongest effect was observed when the altruistic activity involved direct contact with other people. Experts speculate that acting in a warm and compassionate way affects hormones and chemicals in the body such as the neurotransmitter dopamine, endorphins (the body’s natural opiates), and oxytocin, a hormone that triggers certain favorable changes in the body such as reduction in levels of certain stress hormones.

In short, research suggests that just a few hours a week of volunteering with NAH will not only provide important help to members but also result in significant mental and physical health benefits for volunteers. In other Villages as many as half the members donate their time to help other members. While volunteering will not be a requirement for NAH membership, we believe it will be a source of satisfaction to many of our members.



From left to right: Alice Schaefer, Wellington Scott, and Ruth Glotzer put in volunteer hours with NAH setting up for the April 6 community forum.