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Newton at Home has been organized 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.

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

Letter from our Executive Director

Greetings,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you to our April *Connections* Newsletter. This has been a challenging winter for many, and we hope that bright flowers and birds singing are all harbingers of a warmer spring.

It has been an exciting time at Newton at Home. Since our mini-launch in January, we've gotten off to a really good start. We have new members, new programs, and a new Coordinator of Volunteers. Please join me in welcoming Julie Plaut Mahoney and Maureen Grannan, the volunteer helping her. (See accompanying article on page 3) With

more and more new members enrolling every week, we are increasingly busy providing the services they request.

A growing number of Newton at Home volunteers are providing rides to appointments, a nearby friend, relative, or to the beauty parlor, as well as to Newton at Home-sponsored events. Volunteers speak of the pleasure of getting to know one another or becoming reacquainted. One volunteer realized she'd grown up in the same town and went to the same elementary school as the person she was helping.

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Spotlight on new Health & Wellness Committee

Newton at Home has created a new volunteer committee comprised of local medical professionals interested in planning programs and services to promote the health and fitness of Newton at Home members. The Health & Wellness Committee is looking at new trends and research; listening to the concerns and interests of our membership in this area; evaluating health and

wellness programs that already exist in our community to avoid duplications; and identifying ways in which trained volunteers can be resources, provide practical assistance, and help members navigate the health-care system.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Committee has outlined a speaker series on health and wellbe-

Wellness Classes Now in Place

Newton at Home members can already participate in two free programs designed to improve physical flexibility and balance. Gentle Yoga, open to members only, is meeting in a private home on Newton's south side. A Matter of Balance, open to members and guests, is meeting at the Scandinavian Living Center, 206 Waltham Street, West Newton. For information on these ongoing programs and other classes now in the planning stages, please call 617-795-2560 or email info@newtonathome.org.

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Executive Director (From first page)

A member said, “I could not have done this by myself” when she called the office to say, “I’ve graduated – my doctor tells me I can drive again – I’m so happy!” A Newton at Home volunteer remarked, “I get back more than I give every time I volunteer.”

When asked why they joined Newton at Home, members’ responses have been diverse. “This was a rough winter—I miss seeing people.” “My husband can’t drive any longer.” “I so enjoyed going to the museum with your group.” “I need help paying my bills and uncluttering my desk.” Members are also volunteering to help with programs and rides.

Mark your calendars. We are planning our first Newton at Home Member Gathering for Thursday afternoon, May 12, 2011 from 3-5 pm. It’s an opportunity to socialize, see old friends, and make new ones! Details and invitation will follow.

We look to our members to tell us what programs and events they would like to see on our schedule this spring. We are planning opportunities to get together for a special concert, over a delightful meal, or a fun dessert. We expect to take longer trips to areas such as Rockport, Salem, and Tanglewood. Transportation will be available. We look to you for new ideas and recommendations and hope you’ll join us!

We provide a monthly calendar of interesting programs and exciting activities, some outdoors and further afield. One telephone call to 617-795-2560 or e-mail to staff@newtonathome.org provides easy access to customer friendly volunteers and staff with knowledge of events and activities, support groups, vendors, and professional and paraprofessional resources in our community. And always check periodically on our web site, newtonathome.org, to find the calendar and other information on programs and services.

As you know, Newton at Home is a not-for-profit organization composed of many generous neighbors helping neighbors. Our goal is to provide the highest quality services, support, and information for members and guests. We welcome your membership and donations to ensure Newton at Home’s long term success and sustainability.

Sincerely,

Arlene Lowney, Executive Director

Health and Wellness (From first page)

ing. Dr. Jatin Dave, a member of the committee and our Board of Directors, says, “Newton at Home will provide knowledgeable experts and excellent speakers on health-related issues for members and potential members. We plan to focus on general issues and then specific topics of interest, such as the benefits of exercise, good nutrition, building a healthy brain, navigating the health care system, and the importance of social networks.”

As part of this series, on Tuesday, May 17, at 7:30 pm. Newton at Home and the Newton Free Library will co-sponsor a talk by Juergen Bludau, M.D. on his new book “Aging, But Never Old.” Dr. Dave will introduce Dr. Bludau. Dr. Bludau is a board-certified, Harvard fellowship-trained geriatrician. He is the Clinical Chief and Director of the geriatric services at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital Division of Aging, and speaks regularly at local, national, and international conferences.



Present at a recent meeting of Newton at Home’s Health & Wellness Committee were, left to right: Fran Johnson, social worker; Judith Stone, social worker; Susan Murray, health care policy consultant and nurse practitioner; Dr. Michael Johnson, psychiatrist; and John Paul Marosy, health care administrator and author. Not present in the photograph were Co-Chairs Wellington F. Scott and Arlene Lowney, as well as members Dr. Jatin Dave, geriatrician and hospitalist, and Dr. Iolanda Low, retired internist and medical school instructor.

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NEW STAFF MEMBER**Coordinator of Volunteers**

As part of our commitment to a “volunteer-first philosophy,” Newton at Home has hired Julie Plaut Mahoney as a part-time Coordinator of Volunteers. Her role is to recruit, screen, and train volunteers

who provide many direct services that members request. Our volunteer-first philosophy emphasizes that we will, to the best of our ability, secure volunteer assistance first, providing help with a personal touch!

Trained volunteers, including some from local colleges and high schools, offer NAH members friendly visits, computer tutoring, practice with foreign languages, help with small repairs and handyman projects, and more. Seasoned volunteers drive members to Logan airport, the Newton Free Library, hospitals, and doctor’s appointments, without charge. Some volunteers offer members help navigating the healthcare system by being a comfortable presence, offering helpful questions, or providing lists of resources.

According to Julie, “It is important for volunteers to provide the vital services our members need because we are all stronger as a community if people of all ages live near each other. Just as we have a responsibility to children living in our neighborhoods, we have a responsibility to elders living next door – and meeting these responsibilities enriches all of our lives.” She adds, “Newton at Home is an extremely hopeful organization because it empowers people to stay in their homes as long as possible with the additional support of the community around them.”

Julie has a Ph.D. from Boston University in sociology; her areas of concentration were aging, gender, race and ethnicity, and urban and community sociology. Prior to coming to NAH, she was the volunteer coordinator at an area hospice and also worked as a geriatric care manager.

Since joining the NAH staff in early February, Julie has met and trained many of our volunteers, including Maureen Grannan, a nurse and administrator for

over 30 years. Maureen has committed 10 hours per week to working on volunteer applications and organizing materials for Julie’s volunteer training sessions. “She gets lots of credit,” says Julie, “for getting us into shape for our full launch of services on April 21, 2011.”

If you are interested in becoming a Newton at Home volunteer, please contact Julie Plaut Mahoney at volcoord@newtonathome.org or call our office at 617-795-2560. A list of available volunteer opportunities and dates and time of volunteer training is available on our web site at www.newtonathome.org and through the office.

PROFILES**Dr. Cris and Nancy Criscitiello**

have already completed a phase one remodel of their Newton Highlands home to make it more senior friendly. They feel that with the changes they have made and will likely make in phase two, and the help of Newton At Home, they can stay comfortably in their home, which is where they want to be.

In 1965, Chris and Nancy returned to this area so that Cris could practice at Tufts Medical Center and teach at Tufts Medical School. Here, they raised their four children and became involved in numerous community activities. They deliberately created a strong sense of neighborhood connection on their small dead-end street and expanded it through the annual block parties that Nancy has run since 1966. The couple looked at retirement homes and smaller houses but decided that these would not work since they value their connections in their neighborhood so highly.

Looking ahead, Nancy says, “We will use our neighbors for help and companionship, but we don’t always want to rely on them. We want to belong to an organization that can do things for us, like provide a van to go food shopping and connections to people who have been researched and vetted. The preferred providers are a big thing.”

Adds Cris, “This whole thing is the manifestation of the success of medicine. When I was young it was very rare to see anyone in his 80s. Now I am in my 80s!”

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Health and Wellness *(From page 2)*

Susan Murray, a member of our Board of Directors and the committee, has initiated a series of focus groups for the spring. She notes, “We really hope to hear from our members what they want. Part of successfully remaining in your home is staying healthy and we are interested in exploring fun and creative ways we can help people do that.” She anticipates that topics of interest will include supporting care givers, walking programs, help with insurance questions, and relevant and timely health policy issues.

In the future, NAH is thinking in terms of training volunteers to provide practical aid such as changing batteries in hearing aids, smoke detectors, and carbon monoxide detectors. This and other direct service tasks could be an important aspect of the services NAH can provide.

Trained NAH volunteers have already begun to provide transportation and help with medical appointments to our members. One person said, “I’m so grateful I had help – I didn’t have to do this myself – and we had a good time. I enjoyed meeting the volunteer!”

Dr. Cris and Nancy Criscitiello *(From page 3)*

In the future, Cris can foresee giving up driving and valuing transportation provided by Newton at Home to places like Boston Symphony concerts, the library, or the Peabody Essex Museum. Nancy mentions that they might be able to offer NAH members something, too, such as a music listening group once a month. Both are excited to watch NAH actually open and begin providing services.

ACTIVITIES

Davis Museum Trip

Newton at Home members and guests viewed the Fred Sandback exhibit of sculpture, prints, acrylic yarn, and drawings on February 22, at the Wellesley College Davis Museum and Cultural Center. The group was guided by a Wellesley student docent. After the tour, everyone had lunch in the museum café and engaged in a lively discussion of what they had seen, heard, and experienced, as well as other trips NAH members might like to take.

The exhibit included Sandback’s prints, drawings, sculpture, and acrylic yarn. A sculptor who spoke of using yarn like a No. 2 pencil, Sandback treated the two-dimensional surface of the paper in much the same way he approached the sites his sculptures inhabited – as a space to be experienced and interpreted. There were a variety of different pieces on the walls and in corners as well as one work that reached from the saw-tooth atrium skylights to the gallery two floors below.

