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## Retrospective on Newton at Home on the Occasion of Its Fifth Birthday

The human gestation period is 9 months; the elephant's 21 months; Newton at Home's was 4 years. Birth was April 20, 2011.

The idea of a community support system to enable Newton seniors to "age in place" was first conceived in 2007 by Jeremy Warburg Russo and a small group of friends. She had heard about Cambridge at Home from her sister who was an active member. She discussed it with her friends, who discussed it with their friends, who discussed it with their friends. One thing led to another, and gestation began. Small groups met; a Steering Committee formed in February 2008.

By the time Jeremy moved on in the fall of 2008, an organization was starting to take shape. By October it had its name. There were precious few Villages to emulate, and those that did exist differed from one another. (According to Judy Willett, the first Executive

Director of Beacon Hill Village and a founder of the Village to Village Network, "When you've seen one Village, you've seen one Village."). NAH had to be conceived and built from the ground up.

NAH incorporated as a non-profit organization in February, 2009. Early on the members of the board made a key decision to involve as many volunteers as possible. This was not to be a project of a small group; it was to be created by the people who would use it and volunteer to help run it. Eventually more than 55 volunteers staffed 7 committees. Similarly, the decision was made to run the organization on a Volunteer First model: volunteers were to provide as many direct services as possible before referring a member to a vendor. Board members were confident that Newton is a city with a strongly developed sense of community, a tradition of volunteerism, and residents who are not only highly educated but also committed to remain in charge of their lives. Optimistic forecasts were that 60% of member services could be provided by volunteers; today 90% are provided by volunteers. About 85% of volunteers develop meaningful relationships at NAH and stay on.

Planning was meticulous, the work challenging but rewarding. Milestones included a survey of 325 Newton residents over age 55; choosing a name and drafting a mission statement; establishing a Board of Directors; incorporating as a 501(c)(3) charitable

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NAH Board of Trustees, Spring 2010

*From front to back:* Renata Selig, Wellington Scott, Cynthia Pill, Tamara Bliss, Verne Vance, Bob Larner



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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 Executive Director



*Greetings,*

Happy birthday  
Newton at Home!

We are five years old and growing – over 200 members and 100 volunteers, with new members signing up every month. We are truly building a community of support and friendships.

I believe this is our most important benefit: the opportunity for members and volunteers to be part of a lively and quality community. I am very proud of the quality of our practical services, but am especially proud of helping members get out of the house and engage in interesting and fun activities with like-minded people. Our volunteers are essential, taking members to and from affinity groups and events. Membership fees (45% of our budget) and donations (55%) pay the costs: rent, salaries, supplies, insurance, and essential technology. In addition, we have just received a large stipend from the State of Massachusetts which is enabling us to utilize vans to transport members to various venues and provide other new services.

Newton at Home is truly a community we can all be proud of. Thank you, everyone.

Sincerely,

Maureen Grannan  
Executive Director

## NAH Fifth Birthday

*(Continued from page 1)*

organization; developing a business plan, developing a membership package of services and fees, planning and implementing a recruitment campaign for members and volunteers; hiring a paid staff; activating operations, technology and data bases; writing handbooks for members and volunteers; planning and implementing volunteer training; and planning and implementing the launch of NAH.

Many key people still active with NAH came on board early on. Tamara Bliss, a well known community organizer became Chair of the Steering Committee, then President of NAH through 2015, and continues to be a major fundraiser. Deborah Fogel, a writer and editor, designed the community survey and helped organize community forums. David Chosiad, a recently retired businessman well experienced in strategic planning, data gathering, and computer technology, became an invaluable “Advisor,” a role he has kept to this day, as well as being a volunteer. Bob Larner, a retired economist, chaired the Member Services Committee, served for many years as Vice-President of the Board, and currently is Treasurer. Ellen Block, a retired financial analyst, developed the initial budget and helped determine membership fees. Liz Simons, a PhD in physical chemistry and physics, chaired the committee to prepare a vendor list, was on the Board through 2015, and continues with Cynthia Pill to lead a support group for people dealing with a loved one with Alzheimer’s Disease. Cynthia Pill, a psychiatric social worker who, along with Renata Selig, had help launch the Hospice of the Good Shepard and worked there for 5 years, served on the Steering Committee and the founding Board of Directors, chaired the Committee on Volunteers and Staff, and is a current Board member. Renata

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## Building Community at NAH Through Affinity Groups, Events, and Programs

NAH Program Coordinator Aileen Murphy has one response when a member or volunteer suggests a new affinity group or activity: "Let's do it!" The NAH website calendar for April listed 17 meetings and events: Gilbert & Sullivan's HMS Pinafore at the Agassiz Theater in Harvard Square, a Tiger Loft Luncheon, the Spanish Conversation Group (weekly), Tai Chi class (every other week), Singing Group (weekly), Let's Play Bingo, Book Club, Scrabble Club, Knitting Club, and the Political Discussion Club.

Three of the Affinity Groups are new. The Movie Club (Hope and Bob Dauwalter, leaders) started in February by seeing *The Big Short* at the Chestnut Hill Showcase, which features food service with waiters during the show. There was a 10% discount for the NAH members. In March the group saw *Whom Do We Invade Next* at the West Newton Cinema.

The Political Discussion Group (Alice Soref and Andrew Martin, leaders) meets monthly for lively discussions on a host of topics, including current events and the presidential campaigns. The group is at maximum capacity; a second group may be formed if there is enough interest. Let the office know if you are interested.

The Knitting Club (Debby Weiss, leader) meets monthly in Nordic Hall for knitting and socializing. The knitters range from novice to experienced, with everything in between. All are welcome.

Other notable recent events include Share-a-Supper (Carole Noveck and Aileen Murphy, leaders) a pot-luck dinner for 12 in which transportation is provided, the host provides the entrée, the guests bring everything else, and there is lively discussion after dinner. Carole Noveck hosted the first supper in December. Gwendoline Thornblade hosted in April. In addition, there are larger dinners. The February Mid-Winter Supper was a pot-luck in Nordic Hall attended by 28 people sitting at tables of 4 to 6. Aileen's son Myles played background piano during the appetizer and desert, Marie Truslow and Elgie Ginsburgh read their own poetry, Hanni Myers played piano and led the group in popular songs, and Eli Kritzman, a trained opera singer, sang impromptu. Aileen hopes to set up some more large-group suppers, perhaps a July Grill and an End of Summer gathering in September.

In March the Health and Wellness Group presented a very informative talk by Douglas Huber, M.D., on infectious diseases, including Ebola and Lyme Disease, and dealing with mosquitoes and ticks.

On March 3 NAH participated in Bertucci's Dining for Dollars Program (NAH received 15% of the tab for NAH members, volunteers, and friends eating at Bertucci's that day). NAH also raffled off gifts from 17 local donors, including a Red Sox jersey, PlowMe snow plowing next winter, and gift cards. There were 28 people at lunch, 16 at dinner, 11 home deliveries, and several take-outs. Cake was provided at both meals. The main purpose of the event was to give members, volunteers, and friends a chance to socialize. A good time was had by all; the Bertucci's staff was enthusiastic; other customers came over to ask about NAH. The event increased public awareness of NAH as an organization providing an important service to the community and a place to have a good time. NAH also recruited 2 new volunteers.

On May 2 there was a field trip to the Museum of Fine Arts to see the Arts in Blooms exhibit. Transportation was provided from the Scandinavian Living Center and back. In addition to an hour-long guided tour of the exhibit, participants could sign up for an Elegant Tea, featuring finger sandwiches and desserts in one of the art galleries, or dine at the Museum's café or cafeteria.

The Nourish Program is run by volunteers. Carole Noveck and Branda Roberts arrange weekly home deliveries of lunches from Mango Tango. Guichy Waller schedules deliveries of floral arrangements 5 times a month to members. Dana Holland and Joan Wayland make the flower arrangements. – please tell Dana or Joan if you have any extra flower vases. Joe Nobrega schedules weekly deliveries of baked goods to members (doing so 6 months of the year from Kentucky). Galit Gritman makes the baked goods. A fleet of volunteers make deliveries.

The Winter Buddy Program teams members with volunteers – and often their families, who check in on the member weekly and help them deal with winter weather. When there is a storm, the volunteer buddy calls the member to ensure he or she is prepared. The buddy alerts the member that a storm is coming, assesses any need for essential supplies (milk, bread, flashlights and batteries, etc.), ensures there are plans for snow removal, checks that the member has a charged cell phone, calls every day of the storm, and helps the member obtain appropriate help as needed.

## Member Spotlight

### Gwendoline Thornblade, Suzuki Violin/Viola Teacher



How Gwendoline Thornblade came from being born in London during WWII to being a Suzuki Violin/Viola Teacher in Newton is quite a story. Her family is from Hungary; her mother a PhD Political Economist who worked for the Hungarian Section of the BBC during the war; her grandfather, Paulo Forro, a renowned writer whose works have recently been republished; one great aunt the head of the National Orthodontic Clinic in Budapest; the other a well known sculptress commissioned to make the portraits of Bartok and Kodaly

Gwendoline was evacuated as a baby to the countryside for 2 years during the war, followed by convent school in North Devon. She first learned that she was Jewish at age 15. Her grandmother, who spoke 5 languages -- not including English -- escaped from Hungary and became a lady's companion to Lady Bulteel, whose husband was a cousin of the Queen Mother. Gwendoline vacationed in a Downton Abby world at Leighton House, on Dartmoor, and The Royal Ascot Lodge.

After boarding school, she attended St. Paul's Girls' School, London, where she studied violin, viola, and piano, and -- importantly -- learned to read 4-line musical scores. Following her mother's wishes, she pursued studies in Dentistry at London University, but remained active in music, organizing and playing in the London University Orchestra for non-music majors and playing in various musical groups, including performing with the London University Fringe Production at the Edinburgh Festival.

After graduation, she wanted to tour the United States by Greyhound bus. It was the height of the Vietnam War, America was getting bad press in Europe, but she believed there must be something good about such a great country, so at age 24 she decided to see for herself. But instead, with her parents' support, she enrolled in the Boston University School of Dentistry, where she was assigned to a program in Pediatric Dentistry, the only woman in a class with 100 men, experiencing the glass ceiling and harassment first hand. While at B.U., she took a diploma course in Dental Public Health at Harvard Dental School. Upon receiving her Master's degree, she was appointed an Assistant Professor at B.U. and taught there for a year. She then married James Thornblade, a PhD International Economist from the

Sloan School, and moved with him to Syracuse, where he had joined the Syracuse University faculty, and they had 2 daughters (both now professional musicians). She could not practice dentistry in the U.S. because her British Bachelor of Dental Science degree was not recognized here (protectionism), but she could teach (as she had at B.U.) and perform dental evaluations. She helped set up a Montessori day-care center, got an old red cast-iron dental chair from a friend's basement, obtained donations of dental supplies from local suppliers, and did dental evaluations at the day-care center. She became disillusioned with dentistry and decided to pursue a musical career instead. She had been playing chamber music all along, and now she started teaching and became trained in the Suzuki method.

Four weeks after the birth of her second child, the family moved to Washington D.C., where her husband joined President Nixon's Pay Board. She continued teaching, went to Japan to observe Dr. Suzuki, and played lots of chamber music. When her husband was hired by the First National Bank of Boston as an international economist, the family moved back to Boston and settled down in the Newton home where she has remained for 44 years.

She taught about 70 students a week in 5 Newton public schools; set up private lessons for the students after they completed their school music studies; started the Suzuki program at the All Newton Music School, taught there and at the Longy Music School for 8 years; and, coached chamber music in the NEC prep Division, and founded the Suzuki School of Newton in 1986 to teach violin, viola, cello, guitar and piano. Her student groups were twice invited to perform at Disneyworld, and played with the Newton Symphony Orchestra, at the opening of the Newton Free Library, Wang Theater, Newton Village Day events, and several nursing homes. She helped form a chamber ensemble for parents and set up the "Building Bridges Through Music" program for LaSalle Village residents and members of the local community. The group, now located at the Newton Senior Centre, has about 30 members and plays several concerts each year. She also coaches string quartets and other small groups meeting several days a week in her house. Gwendoline joined NAH early on. She very much wants to stay in her house ("There's a lot of music going on here."), looks to NAH to help her do so, has enjoyed volunteering as a driver, and is talking to other NAH members about organizing chamber music concerts. Stand by.

## Vendor Spotlight:

**David Savalle Plumbing, Inc.,**

**Mike Hurley, Proprietor 617 527 1222, 617 592 7924 (cell), mike@davidsavalleplumbing.com**

Mike Hurley's father was a plumber; his son, grandson, and two sons-in-law are plumbers; two nephews are an electrician and an HVAC technician; and two close friends are great carpenters. "Whatever you need, call me and I will get it done." Mike has been a plumber for 51 years and is still going strong; he went to work for David Savalle Plumbing in 1965 and has never left. He bought the company in 1978.

The company has gone up and down with the economy. In the 1980's he had 13 workers and 7 trucks, but when the recession hit in the 1990's many of the building contractors he worked with went bankrupt. He owed his suppliers \$210,000, but they knew he was good for it; it took him 10 years to pay them off.

Today he has a staff of three providing 24-hour service 7 days a week. Mike's customers stay with him. He still has customers from the 1980's, as well as their children and grandchildren. If someone calls with a real emergency, he will do whatever it takes to get someone there, including pulling people off other jobs. He encourages people not to call on the weekend unless it really is an emergency.

Mike says one of the biggest plumbing problems is hot water heaters. People fail to flush them out every 6 months, sediment builds up, and the heater eventually starts to rust. When rust starts appearing in the sinks, the water heater will fail within about 2 months. When a heater fails, there could be a leak or a flood.

Frozen pipes are also a big problem. When a pipe breaks, water will run until it is shut off. Mike advises that someone going away during cold weather should shut off the water to the house and open faucets to drain the pipes.

Recently a lady had just moved in her new home when the hot water heater failed on a Thursday. She called the installer, who said he was unavailable until the following Monday. She called another plumber, who was also unavailable until Monday. Then she called Mike. He walked her through how to turn off the water (she was on a cell phone) and was at her house within the hour. The worst leak he recalls was when a family returned home from a ski trip and found 8 feet of water in the basement, right up to the ceiling.

For Mike, "Good service is the name of the game." He leaves home each morning at 7:30, works until 4:30, then returns all the calls that have come in during the day. His wife is his secretary and can reach him immediately in an emergency. He gives a 10% senior discount on all labor. Seventy-five to eighty percent of his business is in Newton.

## Volunteer Spotlight:

**Deborah Jackson Weiss, NAH Co-President**



In 2002, Debby Weiss left the practice of law. She got a library degree at Simmons College, worked at the Harvard Law School Library until 2012, and joined NAH in 2010, making good use of the NAH Vendors list. When she stopped working, she started driving and participating in various groups and events, such as the Dining Club, Theater Program, Book Group, and the Tiger Loft Luncheon. She says she has discovered restaurants and places she would never have gone to otherwise.

Debby has lived in Newton 25 years. She greatly enjoys meeting members and volunteers, enjoying talking to long-term Newton residents. She drives two or three times a week, taking members to where they have to go and making deliveries. In addition, she always tries to drive members to and from events she attends. She enjoys meeting new people, whether driving or attending events or volunteer coffees, relishing the wide variety of experiences and talents of the people she meets. The word on Debby amongst the NAH staff is that she never sleeps; she is always available to do anything when asked. For her part, Debby says the staff make her feel her time and money are well spent at NAH.

Debby's latest project is the Knitting Club, meeting monthly in Nordic Hall. She brings yarn and needles. The attendees enjoy socializing as much as knitting. She would like to do a group knitting project if enough people get involved. All are welcome.

As a member, volunteer, and Board member, Debby has been greatly impressed by the volunteers, who Debby thinks are the key to the NAH program, doing much more than at other Villages. They value and participate in NAH, enjoying getting to know members and other volunteers. For her, volunteering is the best part of the program. She says she gets more from the members than she gives to them.



## NAH Fifth Birthday

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Selig was on the Steering Committee, chaired the Welcoming Committee, was on the Board through 2014, and was a prolific recruiter of Board members. Julie Plaut Mahoney, a PhD in Sociology with 5 years of experience at a hospice, started as NAH's Director of Volunteers and today is Director of Programs and Volunteers. Maureen Grannan, an experienced oncology nurse and nursing supervisor, was an early volunteer and is now NAH's Executive Director. Member Services Coordinators Barbara Butterworth and Hannah Goldberg were key volunteers before being hired as members of the staff.

When asked what makes Newton at Home work, those who have been with NAH from the beginning cite the talented, varied, and dedicated volunteers and staff; the involvement of experienced and talented members; good will on the part of all; the fact that volunteers are motivated by more than altruism -- volunteering becomes a meaningful part of their lives; and the strength of the concept of fostering a community of people who want to age at home and continue to be active members of the community.

## Building Community

(continued from page 3)

Other Programs include:

- Spring and Fall Cleanups. About 200 volunteer family members, students from local schools, colleges, the Boys' and Girls' Clubs, and three Girl Scouts clean up members' yards. This year the Spring Cleanup was combined with Newton Serves on May 1.

- Book Drives. Volunteers gather books and deliver them to More Than Words in Waltham.

- Clothing Drives. Volunteers gather clothes and deliver them to Good Will.

- Volunteer Coffees. These are important events, not only providing an occasion to thank volunteers, but also to give them the opportunity to meet other volunteers and appreciate the community they are fostering. In addition to providing direct member services, volunteers continue to help run NAH; they sit on the Board of Directors, staff committees, work in the office, run affinity groups and events, and provide technology to NAH.

NAH doesn't just help members live in their homes; it assists them to leave their homes to meet and socialize with other members and volunteers, to be an active part of the Newton community.

### In Memoriam

Newton at Home extends its condolences to the families and friends of the following members:

Blair Brown 1941-2016

Robert Buxbaum 1930-2016

Dodie Magraw 1925-2016

Robert Pill 1938-2016

Sherman Shatz 1928-2016

Melvin Weiner 1934-2016



For more information call 617-795-2560 or email [info@newtonathome.org](mailto:info@newtonathome.org) or visit [www.newtonathome.org](http://www.newtonathome.org)