



Village Neighbors

Working Together to Create Community!

A rural community of neighbors helping aging adults lead independent and engaged lives at home.

**Leverett + New Salem +
Shutesbury + Wendell**

1-413-345-6894

www.villageneighbors.org

P.O.Box 501, Shutesbury, MA 01072

generalinfo@villageneighbors.org

January / February 2021, Issue 11

VN Free Small Home Repairs Project Continuing Into 2021

Village Neighbors would like to thank the Small Repairs team for the valuable work accomplished. Tremendously successful, we have served over 20 members' needs and remain with over half our budget available for the next round.

Work for members is suspended as of now with the cold weather setting in and the upcoming holidays.

Small Repairs team will be out again in the Spring bringing repairs to members' homes. We'd like to thank the members who returned surveys based on the work done, it really helps us keep the LifePath Church Street Home Fund going for next year.



The Church Street Fund is administered by the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts.

CoVid 2021 Update

Governor Baker has announced that CoVid vaccines will become increasingly available over the first half of 2021. ***You can find out more about vaccination through your personal health care provider.*** The Governor also emphasizes the importance of proper mask wearing, social distancing, and testing to get through what many experts believe will be the worst of the pandemic this winter.

VN members and volunteers should expect we will continue to proceed within the strictest CoVid protocols.

Senior News

Now That We All Have High Speed Internet - What Do We Do With It?

New Grant Provides Training for Volunteers and Members

Village Neighbors has been awarded a **Covid-19 Resiliency Grant by the Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA)** to expand our online presence and digital skills. This grant will help us improve the quality and quantity of on-line programming for volunteers and members. We will update our volunteer training curriculum, develop an ongoing schedule of new trainings and create more opportunities for virtual social connection, learning and entertainment for our members.

If you are interested in training, or need help in accessing the wealth of internet available classes and events, please call

1-413-345-6894 or email
generalinfo@villageneighbors.org



Gentle Qigong for Health and Well Being

Free Zoom Class from Village Neighbors Member!
Peter Schein, a member of Village Neighbors, has been a student and teacher of Qigong for many years.

No experience is required for this class and it's suitable for seniors. If you are interested, email Peter **pjschein@gmail.com** to receive a zoom invitation before the class.

LifePath Healthy Living Remote Workshops

Free workshops that you can access at home on your computer or your phone.

Topics are **Living Well with Long-Term Health Conditions, Chronic Pain Self-Management, and Managing Concerns About Falls**. For more information and to register, contact **Andi Waisman**, by phone at **773-5555 x2297** or via email at **awaisman@LifePathMA.org**.

VN Small Home Repairs Project 2020

Volunteer Russ Greco - VN Small Repairs Team:

In early September **Glenn Stockton, Bert Fernandez** and I were invited to help organize a **Small Repairs Team** under the auspices of Village Neighbors for the purpose of helping people age in place at home. **Paul Lyons** and **Sam Rogers** eventually joined us.

What we all had in common was a love of working with our hands, some good experience in residential construction, gratitude for everything we have in life and a desire to give back to our community at this stage in our lives. United in our commitment to service work, and happy to take money out of the equation, this endeavor has so far not only been rewarding but fun as well.

Our focus has been on assessing and completing small jobs (less than a couple of days and a couple of hundred dollars in materials) that address not only safety issues but general maintenance as well. We've worked by committee (online) to put the organizational structure together keeping things as simple as possible while, at the same time, making sure everything is documented for grant purposes. Having such a competent group and receiving strong support from our admin liaisons, **Elizabeth Fernandez O'Brien** and **Don Stone** has made it very manageable.

Some of the work accomplished includes: **installation of grab bars, railings and exterior steps, door refitting, door hardware repair and replacement, gutters cleaned and repaired, smoke alarms replaced, light bulbs changed, winterization projects, deck repair, small plumbing and electrical repair, furniture repair and mailbox replacement.** I'd like to thank all of you who took extra time to write really kind thank you notes to our team. It meant a lot to us! I might add, also, that **we have had no problems related to CoVid-19 protocol.**

Given our efficiency so far I would expect that we would be able to serve another 25 households in addition to the 25 we are already committed to complete. This first group should be finished by the New Year. We are helped in this goal by the donations that we hope to receive from satisfied clients. Unlike some programs we are not limited to helping only those who are in financial need. One only need be a Village Neighbors member. For that reason, we have invited those who can afford it to think about making a donation if they are satisfied with the work done. This stretches our grant money (for materials) and allows us to serve a greater population.

To all of you who we have helped so far: thank you for your gratitude! **We are getting as much out of it as you seem to be.**

Member Responses to Repairs:

"My 2 volunteers (Russ & Bert) were wonderful - Friendly, kind, knowledgeable, thorough, completed every job and cleaned up spotlessly after themselves."

"I so appreciated how easy he [Paul] was to work with! Knowledgeable, enthusiastic, great communicator, thoughtful, competent, good-natured, generous."

"Thank you so much!! This experience was a total gift."

"I'm very happy with the work done. It was a job that was too small for a workman to come do, but required more strength than I have."

"Thank you for the work you did for me. The most amazing thing was when Bert came back to install my mailbox in the rain! I was flabbergasted! I keep thinking how happy David [Dann] would be to see how Village Neighbors is Growing."

"Glen changed two light bulbs and put back interior storm windows (front and back) for the winter! Thanks"

"Glen installed stair rails, fixed front door, and chairs that needed gluing. He was quick and neat in his work. Communicated appropriately about the work in progress. A pleasant person!"

"I send a great big thanks to you and Sam and village neighbors for the home repairs this week. My crooked bony fingers can open my new door lock with ease and I no longer have to fuss with a key which my crooked bony fingers had trouble turning. I'm so happy you thought of the grab handles, now it makes opening and shutting my door tightly very easy."

Thanks also for fixing my slightly unglued bedroom door, and the bathroom door which had become entirely unglued & separated. Sam also correctly installed the bath towel hangers, previously one had been upside down. Yay Village Neighbors!"

"Excellent work! So helpful!"



VN in the CoVidiverse 2020 in Review

2020 has been a year of uncertainty for everyone, learning to adapt to unprecedented changes. Through it all Village Neighbors continued to grow with thanks to the collaboration, dedication and ingenuity of our Volunteers and Members.

January



VN Visioning Meeting with Erik Muten facilitating. Plans were made for an eventful year ahead, organizational development discussed, and preparation for our switch to Free Membership.

February

Free Membership Announcement to 4 Towns.

VN Village Neighbors
Is Now **FREE**
To Members Over 60
in Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury and Wendell

VN Available Services
HELPING HANDS
Change smoke alarm
Batteries
Easy falls
Grocery deliveries
Help in garden
Household tasks



March

Events, classes and fund raisers shut down because of Pandemic.

April

Creation of the **Pandemic Response Team**, establishing safety protocols for volunteers and members so we could continue grocery and medicine pick-ups and delivery. Research and distribute CoVid resources and information. Calls to every member – list of weekly check-ins. Email and website updates with CoVid resources. Membership Renewal mailing. VN organized a Zoom meeting with the local **Councils on Aging** to solidify our collaboration through the crisis.



Health New England

May

The Finance Committee secured a **Health New England COVID Relief Grant** to provide Pandemic Relief Gift Bags to all our members. The Gift Bags contained masks, sanitizer, soap, tea and other items of use and good cheer. All heartfully prepared and delivered by our volunteers.

June

Village Neighbors Annual Meeting was conducted on Zoom. Elections were held for 2 new board members – Miriam DeFant and Dina Polizzi, and VN Secretary Mary-Anne Palmieri returning for another term. Committees delivered their annual reports and there was time for questions from the membership.

July-August

Volunteers continued with grocery and medicine pick-up and delivery to members, maintaining social distancing protocols. Yard work and outdoor repairs calls were also handled with social distance.

Surveys were sent to all members asking what events and activities they would be interested in.

An educational Zoom workshop series on Dementia Friendly Communities was launched.



September

The **Church Street Home Fund / Lifepath Home Repair Grant** was awarded to VN, and the Small Repairs Team was organized.



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

LifePath
options for independence

October



Applications for free home repair were mailed to every member.

A "Get Out To Vote" committee was organized. Members received calls with information about early voting, absentee ballots, and offers of any assistance.

November

Applications for free home repairs were received and in-home evaluations and repairs begun. VN was awarded the **COVID Resilience grant from the Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA)** to be used to improve our capacity to reach and serve our members using virtual and remote technologies.



December

VN brochure was updated to announce Free Membership and will be mailed to every household in Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury and Wendell this January. Training has begun in new tech skills for volunteers to assist members with navigating our "virtual" reality - here in the CoVidiverse!

2020 has been a year of challenges, but those challenges have offered us an opportunity to expand our skills and perspectives. We are committed to a future where we can all rely on our community to assist our elders (and us) to lead independent and engaged lives at home as we age.

We urge you to share this newsletter with anyone you think could benefit from Village Neighbors.

Many of our Members are also Volunteers. Find ways you can help your neighbors and have some fun! Be Part of the Village Neighbors Team!

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION Zoom Meeting Thursday, January 21, 6:30 PM

At the orientation you will learn about the organization and find out about the wide range of volunteer activities that you can choose from. **To join the Zoom Volunteer Orientation you must RSVP by January 10th**

Email volunteers@villageneighbors.org or call **1-413-345-6894**

A Volunteer Handbook and application packet will be sent to you by email, or sent by mail if you cannot print it.

Calling for Call Managers...!

Call Managers (CM) are the front line people for VN. They receive calls from members with requests for services and connect them with volunteers who have said they would provide those particular services. CMs work from home and fill requests Monday through Friday. Calls come in via voice mail to the VN number and CMs access those calls at their convenience throughout the day. CMs are on call one week out of the month. This is a perfect task for someone who likes helping people and prefers to work from home.

For more information call **Mary-Ann Palmieri** at **978-544-2611** or email volunteers@villageneighbors.org

Village Neighbors is a community volunteer-run organization, part of the Village-to-Village national network, dedicated to helping aging adults lead independent and engaged lives at home.

**We offer FREE Membership for anyone over 60 in our 4 Towns:
Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury and Wendell.**

Call or email today to find out more about membership, services and volunteering.

1-413-345-6894 or email generalinfo@villageneighbors.org

Visit our website to view the list of free services we offer www.villageneighbors.org



Don't Be Overwhelmed by Winter Worries...

Volunteers from your town are available to help with shoveling, wood stacking and winter essentials! They will bring their own tools and maintain safe social distancing protocols.

**Give us a call, volunteers are waiting to assist you! 1-413-345-6894
or email servicerequests@villageneighbors.org**



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