



Villages Update

Announcing a revolutionary program for Older Adults in the Berkshires

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BE SAFE

BE WELL

BE HOME

Villages of the Berkshires (Villages). You are probably thinking Lenox, Richmond, Great Barrington. **But it's much more than where we live. It's how we live.** Villages is a proven concept in a new setting, created just for older residents who wish to remain in their homes, confidently and safely. Villages can't be explained in one catchy phrase. In the first newsletter from this nascent organization, we will describe the villages concept and its reality, why you will want to have a role in creating and sustaining it and how Villages will be specifically tailor-made to Berkshire living.

Background on the Villages Movement

Begun in 2002, the village concept grew out of a group of people living in Boston, specifically, Beacon Hill who realized as they aged, their ability to live independently was compromised. They formed an organization where they would share resources, and more importantly, agree to help one another so that they could age in place. Over the years, theirs became the model for a national movement, leading to the formation of the Village to Village Network. Today, over 200 communities have embraced the village movement. Check out the VTV website to learn all about it.

www.vtvnetwork.org

What are the characteristics of Villages?

- Villages are locally organized, membership-driven, grassroots nonprofit organizations.
- Villages are tailored to the needs and culture of the area they serve.
- Villages function through the work of volunteers and a small paid staff.
- Volunteers and staff coordinate members' access to affordable, vetted and discounted service providers. This is a win-win situation for the entire community as seniors benefit from reduced costs and younger members gain employment opportunities.

The Need for a Berkshire Village

The demographics of Berkshire County will not surprise you. According to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's report of 2015, adults over 65 years of age constitute more than 20 % of the population. This means that of the 130,000 Berkshire residents, about 24,000 are older adults. In addition, 40,000 residents of the county, born between 1946-1964, will be retiring in the next 10 to 20 years. (For results of the survey, go to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's website, berkshireplanning.org)

Many Berkshire residents over 65 live alone, do not engage with their communities and are further isolated by limited access to the online world. Our towns are spread out and obtaining goods and services can be challenging. With minimal public transportation in the county and no real presence of Uber or LYFT, arranging for transportation is difficult. Our beautiful topography also poses hindrances for older adults, especially at night when the green hills become black, bright city lights are non-existent and our country roads become more hazardous. In fact, the inability to drive at night, or at all, is often the deciding factor compelling older adults to leave their homes for a life care community.



Key to Villages is what
volunteers can do to help!

**Don't ask what
Villages can do for
you...**

**but what you can
do for Villages!!!**

The Village Mechanism

A village enables community members to enjoy life in their own homes, safely and affordably by operating in a symbiotic relationship—neighbors helping neighbors.

The village serves as a clearing house providing members with information, volunteer services and social opportunities, resulting in healthy, vibrant and meaningful living. *The key to the success of this movement is that the helped are often also the helpers.* Here are some of the volunteer roles:

Members Services

The following services are available to all members: Please note that you may be a volunteer as well as a recipient of some of the services that Villages of the Berkshires offers.

- Telephone check-ins and home visits
- Transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, etc.
- Household help, minor home repairs or outdoor work.
- Help with computer, mobile phone or other technology needs
- A variety of social, educational and wellness activities through our partnership with Osher Life Long Institute at Berkshire Community College (OLLI at BCC) and other agencies.

Benefits of membership... tangible and intangible

- You need to make only one phone call for information, referrals and resources
- Members only website for continually updated information, ideas and events, links
- A network of pre-screened service providers who can offer discounted services
- Pre-screened and trained volunteers to assist with your personal needs
- Access to educational, social interest group and other activities of OLLI@BCC
- Peace of mind

ALL THIS WHILE STILL REMAINING IN YOUR OWN HOME!

How does Villages of the Berkshires Differ From Government or Non-Profit Organizations?

Berkshire County has over 55 social service non-profits—a number disproportionate to our low population numbers. Many of these are especially for senior citizens. We are fortunate to be allied with some of these entities. Berkshire Elder Services, Councils on Aging, Berkshire Super-Genarians, to name a few. We also partner with The Osher Life Long Learning Institute (OLLI) www.berkshireolli.org and Age-Friendly Berkshires (AFB) www.agefriendlyberkshires.com.

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Live at home with peace of mind

Our Mission

To enable people to age in their own home by
fostering independence, a sense of security
and a meaningful life.

JOIN US AND BECOME A MEMBER

To become a member
go to the Villages of the Berkshires website
www.villagesoftheberkshires.org
and click on Membership
or call 413-347-4404

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Interested in volunteering to help with the
newsletter. Let us know.

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