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Villages Update

The Newsletter of Villages of the Berkshires, Inc.

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*Welcome 2020
Newsletter*



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WEBSITE UPDATES

New Headers and Updates to Readability.

Check out our new updates on our website:

www.villagesoftheberkshires.org

Why the changes? There's a lot written about designing websites for older adults. Two things we immediately updated were the fonts (adding a serif) and the text color contrasts. In addition we unified the headers. Going forward we will incorporate more of the people we serve with photo editorials. We hope you like our first steps.



A Readers' Guide

by Wendy Robbins

Let this not be the winter of our discontent. If it's too cold and icy to be outdoors, then be a couch potato and enjoy some literature on aging. Reading up on a topic that we obsess about—for good reason—should prove to be an enlightening experience. I hope this brief guide to both fiction and non-fiction books, journal and newspaper articles, will not only increase your knowledge but will actually make you feel better.

So, let's begin with an author who piqued my interest when she was the keynote speaker of OLLI's August 2019 one-day university day, Living Longer, Living Better: Changing the Culture of Aging. Ashton Applewhite, a writer activist, and self-appointed advocate for those over 65, debunked the myths and pitfalls surrounding aging. Her enthusiasm was contagious, and soon everyone was sitting up straighter in their seats and hanging on to every word. *The Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism* is her widely popular book, first self-published in 2016 but quickly reissued by a major publisher, Macmillan in 2019. A half hour of her enthusiastic straight talk is much better than a bottle of Geritol! Panel discussions highlighted the rest of this informative day, and all the attendees I knew went home in a better frame of mind than when they arrived.

In the November 4, 2019 issue of *The New Yorker*, Arthur Krystal in "A Critic at Large" wrote an article entitled "Old News," essentially a bibliographic essay on aging. He includes Applewhite along with four other authors, calling them "chatty accounts meant to reassure us that getting old just means that we have to work harder at staying young." Don't get bogged down over his references to Ecclesiastes, Shakespeare, Swift and many other ancient and contemporary literary figures, but do read the books he suggests. I will cite a few titles on his list and will include a few picks of my own as well. Google the 50 best books on Aging and you will always have something to read. Are they all hot off the press? No. As a former high school and university librarian, I often told my students that any book you haven't read qualifies as a new book.

Some well-known and terrific novels fit into this template. Barbara Pym, the prolific British novelist's *Quartet in Autumn* is a great starter. Continuing with the English writers mentioned in the *New Yorker* article, is Kingsley Amis', *The Old Devils*. You have seen the movie with Jack Nicholson, now read the book, *About Schmidt* by Louis Begley. Wallace Stegner is an old favorite and *The Spectator Bird* will not disappoint with its elegant phrases and immediacy of the plot. The sequel to *Olive Kitteredge*, so popular that there was a television version starring Frances McDormand, is *Olive Again*, by Elizabeth Strout. Although Olive, the cantankerous retired teacher may not likeable, I believe that all of us share a few of her quirky notions and behaviors and will be touched by her story.

Reader's Guide Cont.

In the non-fiction category, Krystal suggests Carl Honore's *Bolder: Making the Most of our Longer Lives*. Or pick up Nora Ephron's *I feel Bad About My Neck*. She is one author whose long, rambling parenthetical sentences are spot-on. (Why do most of these books have subtitles to explain their subject matter? Perhaps because titles don't want to use unattractive words like aging or one's neck!) Ready to delve into some philosophy? Simone de Beauvoir's *The Coming of Age*, written in 1970, it is still relevant today.

Four years ago, *New York Times* reporter, John Leland, began chronicling the lives of six octogenarians in a series of articles. These heartening reports were published in his book, *Happiness is a Choice You make: Lessons from a Year Among the Oldest Old*. On January, 5, 2020, a poignant post script to this series appeared in the Metropolitan section of the Times.

Almost daily, America's magazines, journals and newspapers feature articles or special sections covering every facet of aging. The latest that I have read, "Memory Need Not Fail us" by Daniel J. Levitin appeared on January 12 in the *New York Times* Sunday Review section. These articles tend to be thought provoking rather than highly prescriptive. Remember the old green reference books in libraries known as the Readers Guide? Now we have Google in the comfort of our home. Go online, grab your kindle, or visit a library or bookstore and you will have enough reading material to keep you busy and happy into your nineties!

Welcome to the Board.

DAVID CASS, RICHARD PETRINO AND BARBARA VINIAR ARE NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBERS. CONGRATULATIONS!

READ IT NEXT TIME

Hub & Spoke

In our next newsletter we'll be telling you more about why our Village was structured on the "hub and spoke" model, and how it is already prompting considerable interest among other towns in the Berkshires to form new villages and come in under our umbrella organization.



Road Map

A lot of people were wondering about the nuts and bolts of becoming a volunteer. We decided to map it out for you. Enjoy this flow chart to get your volunteer ideas going! Click on the flow chart to start the process.



Enrollment Process



VOLUNTEERS



Here's some news!

Volunteer Manual Debut

We would like you to know that the first edition of our Volunteer Manual is complete.

Would you like a copy?

Let us know and we'll send you a link.

Email us: villagesoftheberkshires@gmail.com

Wondering about becoming a member?

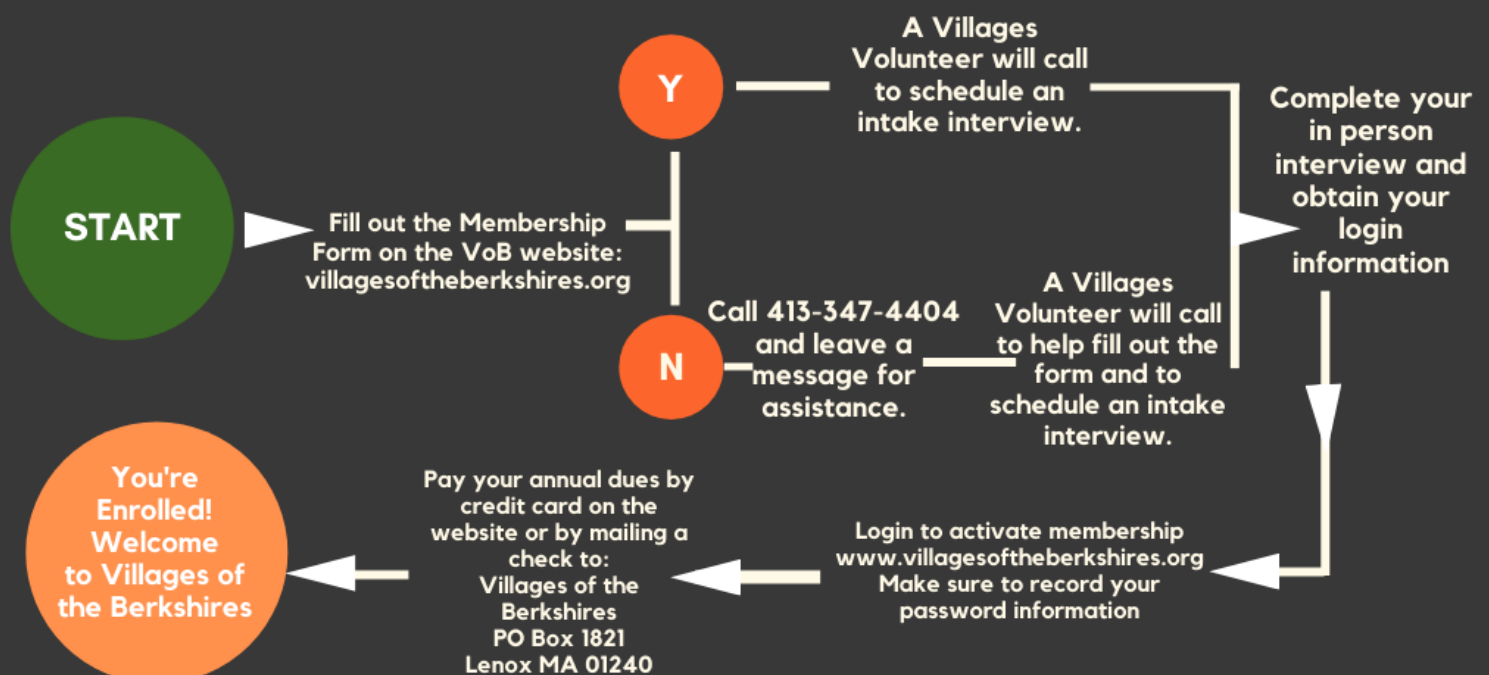
Well, here's your "how to" flow chart. We are glad you are interested! You can click on the chart to begin the process. Welcome aboard!



Enrollment Process



MEMBERSHIP



Have you checked out our site on your mobile device?

We've spent time making our site more "friendly" on more devices. Our hope is that you and your loved ones are able to easily request services where ever you are once you become a member. Check out our site now:
www.villagesoftheberkshires.org