



Village Update

Villages of the Berkshires Newsletter
Fall 2023

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As we approach Thanksgiving, we give a special thanks for the establishment of Villages of the Berkshires. We believe that this program is so important to the future of older people in our communities who wish to remain home as they grow older. We are learning that with the number of people who are reaching their senior years, the ability of existing services may not be as readily available in the future. Therefore, the need for our programming and services are an important part of the Berkshires ability to meet the needs of its constituents, now and in the future.

"Giving Tuesday" is less than two weeks away. Might you consider helping us, as we move forward, with a generous contribution during this season of giving. [CLICK HERE](#) if you wish to make a donation. Thank you!

Villages of the Berkshires Recipient of State Funding

Thanks to the efforts of past Massachusetts Senator Adam Hinds and the current Senator from the Berkshires, Paul Mark, Villages of the Berkshires has begun to receive state funds for its ongoing programs and

We will be planning information sessions for communities throughout the Berkshires to discuss membership, volunteering and the programs and activities of the organization including how one might seek

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Berkshires received \$25,000 for Fiscal Year 2022/23 and is now receiving \$25,000 for Fiscal Year 2023/24.

These funds will be used for the ongoing operations of Villages of the Berkshires as we continue to provide volunteer and support services, information and engagement to people who wish to remain in their homes as they grow older. A primary purpose of these funds is to ensure that the position of Program Director, currently filled by Sarah Dias, will continue to be maintained.

In addition to funding the position of Program Director, the State funds provide support for financial assistance to individuals interested in being members of Villages of the Berkshires who have limited resources and may not be able to manage the fees for full membership.

If you are interested in membership and might need financial assistance with membership fees, do not hesitate to contact us. Villages of the Berkshires can be reached at info@villagesoftheberkshires.org or by phone at (413) 409-6400 or visit the website at villagesoftheberkshires.org.

It is our hope that State funding will continue into future years as we grow and develop the organization and increase its presence in all communities throughout the Berkshires.

Sponsorship Opportunities Now Available

We seek the support of your business or company in the Villages of the Berkshires. Your support will enable us to sustain the organization and ensure that operations can continue and meet the needs of our members. It could also provide support for individuals who have limited finances to receive a scholarship and become members of Villages of the Berkshires.

Often, our members are customers of your business or company. The presence of your name on our sponsorship list and on our website will ensure that our members and volunteers are aware of your commitment to our efforts.

For additional information, contact us at info@villagesoftheberkshires.org or (413) 409-6400.

Are you interested in learning more about Villages of the Berkshires or how you could become involved as a Volunteer? Join us at an upcoming information session:

- Saturday, December 2nd from 1-3PM at the Milne Public Library. 1095 Main St., Williamstown
- Wednesday, November 29th from 1-3PM at the West Stockbridge Community Church. 45 Main St., West Stockbridge

To register click [here](#) or call (413) 409-6400.

Meet Rich Petrino: Member, Volunteer, and Board Member

by: Fran Weinberg, Member, Villages of the Berkshires



Rich and his wife, Elaine.

Have you ever known someone to go from nuclear engineering to practicing psychotherapy and then to executive coaching and consulting on organizational development? Meet Rich Petrino, member of the SAGE Village of the Villages of the Berkshires and a director on the VoB board. I had the pleasure of speaking with Rich recently, and although I first considered his career path unconventional, I soon saw its logic.

Let's go back to Rich's senior year in high school in South Huntington, Long Island, New York. Perhaps because several men in his family had been in the military, he paid attention when two friends of his chose military academies for college. With the required support of his Congressional representative, Rich found himself attending the United States Naval Academy. Graduating in 1968, his next step was five years as an officer in the Navy in exchange for his tuition-free college education. One of his assignments was on a submarine. There he observed and noted how the crew handled long-time confinement in tight quarters. Rich must have been an approachable observer; decades later, he still remembers the enlisted men saying he "was an officer they could talk to."

The camaraderie Rich could generate while maintaining professional distance made him think about graduate work in psychology instead of in his earlier interest—nuclear engineering. Then with more research into psychology and related fields, Rich saw that a doctorate in social work—focusing on human behavior, organizational behavior, and the practice of management—would be a better fit. So he applied to Bryn Mawr, outside of Philadelphia and earned his PhD in 1977. (Back in 1912, Bryn Mawr had been the first college in the United States to offer doctorates in social work; in 1970, the social work department became the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research.)

above executive coaching and organizational development. He describes those twenty-five years as working with individuals, groups, and teams across a wide range of industries,” among them, health care, manufacturing, and transportation. And he experienced the full range of business conditions: for-profit and not-for profit, union and non-union, “slow and steady environments and rapid-change environments.” The PhD also led to Rich’s five-year position as the vice president of human resources and chief learning officer in a Fortune 100 company. (For me, that’s a new and impressive C suite title.)

How did Rich find his way to the Berkshires? By a common route—following friends who had moved here first; they made Rich aware of all that the area offers. Rich and his wife, Elaine Radiss, bought a house here in 1992; in 2006, they began living in Great Barrington full time. Rich soon found a way to give himself to the Berkshires. For years he and Elaine Radiss have been involved with CATA (Community Access to the Arts). The organization uses the arts (painting, dance, theater, drumming, yoga, and more) to nurture and celebrate the creativity of people with disabilities. Professional faculty offer more than two thousand workshops a year to the students.

To wrap up this profile, let’s examine how Rich became involved with Villages of the Berkshires. He met Shirley and Howard Shapiro, who first floated the idea of bringing the national Village Movement ([The Village to Village Network](#)) to the Berkshires. From them, Rich learned that Villages represent a promising new model, with the potential for positively affecting older people in ways that may reduce social isolation, expand access to services, increase well being, and increase their confidence in their ability to age in their homes. Since this goal matched Rich’s own vision of building a strong community here, he let the Shapiros know that he wanted to get involved—initially, to volunteer his services to other older people and later to access the services he himself may need. Now, as noted above, Rich is a member of SAGE Village of the Berkshires (the acronym stands for Sheffield, Alford, Great Barrington, and Egremont) and is on the board of the Villages of the Berkshires. The whole philosophy of the Village Movement is consistent with his view that we need a community beyond the communities we develop through, for example, sports, worship, political leanings, intellectual pursuits (this last, perhaps, via Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, a partner of Villages of the Berkshires). We need, he contends, a way to connect with people who live in our neighborhoods but whom we’re not crossing paths with in the natural flow of our lives. These are people we can meet through Villages; they are people we can rely on and who can rely on us, so we must meet them.

Finally, as a member of Villages of the Berkshires, Rich recalls experiences that Villages made available to him—namely, getting no-cost physical therapy sessions with a Berkshire Community College student studying to become a PT assistant (BCC is another partner of VB’s); and what about that great array of fruits, veggies, and endless baked goods provided at the home of Wendy Robbins in late summer? Rich looks forward to more and different Village-arranged events and to expanding the membership base as we move into 2024.

Winter is Approaching



Members, please remember our volunteers are here to help with your winter needs to ensure you remain safe throughout the season. We can help with moving outdoor furniture, ensuring your road salt supply is accessible, or shoveling a sidewalk to name just a few.

Some resources to keep you safe & healthy this winter:

- [Tip Sheet: Winter Safety for Older Adults](#)
- [US Department of Transportation Winter Driving Tips](#)

What do you need from Villages of the Berkshires?

If you are a member of Villages of the Berkshires (VoB) and have not utilized its services, now may be the time! We are approaching the winter months and you may have things to do in preparation. Or, perhaps, you want to think about what might be helpful to you during the winter months. Don't hesitate to reach out to VoB; we have volunteers who are ready to serve and be of help.

Also, please let us know if you have any program ideas or activities that you would like to see organized by VoB. Maybe a walking group; maybe a book club; maybe just a time to get together and enjoy tea or coffee. Please submit your ideas to:

info@villagesoftheberkshires.org

Building Community in the Berkshires!

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