

News from West River Valley Senior Housing



FEBRUARY 2015

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Dear Friends

This month marks my 3rd anniversary since joining the team at Valley Cares. Everyday people here continue to astound me in this pure, caring community.

As you might have heard the New Year “rained” in as a night to remember at West River Valley Assisted Living when a sprinkler pipe in our attic burst. No residents were hurt, but a few apartments experienced flooding, and we had to evacuate the entire building until the fire suppression system was deemed fully operational. Help came from every direction as aid workers and volunteers arrived to assist with the evacuation. We are so grateful to the whole community for ensuring the well-being of our residents. I am pleased to report that all residents are back home and now able to look back at the New Year’s Eve events as something for the storybooks. To quote our beloved Mr. Patrick, “I never thought I would get flooded out of a second floor apartment!”

You will read in this newsletter about a new program Valley Cares is excited to offer in the West River Valley. We have been selected to host SASH (Support And Services at Home), a program that has had much success around the state. This program employs a Coordinator and a Wellness Nurse who provide free, targeted service coordination and wellness planning for Medicare eligible seniors. We look forward to bringing you more details as our program develops.

-Susanne Shapiro, RN, ED

Kitchen Under New Management

As of the beginning of February, the kitchen at West River Valley Assisted Living is under new management. Our new kitchen management company is Healthcare Services Group (HCSG), a company that runs kitchens all over the northeast but is based out of Pennsylvania. In our area, HCSG also provides food services at such other senior living establishments as Equinox Terrace, Thompson House and Cedar Hill.

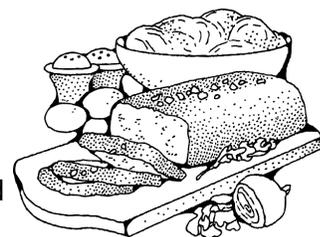
HCSG prides their self on having a “resident-centered approach” to their services. According to their website, they:

- Focus on the resident experience
- Recognize the potential for mealtime to be a highlight of each resident’s day
- Place a priority on sanitation

Menus are designed with the input and preferences of residents in mind and overseen by a regional dietician.

The kitchen has continued the tradition of monthly food committee meetings with residents. The new company is eager to learn everyone’s preferences and to elevate the dining experience for West River Valley Assisted Living.

We are excited about the new potential that this company brings, especially since most of our previous kitchen staff were able to stay on board as HCSG employees. People who work here become part of our community. It means so much to all of us that they are here to blend their talents, knowledge and care for residents with the new kitchen expertise.



Resident Highlight: Bunty Long By Bob Crego

The importance of family, home, and a strong sense of place are concepts which arise again and again when speaking with Edith “Bunty” Long, a resident of West River Valley Assisted Living.

Bunty moved to Vermont last March from Waters Edge, Florida to be closer to her son John and daughter-in-law Emily. “I lived in senior housing very similar to this, but I didn’t have family around. I would see residents go out to dinner with their families. I thought: ‘how nice it is that they can get together.’ Now I have that,” explains Bunty.

Clearly Bunty revels in connection to people—her relations and her new neighbors here. “Everyone here is so interesting; they all have such wonderful stories,” she says. “And I have a lovely view—for what more could I ask?”

Before relocating to Florida in the 1980s, Bunty had lived in West Dover for much of her adult life, running the Waldwinkel Ski Chalet, which she built with her late husband, Herbert. According to Bunty, rural Vermont was a great place to raise three children (Phillip, her eldest son, and youngest child, Joy, both live in Colorado now). “We would ski in the afternoons for an hour or two, then I would think: ‘well...what should I make for dinner this evening (for the guests).’”

Herbert, a carpenter by trade, discovered Vermont on a ski trip in the 1950s. Though Herbert’s family owned a successful lumber business in Hershey, Pennsylvania, he had the “wanderlust,” according to Bunty, who adds, “He felt he had the ability to do more than wait on folks for a pound of nails.”

Examples of Herbert’s handiwork—a diorama of hummingbirds, and a series of small framed “found” works depicting spider webs—decorates Bunty’s apartment at WRV. When Herbert passed away in 2005, the couple had been married for 59 years. They met by chance toward the end of the Second World War. Herbert was a member of the U.S. Signal Corp, stationed in England. “He saw me behind a white horse and wagon,” says Bunty, who was serving in the British Women’s Land Army in Somerset at the time.

Some 64,000 women and girls were part of this division of armed services. Its purpose was to keep the country’s family farms going while the men fought in the war. “I did everything a farmer would do. I learned to milk cows,” says Bunty, who was a bit of a city girl from Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire.

Though she has lived in the States since 1946, Bunty still



Bunty and Millie

has an engaging English accent—one that suggests a character with a fair amount of charm and wit. Fittingly, her friends and family began calling her “Bunty” as a youngster after the female lead in a hit British play of the 1910s, “Bunty Pulls the Strings.”

Bunty continues to impress us with her enchanting sense of fashion, including a remarkable collection of hats. While in Florida, she volunteered at a thrift shop for 17 years. Since moving here she has continued this pursuit by volunteering at the West Townshend Country Store’s thrift shop. “They keep my busy, and I enjoy it,” says Bunty.

Employee Highlight: Millie Barry By Becca Schaefer

Millie Barry is a member of our care staff who started working here as a per diem caregiver in October 2012. At that time this was a second job for her, so she worked primarily on weekends and occasional evenings. In November of 2013, she became a fulltime employee here.

Millie has three [grown] children – 2 daughters, a son, and a grandbaby who was born in July. Her son, Patrick, father of the new baby girl, lives in Saxtons River and manages the farm at Kurn Hattin. Her daughter, Emily, is studying to be an RN at Castleton State College. Her youngest daughter, Sarah, also lives up that way in Burlington.

Millie possesses a wide array of administrative knowledge from working at a credit counseling non-profit, in development at Kurn Hattin Homes, in special

education and guidance at Bel-lows Falls Middle School, and bookkeeping – to name a few.

Before joining our team, Millie had personal experience caring for aging loved ones, but no professional experience providing care. However she had the confidence that she could do the job and the desire to learn. And learn she has. Indeed, her willingness to learn and to help wherever needed is noted by those around her on a daily basis. Millie is very grateful for the coworkers who trained her and shared tidbits of knowledge.

“You have to let people get to know you,” advises Millie.

“That can take a long time, especially if you are only here a couple days a week. There are a lot of different faces and names to learn, but it is *important.*”

Millie’s favorite part about working here is the people. “Everyone here is so different,” she says. “We are all unique and wonderful people.” When she can bring a smile to someone’s face, it means so much.

When Millie isn’t working here she is spreading the cheer elsewhere. She is a Master Gardener. She keeps herself on the go volunteering at St. Michael Church and School, Parks Place, and Kurn Hattin Homes. ...And of course there is that new baby granddaughter that she can’t get enough of!

Much Fun to Be Had By Dawn Slade

It may be cold outside, but that is no reason for us to stop having fun! That was our thinking this winter as we snowshoed and went on horse-drawn sleigh rides. Of course we’ve also found time to relax and rejuvenate indoors with the addition of weekly yoga classes led by Jen Frey of Newfane Village Yoga and, of course, the ever-popular monthly wine and cheese party.

As we look forward to spring, we dream of flowers and green. How better to rein that in than a trip to the Spring Bulb Show at Smith College in March? It will soon be time for St. Patrick’s Day celebrations. Then we will observe Easter with the much loved Easter Egg Hunt (open to children of the community). To get a peak at all our goings on, visit us on Facebook.

Interested in getting involved here? Contact Dawn Slade. THANKS to all the volunteers who enrich our lives in many different ways!

Our Wish List

As an affordable housing organization we do our best to operate on a slim budget. There are a few things we would really like to have, but we need a little help to get them. Will you consider making a donation toward these items?

Vital Signs Monitor



Step Aerobics Step

Flowers & Perennials



Platform/Chair Scale

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As you plan for the future
think of Valley Cares...

*Because the West River
Valley is a wonderful place
to call "home"*



SASH coming to Townshend!

We are very excited to announce that Valley Cares has been selected to host a SASH program for residents of the West River Valley! SASH, standing for **Support And Services at Home**, provides in-home service coordination and wellness resources to seniors who are Medicare eligible. The goal is to support health and wellness of seniors living independently at home. Participation is completely voluntary and free.

You may have heard of SASH in the news lately, as even the Governor has lauded the program's success and declared that the state should support this model program. SASH was created by a housing organization in Burlington and has proven to be a success locally in Brattleboro, Springfield and Ascutney. Under this model, a housing organization hosts the SASH program and develops a collaborative team of health care professions and service providers who provide support, education, advice and oversight. To learn more about how SASH works go to www.sashvt.org.



Townshend has long been on the radar of regional and state SASH planners as an optimal site for the SASH program - with both Valley Cares and Grace Cottage Hospital providing services to an aging population in the greater community. SASH will work collaboratively with other programs in the area so that they may support and enhance each other to achieve the greatest community benefit. We recognize that this type of a multidimensional approach is a promising way to meet more community needs.

Funding for the new program begins in April 2015. Many details are still being worked out, the most important of which is hiring the new SASH Coordinator. This full-time position is the keystone of a great SASH program. It requires someone with a social services background and a big heart. Contact Becca at Valley Cares for more information, (802) 365-7190 ext.106.

Stay tuned this spring as this new program rolls out!

Valley Cares Inc. is an independent community-based 501(c)(3) organization committed to providing affordable housing and supportive services to the elderly residents of the West River Valley and surrounding towns.