

TECHNOLOGY



COURTESY OF ANDREA PIACQUADIO

Some local computer centers provide tutoring to seniors to learn the basics of computers and social media.



COURTESY OF ANNA SHVET

Social media provides seniors with a way to feel a sense of connectedness, such as through a group they can follow that centers on a particular hobby or as a way to keep up with relatives who live out of state.

Social savvy seniors

Social media use by older adults is on the rise in the last decade

By Courtney Diener-Stokes
For MediaNews Group

Many seniors who were resistant to using technology before the pandemic might have learned through necessity some of the benefits of social media along with the ins and outs of Zoom.

These tools helped keep them connected to loved ones while in isolation or enabled them to take a remote exercise class offered by their local senior center.

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan American think tank based in Washington, D.C., that provides information on social issues, public opinion and demographic trends shaping the United States and the world, showed that 45% of those age 65 and older reported using social media in 2021 com-

pared with 84% of those ages 18-29 and 81% of those 30 to 49.

"At the same time, presence on social media among Americans 65 and older grew about fourfold since 2010, while use by the youngest adults remained relatively constant in that time frame," according to Pew. "Since 2010, the gap between adults under 30 and adults 65 and older shrank from 71 points to 39 points."

Nancy Niggel of Montgomery County, 59, has been a Facebook user for quite some time. She also has an Instagram account she uses to follow other people, but rarely posts. Niggel uses social media for her career in management as well as for personal interests.

"I follow a lot of mosaic crafting groups," she said, adding that the Mosaic Society of Philadelphia

is one in particular. "In the beginning I asked a lot of questions, but once you get going you can ride on other people's questions and learn a lot of stuff."

Niggel's favorite time to get caught up on social media is in the evening.

"I just lay there in bed and look at my stuff in bed before going to sleep," she said.

Niggel follows some cousins and two of her siblings who live out of state, but she doesn't follow her grown kids on Facebook.

"I don't like to know too much about what my kids are up to," she said. "They will tell me what they want me to know."

Her time on social media provides her with a sense of belonging and connection.

"You do feel somewhat a part

HELP IS AVAILABLE

One-on-one tutoring: To request a tutor at the Chester County Library, 450 Exton Square Parkway, Exton, you need to fill out a One-on-One Tutor Request Form and submit it in person at the John W. Jacobs Technology Center.

Basic computer training: This is designed to assist people who have never used a computer. Meet with a volunteer tutor for two hours and you will learn to use the mouse, keyboard and basic skills including navigating the Internet.

Facebook: This is designed to help people learn about social networking on Facebook. Meet

with a volunteer tutor for two hours. You will learn how to upload photos, tagging, instant messaging, account security, privacy and more on your Facebook account. If you don't have a Facebook account, you can also learn the basics of creating a new profile.

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SOCIAL SAVVY SENIORS » PAGE 2

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HOLIDAY BAZAAR



COURTESY OF DUNWOODY VILLAGE

Stephen Ruzanksy, vice president of the Dunwoody Village Residents' Association, and Lucy Irwin, holiday bazaar chairperson, invite the community to the event.

Dunwoody Village to hold annual holiday bazaar

For *MediaNews Group*

Dunwoody Village in Newtown Township, Delaware County, is hosting its annual holiday bazaar on Nov. 17 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The public is invited to attend.

The bazaar is the culmi-

nation of hours of preparation by Dunwoody's residents, who organize the event as well as collect and create the items to be sold. All proceeds from the event are used to enhance Dunwoody resident programs. "Traditionally, the bazaar involves a lot of our

residents, through a variety of groups and committees," said resident Lucy Irwin, who is chairing this year's event. "It's been three years since we've been able to invite the surrounding community to Dunwoody for this showcase, and there's so much energy!"



COURTESY OF DUNWOODY VILLAGE

Fran Northrup, floral studio chairperson, with an array of items her committee has created for the holiday bazaar.

The excitement for this year's bazaar is heightened not only because the bazaar had been cancelled for the past two years due to COVID-19 restrictions, but also because the event will take place in the brand-new auditorium that is part of the newly renovated Commu-

nity Building. The bazaar features a wide array of items from which to choose, including unique handcrafted items, holiday decorations, attic treasures, costume jewelry, baked goods, house plants and much more. Visitors can also take a chance on

baskets of cheer. Dunwoody Village is a continuing care retirement community located at 3500 West Chester Pike, Newtown Township, Delaware County, at the intersection with Bryn Mawr Avenue. For more information, visit www.dunwoody.org.



COURTESY OF BRIAN PARKES

Brian Parkes, executive director of the TriCounty Active Adult Center

Social savvy seniors

FROM PAGE 1

of a group for satisfaction," she said.

When it comes to new features on Facebook, Niggel takes to the internet to figure things out on her own.

"I go to YouTube to learn how to navigate something new to Facebook," she said.

For those who prefer

guidance beyond the internet, places such as the Chester County Community Library's John W. Jacobs Technology Center offer one-on-one tutoring for basic computer training or the opportunity to learn about social networking on Facebook.

The free session is two hours long and involves meeting with a volunteer tutor. To request a tutor, those interested need to fill out a request form and submit it in person at the Technology Center. The computer center is open

to the public.

According to the library's reference desk, most who take the computer classes are 60-plus and are looking to learn how to navigate the computer or need help using their smartphone or tablet, such as learning the settings.

Another computer resource is the TriCounty Active Adult Center in Pottstown, which offers computers for people to use who visit the non-profit community center.

"Some use them to ac-

cess email and social media," said Brian Parkes, TriCounty's executive director.

He said some also like to use the computers for Solitaire and other online games.

Other newer and very popular web-based games for seniors are Words with Friends and Wordle, the word puzzle that gives you six chances to guess a five-letter word. The game is owned and published by the New York Times.

The daily challenge Wordle offers is consid-

ered a good way to keep the mind sharp for seniors.

At TriCounty, Parkes saw how the pandemic encouraged first-time usage of technology among those in the active aging category. It served as a way to keep them connected.

"We did see a lot of first-time Zoom users log in for exercise classes during the past two years," he said. "It was a steep learning curve for some, but they were definitely more willing to try out new technology."

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SPOT OF T

Our hunt for Red October

By Terry Alburger

Morning drives in October are just stunning. It's rather like driving through an artist's palette, through varying shades of orange, yellow, green and brown. But by far, the most stunning of all are the shades of red.

Certain trees turn a bright red, as a prized ruby in an ornate setting of gems. And if you happen to catch this treasure around sunrise, it is nothing short of dazzling.

These are the trees I seek out, the ones that make me do a double take. The beauty of this color defies adequate de-



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Nature is resplendent in red in the fall.

scription. It must be seen to be appreciated.

Unfortunately, this bright array of color only lasts a few short weeks, but it is well worth a

drive through a park or other wooded areas. The memory of autumn's majesty has to sustain us through the sometimes-bleak days of winter. So, soak in these colorful days while you can!

I find myself slowing down as I make my way to work in the mornings. It is calming to take in such beauty. And it's fascinating to think that just a few short weeks ago, most of these leaves were all a similar shade of green.

Ah, the joy of being a Pennsylvania girl. We get the best of every season. That goes for our trees, as well as so many other things.

Unless you have been

living in a bubble, you know that there is another hunt for Red October going on right now ... the quest for another World Series championship by our incredible Philadelphia Phillies.

The excitement is everywhere. At my workplace, we hosted a Phillies Day, a dress-down day for employees and a pep rally for residents. It was a sea of red!

It is so wonderful to be united for a hopeful cause like this one. People tend to be happier, friendlier and definitely more hopeful.

In fact, I recently heard a TV news report that crime was down in the city of Philadelphia.



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Philadelphia Phillies designated hitter Bryce Harper celebrates with the trophy after winning the baseball NL Championship Series in Game 5 against the San Diego Padres.

Perhaps people are so gripped with Phillies fever, that they are less apt to feel angry... coincidence? Maybe. But we are all definitely united in this Red October.

So whether you are enjoying the vibrant red of the fall leaves or are immersed in this final leg of baseball's season, enjoy it, and feel the power of red.

RETIREMENT

4 non-investment questions to ask an adviser before retiring

By Kate Ashford
NerdWallet

Using a financial adviser for your investment needs is 100% on brand, but what about the other parts of your retirement life? For example, a third of people ages 64 and up have a financial adviser, but only 2% of them asked their adviser to help with their Medicare choices, according to a July 2022 report from health care consulting firm Sage Growth Partners.

But Medicare and other non-portfolio topics — like travel and long-term care — can affect your finances.

"We are actively bringing these ideas to our clients, but there are still plenty of advisers out there that are not," said Crystal Cox, a certified financial planner in Madison, Wis. "They're still focused just on the investments and the portfolio."

Here are some questions

to ask at your next meeting.

1. What retirement decisions do I need to think about?

Your life in retirement may not continue as it has in the past," said Daniel Lash, a CFP in Vienna, Va. "Do you plan to travel? Do you intend to move to a different state or downsize? How often will you want to buy a new vehicle?"

"Most people just think, 'I need a certain amount of money to live on.' What about all the ancillary things that come along with living? All the things you want to do?"

Mapping your retirement plans can help you and your adviser pinpoint when and how you'll need cash.

"Do you have an idea of where you're going to move, and what does real estate look like in that general area?" Lash said. "They've thought about retiring, not

to ask at your next meeting. 'What am I going to do when I retire?'"

2. What should I know about Medicare?

Although you generally can't sign up for Medicare until you're closer to 65 years old, your income in the years beforehand will affect what you pay for coverage. Each year, both Medicare Part B and Medicare Part D base their premiums on your reported modified adjusted gross income from two years prior. So if you filed individually making more than \$91,000, or filed jointly making more than \$182,000, you'll pay additional amounts each month.

"Because there's a look-back on earnings for Medicare expenditures, we'll adjust plans accordingly, because they might be paying considerably more the first couple of years in retirement than later in retire-

ment," Lash said.

It's also wise to consider guidance on Medicare choices in general, because you sometimes can't change coverage later if your health situation shifts — and Medicare is complicated.

"We do an annual meeting with somebody that specializes in Medicare," Lash said. "All clients are invited to attend."

3. Can I afford to self-insure for long-term care?

A person turning 65 now has about a 70% chance of needing some kind of long-term care, and costs are steep: It's \$54,000 a year for an assisted living facility and nearly \$95,000 for a shared room in a nursing home, according to insurance company Genworth's 2021 Cost of Care Survey.

"Some people are well enough off that they're comfortable self-insuring,"

said Kevin Brady, a CFP in New York City. "Others have more limited assets."

No matter what is the case, it's crucial to discuss potential costs and whether you have the savings to manage them. If you don't, you'll need to run the numbers on products like long-term care insurance or a hybrid policy that combines permanent life insurance with a long-term care rider.

"We're always working with an expert to do projections and see what makes sense," Brady said.

4. Do I have enough money to have some fun?

A successful retirement isn't always about the tangibles. For many, it's a time to realize dreams of travel and other experiences, but spending too frugally can get in the way.

"Often clients are overly

conservative for fear of running out of money, but in the process they short-change the retirement experience," said Kevin Lum, a CFP in Los Angeles. "By the time they realize their abundance, they're too old to spend it."

Talk to your adviser about your big-ticket wishes and whether you have enough money to splash out a little before you settle into quieter spending.

Actual retirement spending looks more like a smile than a straight line, Lum said, with more spending at the beginning on things like travel and more spending at the end on long-term care needs.

"I'm not saying people should spend irrationally," Lum said. "But thinking about retirement spending as a fixed calculation that doesn't change across the retirement life isn't a smart idea."

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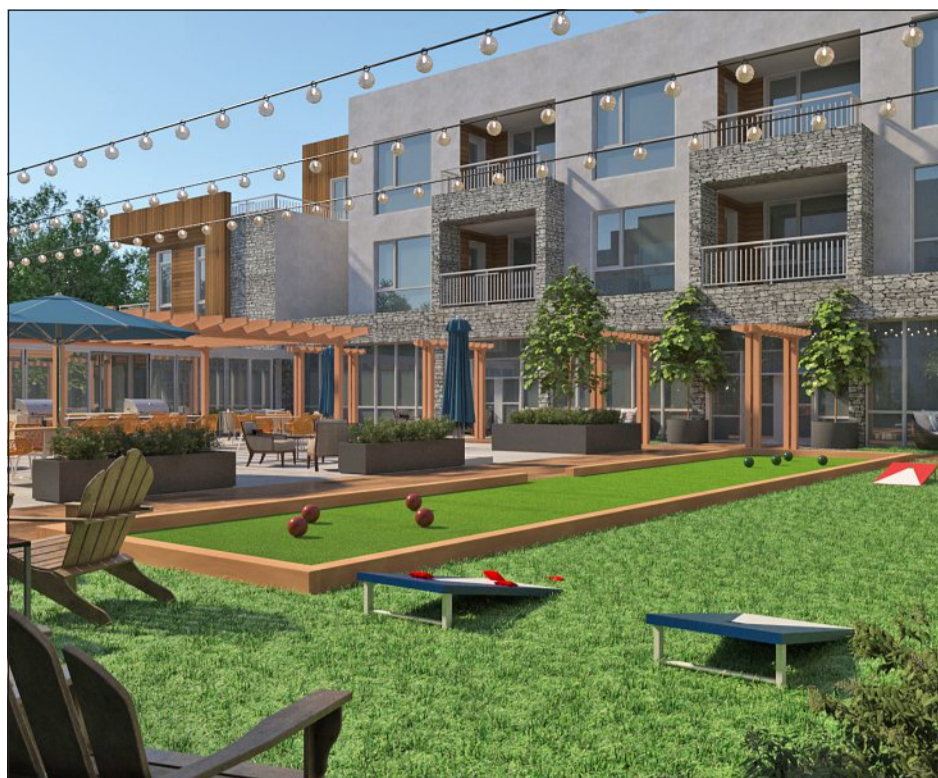


SENIOR LIVING



COURTESY OF SAGELIFE

The 501 at Mattison Estate in Ambler is SageLife's newest luxury senior living community.



COURTESY OF SAGELIFE

Residents of The 501 at Mattison Estate are enjoying the community's extensive amenities, from an indoor pool and fitness center to bar and lounge areas; two theaters and an art studio; a courtyard with a grill, fire pits, a putting green and more.

SageLife's 501 at Mattison Estate opens its doors

For MediaNews Group

The 501 at Mattison Estate, SageLife's newest luxury senior living community, has opened its doors.

Sitting on a 7.9-acre campus in the heart of Ambler, Montgomery County, The 501 offers independent living, assisted living, memory care and the opportunity for respite and restorative stays.

Residents are enjoying the community's extensive amenities, from an indoor pool and fitness center to bar and lounge areas; two theaters and an art studio; a courtyard with a grill; fire pits; a putting green; and more.

"My family can't believe how great it is here," said Carol, who was one of the first 12 residents to move in to The 501. "They compare The 501 to a five-star hotel."

"There are plenty of

things to do and people around," said Stephen, also a member of the original Dirty Dozen, as they called themselves. "We recently had karaoke night, and we play bocce when it's nice out and, if not, we have a golf simulator."

The 501's expert chefs have created unique dining experiences for residents and premium options for every care level.

Independent living residents are enjoying the R5 Pub, named after Main Line Philadelphia's regional rail, and Lindenwold Dining Room, an homage to the Mattison Estate. Assisted living and memory care residents, have access to two dining rooms and The Castle pub.

SageLife communities do not require buy-ins, offering residents the ability to make one monthly payment for their new homes. In ad-

dition to no entrance fees, there are no long-term contracts, allowing residents to live their best lives in a hospitality-focused environment.

"The rental model was vital to me so that I could keep my money working for me and not tied up in a down payment that my family or I may or may not get back," Rosemary said.

All SageLife communities have a maintenance-free lifestyle, which allows residents to not worry about the day-to-day upkeep of homeownership, a huge perk for new residents.

"In addition to spacious and beautifully appointed apartments, residents enjoy a hospitality-focused community without any of the headaches of home ownership," said Parrish Phillips, general manager of The 501. "Live here, and

you obviously won't need to cut the lawn, shovel snow or rake leaves. You also can say good-bye to house cleaning and cook only if you want to.

"Resident can spend time enjoying our proximity to downtown Ambler with its unique shops, delicious restaurants and vibrant nightlife."

Annegret echoed his thoughts.

"I thought about moving for three years," she said. "I did not want to spend another winter shoveling snow or risking a tree falling. From the first moment I got here, I didn't miss my house. The stress was gone."

Eric, along with his wife Helen, agreed: "I was tired of taking care of the house. "We were happy to leave behind all the unused space in our old house. The 501 is excellent. This is now home."

SageLife's philosophy of

living is at the heart of The 501. The community focuses on providing residents with a holistic approach to aging and has developed a MO-SAIC lifestyle, where each letter in represents an aspect of wellness: Movement; Outreach; Social; Arts; Intellect; Curiosity.

"I enjoy the stretching classes and look forward to adding yoga," Annegret said.

SageLife's mission is to encourage, empower, and celebrate successful aging, according to SageLife founder and president Kelly Address.

"Sage is unique in that we go where our residents take us," Address said. "Our communities always reflect the priorities and preferences of the people here."

"It's amazing here, absolutely perfect," Maxene said. "Staff are so friendly and pleasant, and I love

the new construction. It is modern, bright and clean. When your surroundings are new and bright, your outlook on life is new and bright. Everything I need is right here."

Carol was bit more frank.

"It doesn't feel like an 'old people' building," she said. "Everything and everyone are so upbeat. We have fun. There is happy hour every day at 4."

"As they say, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression," Address said, "We are incredibly proud of the team here, bringing our unique value proposition to life — going where our residents take us and ensuring our communities always reflect the priorities and preferences, they want in a home."

For more information, visit sagelife.com/mattison-estate.

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SENIOR LIVING

Move toward your best possible future at Beaumont at Bryn Mawr

For MediaNews Group

Nearly 50 guests braved the tail end of hurricane Ian on Oct. 1 to enjoy brunch at Beaumont at Bryn Mawr, a top retirement community in the region, while getting pointers from two renowned experts on aging.

Glenn Ellis, a health educator, lecturer, author and syndicated columnist, took the stage first to talk about the cerebral aspects of aging; being “self-

ish” about staying healthy, both mentally and physically.

“Aging,” he said, “has been redefined. We are living longer, we want to be independent for as long as possible, and therefore need to reassess our activities and lifestyle — what are we capable of today, not 10 or 20 years ago.”

He had the audience in stitches when he mimed out a “lighter” future, emotionally lighter by letting go of stressors in



COURTESY OF BEAUMONT AT BRYN MAWR

Margit Novack talks about senior moves and letting go of “stuff.”

your life, and physically lighter as well.

“Don’t keep carrying around those extra pounds,” he warned, “your knees, hips, and back will thank you.”

Following Ellis, Margit Novack spoke to the practical, literal side of senior transitions. Having founded Moving Solutions and essentially birthed a senior-focused industry specialization, her experiences give her a unique view of the typical obstacles and challenges seniors face — real and perceived.

Not surprisingly, she used many humorous and poignant anecdotes to illustrate her key point: get rid of “things” because you don’t need them to remember and honor those you loved.

“Instead, share the stories of your parents with your children and those who come after,” she said.

Both agreed that finding purpose and community as we age is the foundation of creating a future rich with possibilities.

“It is your responsibility to find new purpose and to find community,” Novack said. “You won’t like everyone, just like you didn’t like everyone in college. You’ll find

your groups, your peeps, a walking group, a bridge group, a group for whatever your new purpose will be as you move forward. And a bonus point: statistics prove you’ll live longer.”

Guests received complimentary copies of Ellis and Novack’s latest books and

toured several apartments and villas to see how Beaumont residents are able to customize their homes. The finishing touch was a boxed super brownie presented to each guest as they left — so much for a lighter future!

Beaumont at Bryn Mawr is nationally recognized as

a top Life Plan retirement community. Residents cooperatively own the not-for-profit community, and the internal management and healthcare teams deliver the 5-star lifestyle, support and care they expect — for life. For more information, visit www.BeaumontRetirement.com.



COURTESY OF BEAUMONT AT BRYN MAWR

Speakers Glenn Ellis and Margit Novack at a recent brunch at Beaumont at Bryn Mawr.



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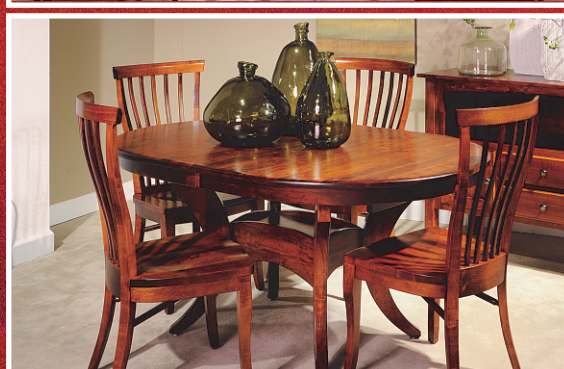
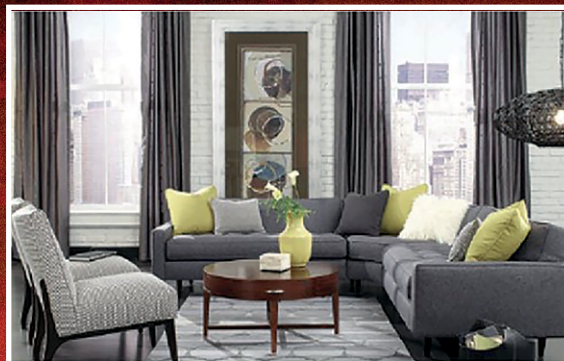


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PROMOTING SENIOR WELLNESS

Aging in a 'smart world': There's an app for that

By Jennifer Singley

At a time where everything seems to have shifted to smart this or smart that — phones, televisions, watches, even thermostats — sometimes it's easy to feel like you're anything but smart while trying to keep up with it all.

This is especially true for older generations who, despite increases over the past decade, still report lower use of technology than their younger counterparts (Pew Research Center, 2022).

In studying technology use among older generations, researchers have discovered that when seniors hear they aren't good at using technology, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy — they avoid using it and then really are less proficient in using it.

The consequences of such attitudes about seniors and technology are unfortunate, as technological advancements hold many possibilities for helping seniors to live meaningful, independent lives.

Technology has a vital place in the day-to-day life of older adults and can support them in their desire to age in place.

Virtual health care

One significant outcome of the pandemic is the way in which virtual health care has become commonplace. And what better arrangement for older adults, many of whom might lack transportation or the ability to trek out of the house to the doctor's office for issues that could instead quickly and easily be addressed by way of a screen visit from the couch.

Many insurance companies offer telehealth apps



Using technology can improve the quality of life for seniors.

for smart devices for individuals to connect with a licensed doctor in their state around the clock. Additionally, several doctors still offer virtual visits to their patients even though in-person visits have widely resumed, having recognized how beneficial that option is for so many of their patients.

Food delivery services

Technology has changed the face of ordering delivery, and it's not just relegated to restaurants anymore.

Yet another positive result of the pandemic, dozens of food delivery apps — such as DoorDash, Instacart and Hello Fresh — place restaurant take-out, fresh groceries and boxed meal kits at your fingertips, allowing homebound older adults aging in place to maintain independence and a healthy diet.

Transportation assistance

For seniors unable to drive, technology simplifies the coordination of rides to get wherever they need to go in the commu-

nity. Transportation apps like Uber or Lyft, which can be downloaded to a smartphone or tablet, enable folks to schedule rides with the click of a button without the hassle of having cash or bus tokens on hand.

Socialization with family and friends

While many of us feel Zoomed out lately, programs like Zoom, Skype and FaceTime can truly be a lifeline for a senior living alone or far away from loved ones.

Whether it's catching up with a friend, virtually joining a family celebration or reading a bedtime story to grandchildren across the country, these social connection apps make it possible for not just seniors, but people of all ages to be actively involved in the relationships that mean the most — no matter the distance.

At The Hickman, we value the role of technology in promoting the quality of life of our residents and their families. Through the LifeLoop program, our residents access daily schedules, reserve spots for desired activities, send emails to connected family members and staff and upload personal photographs and pictures of activities in which they have taken part.

LifeLoop links our residents not just to their Hickman community, in the heart of downtown West Chester, but to their loved ones near and far — offering comfort, connection, and peace of mind. We invite you to visit us and find out why "when you're here, you're home."

SINKING SPRING



BILL UHRICH - READING EAGLE

June Wenrich, 92, waves to passersby and well-wishers for the last time from her front porch along Penn Avenue in Sinking Spring, Berks County.

With a wave of her hand

June Wenrich brought joy to passersby by simply waving to them from her front porch

By Steven Henshaw
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Who knew how much of a positive impact a smile and a wave can have on the disposition of another?

For 62 years, June Wenrich sent good vibes to motorists and anyone else who passed by her home along Penn Avenue in the heart of Sinking Spring, Berks County. Unbeknownst to even her closest relatives until very recently, she touched a whole lot of people.

When the 92-year-old widow's home in the 3800 block of Penn Avenue went up for sale several weeks ago, people noticed. Some expressed concern about her well-being because they hadn't seen her waving to passersby from her porch.

When Wenrich's granddaughter, Jessica Wagner, heard through the grapevine that people were concerned, she took to social media to let everyone know that her grandmother was fine, that it was just time for her to move in with her

daughter and son-in-law Womelsdorf.

She first asked her parents, James and Lois Potts, for their blessing. Her mother is Wenrich's daughter.

The idea emerged to have Wenrich do one last wave from the porch of her home. The reaction was beyond what they expected.

"My parents didn't know, nobody knew, how much she was loved," Wagner said. "So when we decided to make it the 'last wave' everyone was saying we can't wait to drive by and wave."

Members of the public were invited to drive by between 5 and 7 p.m. Tuesday to get a warm smile and one final wave from Wenrich, and of course reciprocate. Some family members sat with her on the porch.

Gratitude poured in through the comments on the Facebook post.

A number of people gave nicknames to the lady on Penn Avenue.

One wrote: "Wait a minute ... this is my Betty?!!!!"

I named her that years and years ago I loved her sooooo much!!!!!! We have moved away And I said one of the things I will miss the most is Betty."

Bus drivers, for Wilson School District and BARTA, were among those who appreciated her the most.

A Wilson school bus driver, upon retirement as a gift to Wenrich, sent her a dye-cast bus. The bus driver's arm was waving out the window. A photo of BARTA bus drivers is among the gifts she's received over the years.

"A woman and her daughter would always stop and drop flowers," Wagner said.

Wagner said her grandmother is touched by the expressions of gratitude and well-wishes.

"We've read her every single comment, and she's in tears," she said.

Anyone who would still like to send Wenrich a card may address them to: June Wenrich, 621 William Penn Blvd., Womelsdorf PA 19567

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SENIOR LIVING

Village model of senior living remains a boutique option

By Judith Graham
Kaiser Health News

Twenty years ago, a group of pioneering older adults in Boston created an innovative organization for people committed to aging in place: Beacon Hill Village, an all-in-one social club, volunteer collective, activity center, peer-to-peer support group and network for various services.

Its message of “we want to age our way in our homes and our community” was groundbreaking at the time and commanded widespread attention. Villages would mobilize neighbors to serve neighbors, anchor older adults in their communities and become an essential part of the infrastructure for aging in place in America, experts predicted.

Today, there are 268 such villages with more than 40,000 members in the U.S., and an additional 70 are in development — a significant accomplishment, considering how hard it is to get these organizations off the ground. But those numbers are a drop in the bucket given the needs of the nation’s 54 million older adults. And villages remain a boutique, not a mass-market, option for aging in place.

Now, people invested in the village movement are asking tough questions about its future. Can these grassroots organizations be seeded far more widely in communities across the country as baby boomers age? Can they move beyond their white, middle-class roots and attract a broader, more diverse membership? Can they forge partnerships that put them on a more stable operational and financial footing?

Villages share common features, although each is unique. Despite their name,



A man rides bicycle inside John Knox Village, a retirement community in Pompano Beach, Fla..

physical structures are not part of villages. Instead, they’re membership organizations created by and for older adults whose purpose is to help people live independently while staying in their own homes. Typically, villages help arrange services for members: a handyman to fix a broken faucet, a drive to and from a doctor’s appointment, someone to clean up the yard or shovel the snow. Volunteers do most of the work.

Also, villages connect members to one another, hosting discussion groups, sponsoring outings, offering classes and organizing social events.

“I’ve lived here a long time, but I really didn’t know a lot of people living in my neighborhood,” said Nancy Serventi, 72, a retired trial lawyer who joined Beacon Hill Village nearly five years ago. “Now, because of the village, I almost always meet people on the street who I can stop and say hello to.”

In principle, this model of neighbors helping neighbors can work in all kinds of

communities, adapted for particular needs. Andrew Scharlach, an emeritus professor of aging at the University of California-Berkeley and a leading researcher on villages, believes the potential for growth is considerable — a view shared by several other aging experts. His work has found that village members have more confidence about aging in place because they expect support will be there when they need it.

In practice, however, the fierce “we’ll do it our way” independence of villages, their reliance on a patchwork of funding (membership dues, small grants and donations) and the difficulty of keeping volunteers and members engaged have been significant obstacles to growth.

“Villages’ long-term sustainability requires more institutional support and connection, whether from local or state governments, or Older American(s) Act programs or partnerships with health care providers,” Scharlach told me.

VILLAGE MODEL » PAGE 8

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Village model

FROM PAGE 7

“We have been brilliant about creating a sense of community and giving people a sense of belonging and being cared for,” said Susan McWhinney-Morse, 88, a co-founder of Beacon Hill Village. “But can what we do be scaled broadly? That’s the critical question.”

Consider how small villages are. According to the latest data from the Village to Village Network, a national organization that disseminates best practices, 35% have 50 or fewer members; only 6% have more than 400. Budgets are modest, with two-thirds of villages operating on \$75,000 a year or less and only 3% spending more than \$400,000.

“What you have are a lot of fiercely independent, hyperlocal organizations scrambling to keep their head above water and a lot of inefficiencies,” said Joel Shapira, who served on the board of the Village to Village Network for six years. “What you need are a lot more orchestrated efforts to bring villages together.”

That’s happening in California, where a coalition of villages is working in sync to expand its impact and seek state funding. Recently, Village Movement California, representing 44 villages with about 7,000 collective members, submitted a \$3 million funding request to the state, which has embraced volunteerism and aging in place in its new Master Plan for Aging.

Priorities include bringing new and existing villages into underserved communities and creating a training institute to promote equity and inclusion, said Charlotte Dickson, Village Movement California’s executive director.

Early discussions are underway with Sistahs Aging with Grace & Elegance, a California organization dedicated to Black women.

“This concept, people in the community taking

care of each other, is not new to the African American community,” said Carlene Davis, a Sistahs Aging co-founder. “But having it in a formalized structure surrounding aging in place intentionally doesn’t exist. We’re at the stage where we’re asking, ‘Can we envision a village model that is culturally responsive to the needs of our community?’”

Another coalition, Washington Area Villages Exchange, represents 75 villages that have opened or are under development in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. Affiliates in the district are supported, in part, by city funding, which rose to nearly \$1 million annually during the pandemic, according to Gail Kohn, coordinator of Age-Friendly D.C.

On a \$50,000 annual budget, Legacy Collaborative Senior Village helps 321 low-income adults in the district, most of them African Americans, access transportation, food, and home and community-based services, and learn how to advocate for themselves with service providers.

“The seniors in our communities are very neighborly, but we had to show them how they could do things on a larger scale if they worked collectively,” said Katrina Polk, the village’s interim executive director and CEO of Dynamic Solutions for the Aging, a consulting firm.

In Colorado, A Little Help has pursued another strategy that many villages are contemplating: forging closer ties with organizations such as Area Agencies on Aging, senior centers and senior housing complexes.

“COVID inspired a fresh look at how we can work together with partners in our communities,” said Barbara Hughes Sullivan, national director of the Village to Village Network.

Since January 2020, A Little Help — which has 970 members in metropolitan Denver, northern Colorado and the western part of the state — has received

\$200,000 to \$250,000 a year from local Area Agencies on Aging. Services supported by this funding stream include frequent “how are you doing” calls, in-person visits and “kindness kits” of books, puzzles or treats that are dropped on members’ doorsteps — all of which eased social isolation during the pandemic, said Hilary Simmons, A Little Help’s executive director.

Because services are government-funded, A Little Help doesn’t charge membership fees, which can be prohibitively high for many older adults. (Beacon Hill Village’s are \$675 a year for an individual and \$975 for a couple, with lower subsidized fees for 20% of members.) Instead, it asks for voluntary contributions, which constitute 2.5% of its \$1 million annual budget. The largest portion, 42%, comes from in-kind services donated by 4,000 volunteers.

Working with Medicare Advantage plans is also an emerging area of interest. Since 2020, plans have been able to offer supplemental benefits that address nonmedical concerns such as home modifications or “social needs,” explained Tyler Cromer of ATI Advisory, a consulting firm that has worked with Village Movement California.

“There’s a lot that villages do to promote health and well-being, and I would love to see a health plan really work with villages to help support their growth,” Cromer said.

That won’t be easy, however, without a stronger research base that can help villages make the case for collaboration, but that is likely “years away,” said Kohn of Washington, D.C.

“We need to show that villages and the social engagement that is their mainstay are making an impact on people’s health and longevity,” she said. “If we can do that, we should be able to get funding through health plans and health systems for villages.”

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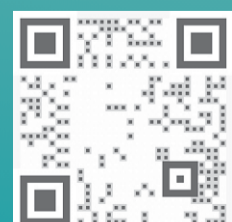


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