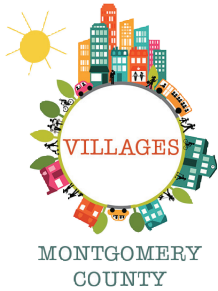


*Fiscal Year 2021-2022*

# MONTGOMERY COUNTY VILLAGES Collective Impact Report





## INTRODUCTION

Only a generation or two ago, most people knew their neighbors. Family members lived in closer proximity to one another and there were fewer families with two working parents. As economic and cultural changes have shifted the way local communities operate, much of that neighborliness has been lost.

To reweave the social fabric of our communities, people needed to intentionally recreate it. This is the core mission of villages.

Belonging to a village can help reduce loneliness and improve health for seniors. Village members, especially in the three years after joining, feel they have more social support and are more confident they can get the help needed to remain in their homes.<sup>1</sup> Villages also drastically reduce isolation by providing opportunities for social and civic engagement.



*"It's so comforting to know that I wasn't going to be all alone during the crisis and closures. With phones and emails, I have so many people, now friends, who live so nearby that I don't feel so isolated... and even see some while taking a walk. It's a kind of peace of mind."*

*Pazil Aviv,  
Montgomery County Village Coordinator, Aging  
and Disability Services*

*Trish Evans,  
Villages Facilitator, Senior Services,  
City of Rockville*

*Elizabeth Haile,  
Executive Director,  
Bethesda Metro Area Village*

<sup>1</sup> According to a 2017 report by UC-Berkeley's Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services. [https://socialwelfare.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/casas\\_pubs\\_villagelongitudinalreport6\\_1\\_17\\_finalv2.pdf](https://socialwelfare.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/casas_pubs_villagelongitudinalreport6_1_17_finalv2.pdf)



## VILLAGES ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

The last two years of pandemic have challenged the way villages have been operating since the first village launched 20 years ago. Members and volunteers altered course and shifted to meet the unique needs their communities faced during the pandemic. Montgomery County villages forged ahead to engage, support, and connect with their community members. They embraced those challenges using technology, resource pooling, and good old-fashioned creativity.

Montgomery County villages are more than the services they offer. While those services are vast and varied, from transportation to friendly visits and assistance in the home, villages meet the critical need of social connectedness.

Tens of thousands of volunteer hours strengthened the safety net for thousands of Montgomery County seniors — these villages donated more than **57,000 volunteer hours** in FY21.<sup>2</sup> As a result, a better and more robust quality of life.

<sup>2</sup> 57,000 hours of volunteer time are estimated to be worth \$1,707,150 according to <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time>.





There are currently 30 active villages and five developing villages in Montgomery County. Most villages operate in the down-county area.<sup>3</sup>

Social events, volunteer rides, light yard work, household chores, friendly visits and phone calls, and errands are just a few examples of the services villages offer their members. Over the past two years, villages have filled 13,340 service requests from their members, all of which were done by volunteers.

The breadth and scope of Montgomery County villages activities becomes even more impressive when you consider the fact that their total combined annual budget is only **\$864,227** – of that – **\$161,884** comes from **County support**.



*"...knowing you're there if I need you is like a great wall of loving support... you make a big, wonderful difference in my life!"*

<sup>3</sup> Statistics, programs, services, photos and quotes provided in this report from 20 villages which submitted data covering 7/1/20-6/30/22.



## **VOLUNTEER RIDES**

Limited access to transportation is a major hurdle for many older adults who no longer drive and wish to age in their community. Village volunteers provided 6,221 rides in the past two years. Not only is the cost savings enormous, but the connection with a friendly neighbor is priceless.

David is a volunteer driver for his village whose most memorable activity was driving a woman every week for two years to her church for a noon service. Over that time, the two of them became good friends and the friendship was rewarding to each of them.

Even during the pandemic, this vital service continued. Volunteers and passengers followed public health guidelines and proceeded safely. It was a win-win for both the driver and the passenger to connect when isolation was at its peak.

Villages are unique in their ability to meet the needs of their members — they are completed by community members who have immediate information about their neighbors' needs and are often able to flexibly and rapidly adapt.

Perhaps it is the adaptability of villages that make them so valuable. They serve older adults *where* and *how* they live.

Elly has low vision issues. She is a member of the village's walking group where members look out for her and help her navigate any hazards. She has attended gallery tours with members and volunteers who help her understand more about the



*"My volunteer made it seem like 'no big deal', to me, it meant the world. I never could have done it without that help!"*

of the tour presentations. Elly has village volunteers who sort mail and helps her use her low vision devices to read important papers.



*"We wore masks, thoroughly cleaned our vehicles, had plenty of airflow, so I felt safe and so did Mrs. G."*



## NAVIGATING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the pandemic, villages were especially attuned to the needs of their members. They served as the providers of critical information at a time of confusing misinformation. They distributed masks, sanitation and other equipment. They gave people rides to testing and vaccination centers when possible. They delivered food and cooked meals. And they engaged people through online meetings and friendly phone calls.

Take for example one simple yet telling story. In the early stages of the pandemic, there was a shortage of toilet paper and people were anxious. A frail, isolated village member called her village to ask for help since she ran out of toilet paper and the village staff got other members to share and deliver the toilet paper to her.

There are hundreds of stories such as this, some of grand scale, others, small.



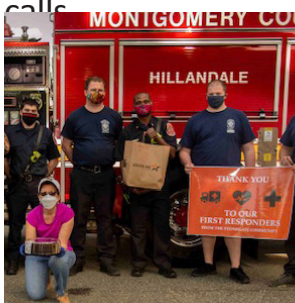
## SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

One of the greatest challenges during the pandemic was social isolation, which impacted all ages but had hurt older adults especially hard. Villages were extremely creative and effective in addressing the social needs of their members.

Villages used the Zoom platform to stay connected. Creativity abounded. Trivia games, lectures, recipe sharing, complete with cooking together online, are just some of the creative ways villagers helped people stay connected. Group coffees and virtual happy hours will outlast the pandemic. A lot of older adults still find it easier to meet via Zoom rather than drive, especially at night. Villages helped their members with tech support to get online and continue to stay in touch with those who preferred phone calls.



*“My conversation with H. was a lift in the midst of very difficult times.”*



*“Zoom was a game changer!”*

*“Our monthly happy hour on Zoom is a lifeline for me!”*

Villages are creative and fun loving. This is evidenced by the huge variety of social activities: Men’s lunch bunch, Beers & Bon Bons, coffee talk, virtual bingo, armchair travel, foreign conversation groups, walking, biking, hiking, birding, gardening, bridge, book club, chess, art and films clubs, knitting and needlework, surprise gift bags and much more. So many activities to bring people together in fun and for lifelong learning.

3,555 people

are involved with a village, whether as member, volunteer or active in their social events.



Hiking · Walking · Coffees · Happy Hours · Lunch Bunch · Armchair Travel · Bridge · Gardening · Book Club · Film Club · Language Club · Birding · Beers and Bons Bons · Chess · Needlework · Hiking · Walking · Coffees · Happy Hours · Lunch Bunch · Armchair Travel · Bridge · Gardening · Book Club · Film Club · Language Club · Birding · Beers and Bons Bons · Chess · Needlework · Hiking · Walking · Coffees · Happy Hours

3,353

Number of social activities and events.







# 6,221

Number of rides provided by village volunteers.



- Lunch Bunch • Armchair Travel
- Bridge • Gardening • Book Club
- Film Club • Language Club •
- Birding • Beers and Bons Bons
- Chess • Needlework • Hiking •
- Walking • Coffees • Happy Hours
- Lunch Bunch • Armchair Travel
- Bridge • Gardening • Book Club
- Film Club • Language Club •
- Birding • Beers and Bons Bons
- Chess • Needlework • Hiking •
- Walking • Coffees • Happy Hours
- Lunch Bunch • Armchair Travel
- Bridge • Gardening • Book Club

# 43,347

Number of participants in social and educational activities.





## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Villages organize not only entertainment but educational programs for members and the public. Programs take place either on Zoom or in local community centers, libraries and gathering places. They cover a wide range of topics, such as seminars on Medicare enrollment, financial planing or end of life planning, history, art, local issues, and public health.

Villages leverage relationships with professionals and nonprofits its in the area to bring programs on improving health to our communities: fall prevention, safety at home, loss of hearing, signs of dementia, dealing with anxiety, and all kinds of exercise.



*"The informational programming was very helpful. The program on Medicare enrollment was informative. I also liked the museum tours. They were so interesting!"*





## CHANGING MINDS: VILLAGES ADVOCACY AND DIVERSITY WORK

By coming together to accomplish shared goals, villages made a significant contribution to the primary election. They hosted two candidate forums: one for County Executive and one for County Council. Both forums were very well attended and featured a robust discussion on aging related issues. This was the only aging-focused forum offered during the primaries.

Additionally, villages successfully engaged their state delegates in an effort to recognize villages as a viable option for aging in place and to dedicate grant funds from Maryland Office on Aging. As a result, villages now have access to grant funding from the state.



*“What started as a new interest group, became a powerful way for our village to raise awareness after the death of George Floyd. We hosted a discussion with two delegates to the MD State Assembly on racial equality in Maryland. It was a huge success with more than 75 attendees.”*

## CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Over the past couple of years, villages have increased partnerships among themselves, with nonprofit partners, and with County agencies. Here we highlight a few of them:

During the pandemic, villages began to collaborate on planning and hosting shared programming. The shared events were posted on an online calendar hosted by Silver Spring Village and villages exchanged ideas and other creative resources to strengthen the already-robust movement.

Local businesses have benefited from partnerships as well. Restaurants supported older adults in need by donating meals that village volunteers could deliver door to door. Local elected officials participated in several ways with villages concerned with social justice issues.

Members from another village set-up a program to meet with high school and college students over six weeks to discuss areas of mutual interest.

Another village created an Afghan refugee assistance group to fundraise and provide support for refugees resettling here. In cooperation with Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, the group located and set up an apartment for a refugee family and continues to support the family through rides to school and doctor appointments, help with English classes, and negotiating government benefits and life in Bethesda.



*"I appreciate the extent to which the Village supports seniors in so many ways. Visiting, shopping, errands, supporting seniors who have to modify their housing to accommodate aging and disabilities; rides-- all that you do for us. Sometimes I'm amazed."*



When vaccination efforts were underway, one village partnered with Giant Pharmacy to organize a local vaccination clinic. They provided logistical support for the clinic as well as rides for members to the site.

Other partnerships were geared toward mobilizing village members to support different causes. One village organized a coat drive for their local elementary school, another has regular groups of volunteers who cook and serve food at the homeless shelter. Some villages take on local conservation efforts. Once you have the organizational infrastructure, the sky's the limit.





## MONTGOMERY COUNTY VILLAGES



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In the Fall of 2019, IMPACT Silver Spring offered a three part workshop on anti-racism to villages. The workshop was well received and resulted in the development of an ongoing workgroup on villages DEI. A dedicated group of village leaders meet monthly to discuss various topics of interest, hear from experts and consult with one another on ways to make their villages more inclusive. Topics covered include: Asian American older adults, working with black communities in DC, LGBTQ needs, disabilities. The group developed a guide for introducing anti racism work to villages through a culture and art lens, exploring history and providing education.

The Village Coordinator has been working with partners in Long Branch and in East County to support the local communities needs around aging in place. Villages have been seeking ways to partner with the Long Branch community and East County Village Seniors have been collaborating on the East County outreach efforts.





*"I never cease to be amazed at the quality of the programs that you are offering to us. As you know my life is very limited in that my fatigue and health status keep me from attending and partaking in many events that I enjoy. BUT you have changed this for me. You are bringing all my interests to me in my bedroom and my study. This is a miracle for me. It would be impossible for me to get dressed and attend these fabulous meetings with learned speakers that you are providing. You are helping so many people and I hope by your example others will follow your lead."*

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

No matter what your age, whether you need help or want to give it, there are villages that would love to hear from you.

The County's website [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/village](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/village) contains an interactive map where you can locate the village near you. If there are no villages in your community, you can help start one. Call the Montgomery County Village Coordinator at 240-777-1231 for more information.

***Donate,  
volunteer,  
join,  
tell the story,  
create!***



*Villages need you!  
It takes a village  
to sustain a robust  
community network.*



## *What is a village?*

*Villages are local, volunteer-led, grassroots organizations that aim to support community members who choose to age-in-place. They foster social connections through activities and events and coordinate volunteer help at home using neighbor helping neighbor models.*

*There are close to 200 villages in the nation and around 50 in the DC metro region. Each village is unique and reflects the character, interests, and needs of the community that creates it. The village leadership decides what it offers and how it operates.*

# # #

- Bannockburn Neighbors Assisting Neighbors • Bethesda Metro Area Village • Bradley Hills Village • Burring Tree Village • Chevy Chase At Home • East County Senior Village • East Rockville • Friendship Heights Neighbors Network • Greater Stonegate Village • King Farm Neighbors Village • Little Falls Village • Manor Connections • Mill Creek Village • North Bethesda Village • North Chevy Chase Connections • Olney Home For Life • Parkside Condominium • Potomac Community Village • Pump House Village • Rockville Area Villages Exchange • Rockville Town Center Neighbors • Rockville West End • Silver Spring Village • Village at Kentlands and Lakelands • Village of Takoma Park • Villages of Kensington • West Rockville Connects Village • Wootton's Mill (Rockville) • Wyngate Maplewood Neighbors Helping Neighbors •

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