

Villages in Montgomery County
2015 summary of activities and highlights

Thanks to the incredible work of so many village leaders and volunteers, 2015 was a great year. Many communities around the county have requested information or presentation on the village concept and several have started a planning committee.

Developing, launching and sustaining a village are a labor of love. In addition to celebrating the wonderful success, there is also a need to recognize the inevitable challenges. This report contains three sections: (1) Villages in numbers (2) an overview of opportunities and challenges that presented themselves in 2015 and (3) Villages' highlights (as provided by the villages).

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(1) Villages in numbers:

- Active villages: **16**
- Villages in development: **9**
- New geographical communities receiving presentations on villages: **18**
- Faith communities receiving presentations on villages: **8**
- **Estimated** numbers of people involved in a village (volunteer or member): **2,500**
- **Estimated** Number of people over 60 with access to an active village in their community: **43,000**
- **Estimated** number of people over 60 with access to a developing village in their community: **40,000**
- Number of volunteer rides provided by five villages who participate in the Village Rides program* (numbers for April-December only): **1545 (total of 3785 miles)**

* Village Rides is a grant funded program that enhances villages' capacities for volunteer transportation.

(2) Opportunities and Challenges:

Opportunities

Partnerships:

- Montgomery County villages gathering took place in May 2015. More than 40 communities were represented in this day-long event, which included a keynote speech by Rona Kramer, Maryland Secretary on Aging, followed by six different workshops on topics ranging from village models to volunteer recruitment and risk management tools.
- Village Rides and The Senior Connection are great examples for successful partnerships that support villages in their work. They offer “back office” support for volunteer rides thus simplifying the villages’ operations.
- Bethesda Chevy Chase Villages have met three times during the year to discuss topics of shared interest. They identified ways they can collaborate on resources sharing and program development. They also used the forum to raise challenges and seek advice from other villages. They now share programming events to increase offerings and participation across villages.
- HEALTH Partners hosted a meeting with healthcare providers in the county and villages’ representatives to discuss ways to enhance the relationship between villages and health providers. Currently, several hospitals are engaged with their local villages and offer classes and workshops. Some villages also help their members when they are discharged from the hospital. Villages are also looking to train their volunteers on medical note taking.
- Villages are forming partnerships with local community organizations and providers (home health companies, hospitals, recreation centers etc.)

Communications:

- Village leaders receive monthly updates from the Village Coordinator. The email includes events, grant opportunities, resources and announcements.
- The Village Coordinator maintains an up to date website which contains information on all active and developing villages as well as resources, information and links. It also features an interactive map with villages’ catchment area.
- The Village Coordinator was featured on Senior Today twice this year
- Little Falls Village was featured in the Maryland AARP magazine.
- Local communities feature villages in their local news outlets (Gaithersburg, Potomac, Takoma Park)

Faith Communities as a natural partner:

- Faith communities have begun expressing an interest in the village concept and are asking for presentations on the topic. Some communities are already offering aging in place programs, and there is tremendous potential to develop new ways to mobilize older adults' volunteerism and service.
- An effort is under way to form an interfaith council on aging issues under the Neighbors in Need Workgroup, which is a interfaith collaborative led by Reverend Kasey Kaseman, County Interfaith Liaison.

Diversity outreach

- Villages are engaged in activities which enhance their diversity: offering scholarships to low income members, targeting home/buildings that have more low income or diverse resident body, researching best practices from across the nation.
- The Muslim Community Center serves a highly diverse population. They have been successful in engaging older adults with monthly programs (social and educational) and offer volunteer help and food assistance.
- Takoma Park has been successful in engaging its diverse older adults. They attend monthly meetings and receive volunteer rides.
- East County Village Seniors, which is a developing village, has a very diverse leadership team. They partner with IMPACT of Silver Spring and the recreation center.
- Village Coordinator has conducted outreach events with Spanish speaking older adults at the TESS Center and with Impact of Silver Spring.
- Faith Communities also serve as partners in reaching diverse groups in the county (see faith communities section).

Challenges

Sustainability

- Sustainability refers both to financial viability of villages as well as their ability to attract and sustain volunteers for leadership positions and hands-on volunteer tasks.
- Financial sustainability: villages rely on grants, donations and memberships to sustain their operations. This requires ongoing fundraising efforts.
- Villages report that loss of their original founders can pose a challenge in recruiting "new blood" to their boards and committees.
- Sustainability will remain a prime concern for developing and active villages. This issue should be viewed as an integral of village operations and not as a problem with a one-time solution.

- Some villages struggle to determine if to charge fees and how much. Fees are often the major way a village funds its operations but on average they only cover about 60-70% of the budget.
- The Village Coordinator consults and supports villages in their efforts to sustain all aspects of their operations.

Members' needs and village capacities

- Village members who age at home can become frailer with time. Villages strive to ensure a balance between the desire to support all members as they age at home with the limitations on what they can offer and the safety concerns for the member.
- Villages cannot be seen as the only solution to aging in place. It is essential that there is a realistic understanding of what a village can offer and what it cannot be expected to deliver.
- Villages will be most successful when partnering with other community resources to provide a more comprehensive support system.
- Each village defines its own “comfort level” and degree of involvement with its members. IONA (a DC based aging services agency) has an ethics committee which is available for village leaders who struggle with specific situations.
- The built environment (home and public spaces) will continue to pose a challenge. Villages can offer robust services but people with mobility impairment may have difficulty aging in their homes and neighborhoods in their current state.

Diversity

- Diversity will continue to pose a significant challenge to villages. Villages report great interest in diversifying their membership but encounter difficulties in connecting with isolated older adults or people with limited English proficiency.
- In addition to the obvious barriers to outreach (language, access), there are different cultural perceptions regarding older adults in different groups. In many cultures, older adults' relationships focus on family only. This makes the concept of a village more difficult to “sell”.

(3) Villages Highlights

*(not all villages were able to submit their summaries):

Villages in Development

1. North Chevy Chase:

NCC Connections is off to a great start. We held our first general meeting at the end of August 2015 and have had monthly general meetings since. We have established our boundaries, set up a steering committee, obtained free space in a local church, have filed for incorporation in MD, and are working on our bylaws and a communication plan. We are also finalizing a survey of our neighbors' needs and volunteer skills which we plan to distribute in late January.

2. Kentlands:

The Village at Kentlands conducted a successful needs assessment in 2015. Almost 500 residents responded and close to 350 offered to volunteer to help out! We are creating our implementation plan and expect to have the Village operating by May 2016.

3. East County Village Seniors

- Most recently we incorporated and plan on applying for 501(c)(3) Status.
- During the past six months we offered the Holy Cross BioSway Balance Test twice;
- Had presentations from MC Volunteer Fire Dept. on Fire and Injury Prevention and Fire Safety; A presentation by MC Volunteer Police Assoc. on "Keeping Seniors Safe." Hosted an Insurance (Senior Health Plans and Life, Health & Wealth Policies), wills, advanced directives and Power of Attorney
- Made many new friends and partners interested in our endeavors and offering participation in theirs. We've had several independent speakers from other organizations speak to us about their villages, their volunteer offerings, and how to improve our village. In addition to support from the aforementioned speakers, none of this would have been possible without the support we receive from Pazit Aviv and her Office on Aging and Disabilities; Lanita Whitehurst, IMPACT Silver Spring; Brandon Ashe, East County Community Center Director; and Aziz Sani, Youth Empowerment Series (YES).

4. Bethesda Metro Area Village

- Begun a campaign called "It takes a village to build a village" in an attempt to jumpstart the next phase of development, in which we need those interested in the village to step forward and commit their time and energy to doing jobs needed to get us to launch.
- Conducted focus groups to get community feedback on a list of initial services and membership fees and structure.

- Received community support including a generous financial donation from a community group and in-kind donations of use of clubhouse venue from a local club.
- Planning a community social gathering in January to build momentum and recruit new volunteers to help.

5. Villages of Kensington

- Villages of Kensington is in the final stage of creating our Village before we open for business. We've learned a great deal in 2015, including the incredible amount of time and dedication required to start a nonprofit, service-oriented organization.
- Mostly, though, we are heartened by the overwhelmingly positive response we've received about the upcoming opening of VoK and the ways in which VoK will enhance the quality of life for all residents of Kensington.
- Please join our opening social event on Sun., Jan. 31, from 2-4 pm at Temple Emanuel at 10101 Connecticut Ave. in Kensington!

5. Bradley Hills Village

- A highlight of the year was a presentation at a BHV Community Meeting by William Offutt on Bethesda's History. He is the author of *Bethesda, A Social History*, and an engaging speaker who lives in our neighborhood. It was a great example of our "Voices in the Neighborhood" speaker series and much appreciated.
- Someone not on our electronic mailing list received an all-households flyer delivered by the "sneaker brigade" about one of the Bradley Hills Village community programs. He sent an email saying "he couldn't participate for the moment but what a great idea this is and where could he send his donation?" The Village received a generous check from him within a week – a nice recognition!
- The Book Discussion Group held a holiday potluck supper at which we raised a toast to the Village (and another to the host) for bringing us together. We ascertained that all in the group got to know each other through the Village – recognition of the value of belonging.

6. Rockville City Advisory Committee:

- The Rockville Advisory Committee met monthly during the year and heard from several other villages' representatives about their launch process and current operations structure.
- The Committee has 70 members on the mailing list and includes city residents, local aging services providers and city staff.
- The Committee organized a citywide community forum which was held in September and was a huge success with 140 people in attendance including city officials and key staff.
- Three civic associations in the city have begun planning their neighborhood village with support from the county's Village Coordinator.

- Senior Center staff is committed to supporting local neighborhood initiatives.

Active Villages:

1. Olney Home for Life:

In 2015 volunteers of Olney Home for Life accomplished a number of great things.

- We established a Friendly Call program.
- We are piloting a Friendly Visit program with the Mental Health Association of Montgomery County.
- OHFL also conducted an intergenerational "Tech Time For Seniors" event in partnership with the Olney Library and JCA.
- Our volunteers and volunteer efforts were recognized by Governor Hogan with a Governor's Citation for reaching a milestone of 10,000 volunteer hours helping seniors with transportation and providing friendly calls.

2. Maplewood:

- We held an intergenerational outdoor summer game party, with activities for little folks (bean bag tosses etc.) to bigger folk (ping pong on the patio). Two families with small children who were brand new to the neighborhood came purely because of our Village "welcome wagon" activity, when a Village volunteer went to their home to share some useful information about the community—including this upcoming party. A good time was had by all, and some new connections forged.
- Our garden group has "blossomed" and its pot luck supper attracted 3 dozen people and featured the hostess's neighbor, a flower photographer.
- Our "silent reading and social nights" (30 minutes of socializing, 1 hour of strict silent reading of any book/material of one's choice, ending with another 30 or more minutes of socializing) has sparked an appreciative small group who can't find time to read otherwise and enjoy the company of other readers!

3. Bannockburn NAN:

- NAN Night at the Bannockburn Spring Show: One weekday night performance offered discounted tickets to seniors and free snacks. The preshow snack/drinks period gave those attending the performance time to socialize. Seniors appreciated the discounted tickets. It was a good way to increase audience and to promote interaction among our older neighbors.
- Water exercise twice a week in the summer: For several years our neighborhood pool has supported water exercise classes. Although open to all ages, the classes are in the morning when many younger neighbors are at work. The majority of attendees are seniors. Classmates pick up those who do not drive. After class neighbors 'hang out' to talk and some go out for coffee or lunch. It is a successful program that combines exercise and social interaction.

- Sunday Series: Monthly talks, music programs or demonstrations on a broad range of topics that draw neighbors of all ages. There is a social hour with snacks before and after the featured program. We had several quality presentations by neighbors for our village and nearby villages. Next up is a poetry reading on January 24.

4. Little Falls Village:

- Little Falls Village survived the “terrible twos” by making substantial headway in 2015 to increase Village awareness throughout the 20816 zip code. Campaign elements included coordinating a snow shoveling program for any senior needing help.
- We hosted two major informational meetings for all comers, opened most of our programs to all seniors in our zip code, including our second anniversary party where attendance topped 75 enthusiastic folks.
- We partnered with a group of high school students who set up an on-going program to help seniors get their trash cans to and from the curb each week.
- We worked with a local Boy Scout who approached us wanting to focus his Eagle Scout project on organizing an event for our membership. The event included special meetings on Capitol Hill, a guided tour of the capitol and a luncheon.
- Smaller events included reaching out to all of the neighborhood civic organizations and business groups. This campaign resulted in attracting 28 new members and a similar number of new volunteers.
- We had some pretty unique member requests for help around the house. One member called to let us know her best friend had just arrived from London for a long stay. Then she asked if we could come over and help get a snake out of her guest bedroom. We did help by getting animal control there ASAP.

7. Potomac Community Village

- We celebrated our Village's birthday in May with a birthday party where we honored local businesses which had donated \$250 or more in either cash or services in lieu of. We presented framed Certificates of Appreciation to them, and were able to get the Potomac Almanac to send a photographer to take pictures. We also invited local political leaders, one of whom came, County Councilman Roger Berliner.
- We had a speaker on Potomac's early history as the "entertainment" for a Pot Luck Dinner (this past week, on Dec. 17) which attracted 75 people.
- We had an Appraisal Road Show on a Sunday afternoon, which we used to gain wider public knowledge of the Village by inviting everyone in our community to come for free. We timed the event so it followed Potomac Day and the Potomac Day parade by 8 days; we marched in the parade with our banner, and had members in Village t-shirts handing out fliers about the Appraisal Road Show to all adults along the parade route. The Road Show event attracted 70 people.

8. Aging Well With Friends-AWWF in Sandy Spring

AWWF is a collaboration of partners in Sandy Spring. We have continued to foster connections between Friends House Retirement Community, The Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and several local community partners.

- Our new website and shared blog is at www.Agingwellwithfriends.org
- We are recruiting volunteers of all ages to help us manage the website and community shared blog.
- We continue to use creative opportunities and workshops to bring generations together. We are hosting a special Garden Planning workshop in February at Friends House Retirement Community for an exchange of ideas between seasoned, expert gardeners with new or experienced gardeners of all ages from the community and local schools.
- We continue to bring together participants of all ages for Creativity workshops at the Sandy Spring Museum building new connections between

9. Neighbors Helping Neighbors (WNHN)

- Two years in the making, Wyngate Neighbors Helping Neighbors (WNHN) began offering assistance in November 2015. The preceding month, 40 residents completed its volunteer orientation.
- As a no fee village, WNHN had to rely on the ingenuity of its volunteer organizers and the generosity of other organizations.
- In Spring 2015, WNHN incorporated and received IRS certification as a 501(c)(3) organization; all application fees were paid by the membership of our community's citizens association.
- WNHN obtained, from Google Voice without charge, its own telephone number and linked email account to take requests for assistance. WNHN created web sites to reach the community and to coordinate its volunteers using the free templates, tools, and web platform provided by "Lotsa Helping Hands."
- The advice and time generously given by neighboring village coordinators helped WNHN develop its volunteer training materials and its organizational bylaws, as well as gain an understanding of villages in general. This cooperation and education was an outgrowth of exchanges among Bethesda area villages that were facilitated by Montgomery County's Village Coordinator, Pazit Aviv.
- In Summer 2015, WNHN partnered with VillageRides and received software to coordinate driving assistance, and motor vehicle & criminal background checks and supplemental insurance for its drivers – all without charge.
- In Fall 2015, VillageRides helped WNHN design an informational brochure & refrigerator magnet and, again without charge, provided high-quality copies of each for all 1400 households that WNHN serves. The community's awareness of WNHN and its demand for WNHN assistance will likely emerge once these materials are distributed door-to-door in January, 2016.

10. Chevy Chase at Home

Chevy Chase At Home initiated three new programs to meet member needs:

- A storm buddy system matching a volunteer to a member who might need assistance after a severe weather event;
- Home safety visits with Montgomery County firefighters to install smoke alarms for members who request them and review possible safety issues for the member, such as house number visibility, safety of likely exit routes in case of fire,
- Volunteer training in medical note taking, acting as invited transcribers during a member's visit to his/her physician.

11. Village of Takoma Park

- On Saturday, November 20, the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church honored Wolfgang and Gertrud Mergner with the church's annual Caring Heart Award in honor of their work establishing the Village of Takoma Park.
- The Village of Takoma Park is off and running, or at least driving. The Village Rides program currently has 20 volunteer drivers who give rides to seniors and disabled individuals to get them to church, doctor appointments, adult daycare or grocery shopping. Since April 1st, 40 seniors have received over 279 rides from our volunteer drivers.
- The Village also has a Friendly Visitors program, pairing a volunteer with a homebound senior for a weekly hour-long visit.
- The Movement Disorder Support Group (Parkinson's and MS): This group was started in response to interest from Takoma Park residents with Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, and similar diseases.
- Parents of Special Needs Adults (POSNA): This support group of older parents of adult children with special needs seeks to address, such as planning for the future, employment support, emotional support for the aging parents and more.
- Story: We were asked to drive a rider to adult day care and found out she had substantial problems getting in and out of her home due to structure issues. We contacted several official places to find relieve, but help was not available. Finally, we called Steve Hage, a local builder and village member who specialized in home modifications. Steve said that this was a life threatening situation. He repaired it free of charge since the residents could not afford it. Later on a very effective resource person from the Department of Aging and Disability Services secured funds for the repair of the house door and a ramp on which the rider comes down twice a week to spend the day at the adult day care center.

12. Silver Spring Village

- Hired a part-time Executive Director (Debbie Billet-Roumell)

- In May, we held a very successful program to introduce the Village to residents of the Lyttonsville and Rosemary Hills neighborhoods. A diverse working group of Village members and community members developed and implemented the program. The “Lunch & Learn” event, held at the Gwendolyn Coffield Community Center, was attended by more than 40 people. A similar event is planned for East Silver Spring in February.
- Conducted first member satisfaction survey as part of our commitment to evaluate what we do
- Raised membership total to 110 and volunteers total 85
- Conducted a fundraising campaign that brought in over \$9500 from individuals and couples

13. Mill Creek Town Village

- Our volunteer village has sponsored several social events again in 2015, with great success: game night, a wine and cheese party, ice cream social, end of summer picnic, community walk.
- We get great feedback and continue to promote these in order to gather more community members together to get to know each other better.
- We took on our community newsletter when the person who had volunteered to send it out We have had 5-6 drivers provide rides to 5 or 6 community members to doctors appointments this year.
- Our handyman provided assistance to 2 neighbors.
- We've lost a couple of our drivers and are working to recruit new ones. We still want to engage with more of our neighbors and will work on strategies in 2016.