



## Village of Takoma Park Annual Report 2019

This is a good time to recall some of the Village's highlights over the past 12 months. Among other things, our membership has grown to almost 250 people and the kinds of services we provide have expanded to include more social and cultural events. With this expansion we have added an accountant, Ismenia Peña-Romero, and a part-time administrative assistant, Robin Walker, to our team. Both have provided invaluable help to the Village and our members.

### Special mention in 2019

There are hundreds of Villages across the US, and 28 in Montgomery County alone. Each Village has special attributes, and we want to highlight ours. From attending a gathering of Washington area villages, we learned that few have dues under \$100 (ours is a \$25 annually, waived if requested), and many have dues of several hundred dollars. Our membership dues reflect our core missions of inclusion and meeting the needs of the more vulnerable seniors in our community.

Our Village was chosen to participate in a pilot program with WISH (Wellness and Independence for Seniors at Home), bringing health coaching and care planning into the homes of eligible Village members; the program had previously only been available to those living in senior housing. We are now providing data to WISH for an evaluation of the program.

We have a strong partnership with the Lifelong Homes Coalition. With the help of the Village, a member applied through the Coalition, a partnership of Rebuilding Together and Habitat for Humanity, for help to declutter her home and to convert one floor to an apartment for herself and one floor to a living space for a caretaker. Thirty-six women, a team named "She Builds," accomplished all this in one day!

### Services and Activities in 2019

**Errand Service:** For members who have stopped driving, can no longer get around easily, and need something that he/she (or a friend or family member) is unable to order online or from a delivery service, we provide pick up services to Village members. In 2019, volunteers ran 50 errands.

**Friendly Visitors/Callers:** Village volunteers provide visits to Takoma Park elders who cannot get out as much as they might like, as well as offer phone calls several times a week. We have 7 active volunteers providing approximately 330 hours of visits.

**Senior Stroll:** The Village of Takoma Park has a senior stroll program which matches a volunteer or two with a senior who wants to go for a walk once or twice a week. Each volunteer is a member of the Village of Takoma Park. Currently 4 strollers walk with 4 volunteers (144 strolls a year.)

**Small Home Repairs/Tasks:** The Village of Takoma Park has a team of volunteers ready to do small home repairs and tasks around the house for members who have no other access to help for minor repairs or chores (moving furniture, replacing high light bulbs, etc.) When a Village team is unable to perform a repair or a task, the homeowner or apartment resident can be referred to Rebuilding Together Montgomery County, a non-profit providing more extensive home repairs. For 2019 the team completed 23 repairs, an increase from 2018 where 10 small home repairs were completed.

**VillageRides:** VillageRides remains our most active, heavily used service. In 2019 we averaged 100 rides a month, a 15% increase from 2018. We have 82 members getting rides and 30 active drivers (57 are approved as drivers). In our annual survey, both riders and drivers reported a high level of satisfaction with the service. Many commented they had made new friends as well.

## Partnerships

The City of Takoma Park supports our arts and humanities program.

The Montgomery Community Grants Program supports our overall operations.

The Montgomery County Department of Aging and Disability Services serves as a key partner for assisting seniors in need.

The Jewish Council for Aging supports our VillageRides program.

Every Mind is a partner on the Friendly Visitor program.

The Design for Life Coalition provides resources for home repair projects that are beyond the capacity of our volunteers.

Five local community organizations reach seniors experiencing food insecurity: CHEER, Difference Makers, Adventist Social Services, EDCARE, and Meals on Wheels.

Wellness and Independence for Seniors at Home (WISH), a no-cost program that helps eligible seniors remain healthy and independent at home.

We share information from other organizations. In 2019 we let our members know about an energy efficiency grant program, home sharing options, free book delivery by Montgomery County Public Libraries, free income tax preparation via the AARP/RSVP program, and more.

## Support groups

**The Movement Disorder Support Group** was started in response to interest from Takoma Park residents with Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, and similar conditions. Members, ideally together with the caregiver, meet every other month to exchange information and hear from guest professionals on recent advances.

**Parents of Special Needs Adults (POSNA)** is a Takoma Park advocacy and support group for parents and other loved ones of adults with developmental and/or chronic psychiatric challenges.

## Events

**All year:** The semi-monthly walking group continued on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month.

### **January 25: Aging Well event: Home Sharing**

About 25 people gathered to hear a presentation from Lisa Smith of Silvernest, an organization that promotes and facilitates home sharing as a way to provide added security and help around the house.

**February 28: Aging Well event: Still Standing: The Relics of School Segregation in Montgomery County**

Ralph Buglass, a Montgomery County native and avid history buff, discussed how in Montgomery County, where slavery existed, public education was not extended to black children until a decade after it was instituted for white children, and discussed the partnership between Booker T. Washington and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald to build schools.

**March 28: Aging Well event: Medicare Senior Savings Seminar**

Rafael Espinoza, of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, and a veteran of 28 years in the healthcare industry, discussed programs and strategies to help benefit more from Medicare.

**April 26: Aging Well event: Trip to Brookside Gardens/Celebrate Spring**

Nine attendees enjoyed a picnic lunch and strolls through the natural beauty of Brookside Gardens. Transportation provided by the City of Takoma Park Recreation Department.

**May 30: Aging Well event: The Exciting World of Travel**

Village member and skilled photographer Lewis Morris and his wife Louise Jung shared travel tips and stunning photos from their trips.

**June 1: Potluck Picnic**

Our annual potluck picnic was a resounding success, with an excellent turnout (60-65 members) and a chance to honor Village founders Wolfgang and Gertrud Mergner and meet new co-presidents, Andy Penn and Laurie Welch.

**June 27: Aging Well event: Exercise for Health and Well-Being**

Twenty-one people gathered to participate in a fast-paced exercise session led by two fitness instructors with Holy Cross Senior Source. They left with an exercise book compiled by the National Center on Aging, *Exercise and Physical Activity*, and the inspiration to keep exercising!

**July 8: Museum visit to Smithsonian American Arts Museum/National Portrait Gallery**

Four intrepid Village members braved intense rain to take Metro to the Smithsonian American Art Museum. This was the first outing of the Village's new Cultural Arts programming. Highlights were portraits of the Obamas, and the magnificent building.

**July 16: Ice Cream Social**

Thirty-five members came out on a hot summer night to enjoy ice cream and conversation.

**July 25: Aging Well event: Home Care to Enable Independence**

Lylie Fisher of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services discussed home care services available through both County and private agencies in Montgomery County; available caregiver support including education, support groups, respite, transportation, and adult day programs; how to navigate finding home care; and the role of the Adult Protective Services program and when and how to contact them.

**August 29: Museum visit to the Phillips Collection**

Participants viewed a special exhibit, "The Warmth of Other Suns: Stories of Global Displacement" presenting historical and contemporary works by approximately 75 artists posing urgent questions related to experiences and perceptions of migration and the current global refugee crisis.

**September 18: Book talk** by bestselling author Naomi Klein on her new book, *On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal*, in which she makes the case for a Green New Deal, explaining how bold climate action can be a blueprint for a just and thriving society.

**September 26: Aging Well event: Money Management**

Grant Wing, Executive Director of The Society for Financial Awareness (SOFA), led a group of 25 people with a presentation on money management including tips on budgeting, retirement savings, reverse mortgages and life insurance.

**September 28: House Concert** with John W. Warren performing a program of Latin guitar in a Takoma Park home.

**October 4: Museum visit to Glenstone**

The Village of Takoma Park and the Forever Young program of the City of Takoma Park hosted a trip to Glenstone, a private nonprofit museum in Potomac open to the public by appointment only. Nineteen Village members (and friends) went, on a beautiful fall day. Most had not been before and were amazed at the beauty and breadth of the museum and its grounds.

**October 25: Museum visit to National Gallery of Art**

Guided tour of Renaissance collections.

**October 26: House concert** with Rupert Wates offering an eclectic mix of acoustic, melodic art/folk, with flavors of jazz, vaudeville and cabaret, in a Takoma Park home.

**October 28: Book talk** with New York Times columnist Gail Collins at Politics and Prose, on her new book, *No Stopping Us Now: A History of Older Women in America*.

**October 31: Aging Well event: Getting Your Affairs in Order**

Elder law attorney Bernadette Sweeney ([sweeneylegal.com](http://sweeneylegal.com)) gave a well-received presentation to close to 40 attendees on how, and more importantly why, folks need to get their affairs in order.

**November 21: Aging Well event: Aging Well by Doing Good; Giving Back To Our Community**

Involvement in the community comes with many rewards. We heard brief presentations by representatives of some organizations that serve Takoma Park and welcome volunteers — Meals on Wheels, Manna, Takoma Park Elementary School, a local animal advocate, and our own Village of Takoma Park.

**November 23: House concert:** David Schulman + Quiet Life Motel. By turns nocturnal, reflective, funky, and cinematic, the music of electric violinist and composer David Schulman is a weave of jazz harmonies, shimmering orchestral textures, and frolicsome grooves.

**November 25: Museum visit to National Gallery of Art**

Guided tour of the Dutch Masters Golden Age collection led by one of the Gallery's expert docents, looked closely at works that provide glimpses of life in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century.

**December 12: Matinee at Ford's Theater of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol."**

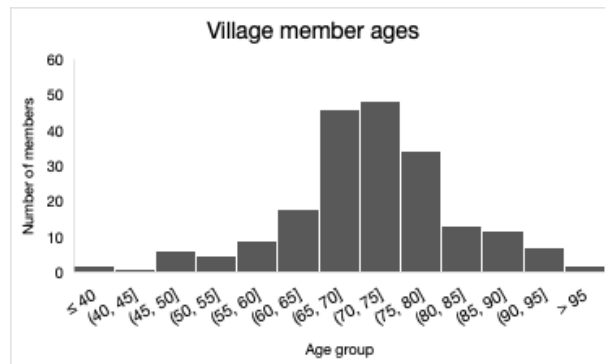
**December 31: Aging Well event: New Year's Eve game-playing party** at Victory Towers. This event was well attended, with at least 25 people, and interest in making it an annual event.

### Some (of many) comments from our members:

- I am the only deaf tenant in Franklin Apartments. My deaf church friends are few in Takoma so when going out with a friendly volunteer in the Village of Takoma Park, I felt very happy and safe.
- Now I don't worry about getting to appointments, it's such a relief.
- Knowing that it's possible to get to my appointments is a blessing.
- It has helped me to have a measure of independence.
- I can now go to doctors' appts, grocery store and church without having to take 2 or 3 busses. Also, you begin to have friendships with your frequent drivers. It's the best thing that happened for me because I'm getting older and I don't walk as fast as I used to. All I can say is "what a blessing!"
- The rides have been very helpful, made the doctor's visits easier and helped me meet more people.
- I am able to attend church services every Sunday. Attending church services is very important to me.
- The rides program has been a Godsend for me; shortly after the program was initiated, I suffered a heart attack and stroke leading to my giving up on driving. But Village Rides enabled me to continue classes at TP Community Center, Forever Young + Village Meetings.

### Plans for 2020

The average age of our members is 71, and ranges from 40 to 95+. We hope to add more members of all ages!



We will continue all of our programs, hoping to expand each to offer more opportunities for connection and collaboration. Our teams will reach out to neighbors who may need these services, make new connections between neighbors, and build partnerships with more local organizations. If you have questions about where we are headed, or want to get involved, be in touch! We welcome new energy and ideas at any time of the year.

#### ***Events already on the books for 2020:***

Games night in April in collaboration with the Forever Young program of the City of Takoma Park

A spring visit to Glenstone

Targeted outreach for the small home repair program

The Village is a small organization, with an annual budget for 2020 of \$34,000. We have a half time administrative manager and part-time accountant, with all the other work done by a large circle of volunteers. The Village is very thankful to the City of Takoma Park, the Montgomery County Community Grants program, the Takoma Foundation, and many neighbors for their financial support. The new arts and humanities program is made possible through the support of the Village of Takoma Park.

## Leadership

### **BOARD:**

Mary Akers  
Kathie Baker  
Bindu Hickson  
Pat Matthews  
Andy Penn, Co-President  
Dana Robinson  
Susan Rogers  
Lois Weinberg, Treasurer  
Laurie Welch, Co-President  
**EX OFFICIO:** Paula Lisowski

### **STAFF:**

#### **Part-time Administrative Aide**

Robin Walker

#### **Part-time Accountant**

Ismenia Peña-Romero

### **ADVISORY BOARD:**

Bruce Baker  
Ken Flemmer  
Seth Grimes  
Peter Kovar  
John Urciolo  
Moses Wilds

### **COMMITTEE CHAIRS:**

**Communications:** Linda Carlson

**Finance:** Lois Weinberg

**Membership:** Wolfgang Mergner,  
Past President

**Programs:** Laurie Welch

**Small Home Repairs:** Lewis Morris

**Volunteers:** Sandra Egan

## Mission Statement

Village of Takoma Park's mission is to provide intergenerational support to seniors and persons with disabilities who wish to live actively in the Takoma Park community by:

- providing assistance, advice, and neighborly support;
- facilitating access to needed service providers;
- advocating on behalf of Village members and informing them about relevant issues and policies;
- organizing and managing Village volunteers who provide services and assistance; and
- collaborating with the City of Takoma Park, Montgomery County, and other organizations.

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*Helping neighbors age in community*