



Village of Takoma Park Newsletter

Helping Neighbors Age in Community

Volume 3, no. 4

October-December 2017

Message from the President



Holiday Greetings to all,

The Village has had a good year in 2017 -- increasing its membership (227 members as of November 1), adding new services, developing collaborations with other organizations, and significantly improving outreach. The progress came mainly thanks to energetic and creative contributions of the Village's volunteers and leadership team.

Service is expanding, as follows:

The **Small Home Repair Service** started in Spring 2016 and now has 8 volunteers ready to help with fixing day-to-day problems in the home. We are now connected with the **Lifelong Homes Coalition** that includes Habitat for Humanity, Montgomery College, Rebuilding Together Montgomery County, and the Silver Spring Village. This coalition is in the beginning stages of helping two senior families with repairs and modifications to allow them to age in place. To qualify, seniors must own the home, have homeowner's insurance, be income-qualified, and agree to continue living in the home for at least 5 years.

The **VillageRides** program continues to be in high demand. We've provided 1500 rides since April 2015. We have 47 volunteer drivers and 96 members who take rides. This year we added new offerings to complement the **Friendly Visitor** program: **Senior Stroll** (twice-weekly escorted walks) and **Errand Service**.

Another major activity has been developing the Village's interface with local hospitals (Washington Adventist, Holy Cross and Suburban), known as the **Ambassador Program**, so that we know when members are hospitalized and may need Village assistance.

The monthly **Aging Well** programs and other events continue to be an essential part of the Village of Takoma Park. Events in 2017 included a screening of the award-winning film "Hidden Figures"; a memoir-writing workshop; a trip to the Frederick Douglass historic site; presentations on grieving, end-of-life instructions, staying safe, decluttering, money management, and the life of Clara Barton; a simulcast conversation in celebration of the beginning of the Village movement, with author and physician Atul Gawande and Robin Young of NPR; and a potluck picnic.

On November 18 the Board will hold a retreat to review the past and plan for the future of the Village of Takoma Park. The organization's outlook is positive, but our annual membership dues of \$10 per person are insufficient to support all that we do. At this time of year when many of you are receiving requests for money from worthy causes, we hope you'll consider making a tax-deductible donation to help us continue to grow and serve our diverse membership. We depend upon, and are grateful for, your help.

Best wishes for the new year,
Wolfgang Mergner



At its annual conference in November, the Village to Village Network awarded a certificate of appreciation in recognition of outstanding volunteer performance to our own volunteer coordinator **Sandy Egan**. Congratulations, Sandy, on a well-deserved award!

SPOTLIGHT on VILLAGE MEMBERS

Laryce President-Neal: An All-Around Survivor



Like many, Village member Laryce President-Neal's life began uneventfully, but during her adulthood she has faced some unexpected and dramatic times, most notably surviving the events of 9/11 at the Pentagon, where she worked. Her ability to survive challenges helped carry her through personal difficulties, and the Village has played a positive role in her life in the past two years.

Laryce was born in Northeast Washington, DC, at Providence Hospital, and grew up in DC. Due to family circumstances, at age ten she was sent to live with her grandmother, Octavie, an outspoken community activist and well-known minister of the Second New St. Paul Baptist Church in Northeast DC. Laryce notes that her grandmother "taught me about spiritual life and hospitality, having grown up in the South. She loved to entertain." As a teenager, Laryce volunteered as a candy striper at Howard University Hospital and later as a teacher's aide in a church program for elementary school children.

After graduating from McKinley Tech in 1981, she passed the Federal entrance exam, and the Navy hired her in an entry-level position. That led to "career ladder" status and promotions to Voucher Examiner and then Accounting Technician with DFAS, the Defense Finance Accounting Service. In 1986 she married and her son James was born in 1987. Sadly, James was severely handicapped, a non-verbal autistic child whose special needs led to his living with a caregiver grandfather. In 1990 Laryce moved to Takoma Park and had a second son, Matthew, in 1997. Her career continued with a 1998 position in Personnel Security for the Chief of Naval Operations at the Pentagon.

On September 11, 2001, she was in the Pentagon when it was attacked, and her life was shattered. Her physical and emotional traumas were overwhelming, and she spent the next eight years in treatment. The government offered her an early retirement, which she accepted, but it left her with a reduced income and limited financial resources. Her mother, Levora President, who lives in Silver Spring, played a major role in Laryce's support system and recovery. In 2009, after eight years of therapy, Laryce says, "I threw away my cane." She also rejoined her church, Mt. Jezreel Baptist, a positive influence. In 2012, feeling "I needed a plan and a purpose," she began volunteering at Washington Adventist Hospital as a "meeter and greeter and escort."

In 2015 she faced a new challenge when her son James came to live with her. His grandfather, 80, could no longer care for him. Laryce struggled to find resources which could provide the care James needed. One need was transportation. She and Matthew combed the Internet and discovered that the Village of Takoma Park provided free rides. The Village connection also led her to join the caregiver group for parents of disabled adults (POSNA), where she shares her knowledge of resources with other parents. She says, "the Village has been the answer to my prayers in terms of transportation, first for James and then me, for doctor appointments, groceries, and some social contacts. It takes off my anxiety to be able to call for rides. What a blessing!"



Volunteers Andrea Savoye, Deborah Zuckerman, and Gina Gaspin enjoying an appreciation lunch for Village volunteers at Wolfgang and Gertrud Mergner's home on October 22.



Celebrating 15 Years of the Village Movement



On Monday, September 25, 22 members of The Village of Takoma Park gathered to join over 7,000 viewers from almost 200 other villages around the country viewing “Celebrating Community and Choice: A Conversation with Dr. Atul Gawande.” Dr. Gawande is a renowned surgeon, researcher, and best-selling author of several books, including *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. He spoke in conversation with Robin Young of NPR’s “Here and Now.”

The recurring theme of the conversation was the critical importance of continuing to be able to make choices as we age. Often, Dr. Gawande explained, what we want for our loved ones is safety, but what they want for themselves is a sense of autonomy. The loneliness, boredom, and sense of helplessness that many older people experience can be combated by structuring more opportunities for choice and decision-making. This requires that we have meaningful, respectful conversations about options, decisions, and an individual’s priorities. The Village

movement, Dr. Gawande asserted, plays a significant role in learning about and supporting what people need and want: to be able to stay at home and be part of a community. While we must recognize that Villages cannot meet every level of support needed, the Village movement is an important part of a cultural change in responding to this need for autonomy in how we address aging. There can be growth, purpose, and a greater sense of well-being and meaning all the way to the end of life.

Participants viewed the webinar as informative, enjoyable, and thought-provoking. One of those attending, Ruth McGoff, said,

“I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation ... Because I work in a hospital, I am familiar with the struggles that patients and families go through when dealing with decisions of what to do when family members become more dependent, or their illness prevents them from living the way they want. The need to listen to what people really want to do without imposing on their autonomy is not easy but essential. Dr. Gawande’s focus on happiness and not simply safety was also important. Thanks ...for a thought-provoking presentation.”

This event was sponsored by Beacon Hill Village in Boston in celebration of their 15th anniversary, and of the growth of The Village movement. Special thanks to Village member Beth Novey for donating two copies of Dr. Gawande’s book *Being Mortal*, which were awarded as door prizes. Note that the Takoma Park Library also has a copy available for loan!



Village to Village Network Promotes Diversity

At the Village to Village Network’s annual conference in Baltimore in early November, Village of Takoma Park president Wolfgang Mergner, Pazit Aviv of Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services, and Anthony Sarmiento and Marcy Frosh of Silver Spring Village spoke on diversity outreach in villages.

Pictured, l. to r.: Anthony Sarmiento, president of Silver Spring Village, Marcy Frosh, Pazit Aviv, and Wolfgang Mergner.

AGING WELL



TRIP to the FREDERICK DOUGLASS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE – August 29

Less than ideal weather didn't deter a group of 23 people (with two Takoma Park police escorts, Captain Collington and Corporal Rodriguez) from enjoying a successful trip to the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Anacostia. Although rain prevented the group from exploring the grounds or the "Growlery" -- the tiny stone cabin where Douglass retreated to think, read and write in private -- they appreciated a brief film, an exhibit, and the chance to purchase books in the small shop. A park ranger provided a tour of the house (Cedar Hill), which they found to be well maintained and full of interest. We're thankful to the City of TP for their generosity in providing bus transportation.

HOSPICE CARE and STAGES of GRIEF – October 31



Emily Young (MSW, LGSW), Bereavement Coordinator, Holy Cross Home Care and Hospice, spoke on grief, and Nancy Fox (MSW, LCSW) of Holy Cross Home Care and Hospice spoke on hospice care.

Additional Resources: Holy Cross Hospice Bereavement Program offers an eight-week grief support program that is held on Wednesdays, 6:00 to 7:30 pm, and Saturday drop-in grief group meetings held twice per month, 2 to 3:30 pm. Support group meetings are held at the Holy Cross Resource Center, located one block from Holy Cross Hospital at 9805 Dameron Drive, Silver Spring.

For information on free grief support groups and drop-in counseling offered by Holy Cross Home Care and Hospice, visit <http://www.holycrosshealth.org/bereavement-support>, call their Bereavement Center at 301-754-7742 or email bereavementcenter@holycrosshealth.org.

Upcoming Aging Well Events

Making Your Health Care Wishes Known



When: November 28, 10 am – 12 noon
Where: Takoma Park Community Center, Azalea Room
What: Learn about Maryland MOLST (Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment), a document that makes your treatment wishes known to health care professionals. Copies of the form will be available.
Presenter: Annette Volk, a social worker with the Jewish Social Service Agency



When: Tuesday, December 26, 10 am – 12 noon
Where: Heffner Park Community Building, 42 Oswego Avenue
What: Sharing Holiday Memories and Food
 Socialize and reminisce about the ways your families and friends have celebrated the winter holidays. Bring traditional objects and/or food to share.

Play, Learn, Engage, and Read

PLAY: An intergenerational Games Night is held every Tuesday evening from 7-9 pm at Victory Tower, the senior apartment building at 7051 Carroll Avenue. Folks of all ages -- not just Victory Tower residents -- from middle school to 80 (and beyond!) gather to play a range of games, including Rummikub, cards, and board games. Everyone is welcome--come join us and play!



Speaking of play, congratulations to Village member Pat Rumbaugh, also known as the “Play Lady”, for being recognized in the 2017 AARP publication, *Where We Live: Communities for All Ages; 100+ Inspiring Ideas from America’s Community Leaders*. The publication highlights Pat’s work with her nonprofit, Let’s Play America, and the events they sponsor, including Takoma Park’s Play Day. Pat is quoted as saying “older people need play just as much as anyone.” For a free print copy of the publication, go to AARP.org/Livable-Communities/Publications or get a link for downloading the e-book edition by emailing WhereWeLive@AARP.org with the subject line “Where We Live e-book.”



LEARN: Senior Planet Montgomery offers digital technology courses, workshops, and talks geared toward older adults, all of them completely free. Examples of courses are iPad Basics, iPad: Beyond the Basics, Computer Basics, and iPad Basics for Spanish speakers. Single session events include Google Maps, Digital Photography, Twitter, Online Travel Sites, Protecting Your Personal Information Online, Social Media, Ebay and Paypal, and much more.

For more information and a complete schedule of classes and lectures, contact Senior Planet Montgomery at 240-753-0676 or by email at mocoinfo@seniorplanet.org or visit

<https://seniorplanet.org/montgomery/>.

Interested in other educational opportunities?? For more opportunities geared towards adult learners, remember to check the Village of Takoma Park’s website, villageoftakomapark.com. Click on “**Links and Resources**” and then “**Learning and Enrichment Opportunities.**” You’ll find information on free tuition for seniors at Montgomery College, University of Maryland, Georgetown University, and much more.

ENGAGE: Our neighbors at Silver Spring Village co-host “SPARKLE” meetings along with Silver Spring Town Center. These are generally free and open to anyone, but require registration. To find upcoming events, go to Silverspringvillage.org/calendar and look for SPARKLE, usually on the second Wednesday of the month from 2-3:30 pm. SPARKLE stands for “Senior Programs Aimed at Re-Kindling Lifetime Engagement” and has covered topics as diverse as origami, poetry, the US economy, and a visit to a local farm.



READ: The Takoma Park MD Library has a special book cart, opposite the Circulation Desk, showcasing some of its collection of materials that address the needs and interests of older residents and their friends and families. Library staff member Jill Raymond has compiled a 6-page bibliography of some of the highlights. Also note that library staff are happy to help if you’re looking for something special. Check it out!

Hours:	Monday-Wednesday	12-9
	Tuesday-Thursday	10-9
	Saturday	10-5
	Sunday	12-5

Day of Service

The Village held a day of service on Saturday, October 28th, to help members with tasks that included leaf raking, gardening, changing lightbulbs, moving heavy objects, vacuuming, and doing laundry.

Many thanks to all who contributed to the success of this effort -- Village of TP volunteers Andy Penn, Immaculate Javia, Bob Sheldon, Mary Jane Muchui, Joseph Khabbaz and Paul Huebner; a crew from the Difference Makers Club of Takoma Park Middle School with coordinator Brian Goehring; and the 7th Day Adventist Young Adults.



Need help with snow removal? Students at Takoma Park Middle School who belong to the Difference Makers Club collaborate with parents and the City of Takoma Park to form teams of Snow Angels to fan out across the city and dig out residents who can't do the heavy lifting of snow removal themselves. The Recreation

Department, which collaborates with the Difference Makers Club and its coordinator, Bryan Goehring, operates on days the students are out of school and when there is 2" or more of snow.

For more information on the Snow Angels program or to be placed on the waiting list, contact Paula Lisowski, Senior Programs Manager at 301-891-7280 or paulal@takomaparkmd.gov.

In order to qualify for the Snow Angels program, you must

- be a Takoma Park resident
- have a disability that prevents you from removing snow or are 55 or older
- not have anyone living in your home who is able to assist with snow removal

Home Repair & Weatherization

Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland (HFHMM) serves homeowners across both Montgomery and Prince George's County. The program is a construction-based resource which provides qualified moderate-to-low income homeowners necessary health and safety-related home repairs, as well as eligible weatherization services.

For information and eligibility requirements, visit <http://habitatmm.org/energy+efficiency> or call 301-990-0014.





Small Home Repairs/Tasks: The Village of Takoma Park has an expanded team of volunteers who are ready and willing 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.). If you are a Village member in need of help, call 301-646-2109. Volunteers will contact you to arrange an evaluation of the job and determine if it can be done by the small home repair team. When a Village team is unable to perform a repair or a task, the homeowner or apartment resident who meets certain income requirements will receive an application form that goes to Rebuilding Together Montgomery County, a non-profit organization that works with community volunteers to provide free home repair and accessibility modification to help low income homeowners to live safely and independently in their homes. These repairs may include minor plumbing and electrical work; roofing, floor, and ceiling repair; interior and exterior painting; installation of grab bars; and building of ramps.

Errand Service: If you have stopped driving, can no longer get around easily, and need something that you (or a friend or family member) are unable to order online or from a delivery service, we can help if you are a member of the Village. You may, for example, need to pick up a prescription, a package from the post office, or dry cleaning. Call 301-646-2109 and let us know what you need. We will try to fill all requests within three days, sooner if there's an emergency.

Friendly Visitors/Callers: Village volunteers provide visits to Takoma Park elders or homebound residents. Do you know someone who might welcome this service, or would you like to volunteer? If so, please contact the Village of Takoma Park at 301-646-2109 or email Sandy Egan at sandyeganretired@gmail.com.

VillageRides: VillageRides remains our most active, heavily used service. We can always use more drivers. To learn more, to volunteer, and/or to register for or request a ride, call 301-646-2109.

Senior Stroll: How easy is it for you to go out for a walk in your neighborhood or Sligo Creek Park? For some of us it isn't easy: we are afraid of tripping, or falling, or getting lost. 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 and has had a criminal background check completed. If you are interested in this program or know someone who might be, please contact sandyeganretired@gmail.com or call 301-646-2109.

SUPPORT GROUPS: The Village of Takoma Park has fostered the development of the following support groups and helps to promote them.

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, usually from 1:00 to 2:30 pm, to exchange information and hear from guest professionals on recent advances. The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 19. For more information, contact wolfgang.mergner@gmail.com or call 301-646-2109.



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. The group is especially interested in securing jobs, supportive housing, safety, and recreation for their loved ones. Meetings are the fourth Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm. For more information, contact Mary Muchui (muchui@aol.com) or call 301-646-2109.



JOIN OR RENEW

Sign up or renew online at our website – villageoftakomapark.com.

Don't have access to a computer?
Call 301-646-2109 to request a membership form.

Membership dues are \$10 per year per member.
Pay online at our secure site or mail your check to:
Village of Takoma Park, PO Box 11420, Takoma Park, MD 20912

VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are essential to the success of the Village.
The two types of volunteering are:

- Direct service to members
- Volunteering to help the organization

In most cases you may serve on a regular or periodic basis, giving as much or as little time as fits your schedule. Anyone age 18 or older is welcome.

Note: Our insurance coverage requires that all volunteers join as members as well. Let us know if the \$10 annual dues are a hardship.

To volunteer, go to villageoftakomapark.com, **Join** and **Member Signup**, or email Sandra Egan at sandyeganretired@gmail.com.

SUPPORT

Village of Takoma Park is an all-volunteer, non-profit, tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organization. We rely on grants and donations to supplement income from dues. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Donate online by credit card at villageoftakomapark.com or send a check payable to Village of Takoma Park to
Village of Takoma Park, PO Box 11420, Takoma Park, MD 20912.

We greatly appreciate your support.

Officers

President: Wolfgang Mergner
Vice-President: vacant
Secretary: vacant
Treasurer: Lois Weinberg

Additional Board Members

Kathie Baker
Marisa Cruz
Doris Duarte
Jacquette Frazier
Andy Kelemen
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Ruth McGoff
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Finance: Lois Weinberg
Membership: Wolfgang Mergner
Programs: Kathie Baker
Volunteers: Sandra Egan

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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.