

Senior Living

Many Good Choices for Arlington Seniors

Arlington Neighborhood Village can help seniors thrive at home.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION

Need a ride to the doctor? Your computer break down? Want to join a group trip to a Nats game?

Arlington Neighborhood Village (ANV), a membership-based organization supported by volunteers, is here for you. It offers household or individual full or associate memberships for seniors for a fee of \$500 or \$750.

Patty Sullivan, interim operations director, says the full membership offers a variety of services plus social activities. The associate membership includes only the social activities.

"The most popular benefit is three, round-trip rides a week to anywhere in Arlington County. The rides can be used for any activity sponsored by the county as well as doctor and dental appointments or, for instance, having your nails done."

George Ruppert, who joined in late November before his knee replacement, said he lives in Lyons Village and needed rides to the doctor and shopping. "I can't say enough good things about these volunteers. It's stressful what you have to do and they are such good company."

Sullivan adds that technology assistance is also in demand. "We just had a man call us today who got a new TV and couldn't get his WiFi hooked up." So a volunteer will go solve the problem.

She says ANV has a volunteer base of about 125 people. "It's amazing the robust volunteer resource in Arlington County, the amount of time and skills people are willing to give."

Sullivan adds, "we will fix a leaky faucet, change a light bulb in a stove if you're afraid to put your head into the gas oven." She explains people are entitled to three of the services a month. And the volunteers often gradually establish relationships with the members they assist. "If you go shopping with 105-year-old Martha Ann Miller, you will want to go shopping again."

Virginia Andreani, 93, says she uses the volunteers a lot in the spring to take her to her Encore Learning classes. "I'm taking two classes now, one on Ancient Islam and one on the Bible, non-religious. Next month I'm starting a class on China Inside Out." Every other week she has a couple who come over "and we have tea or something and I brush up on my French. And I have a woman who loves gardening and when the county delivers my mulch she's going to come over and put it down. Isn't that great?"

In addition, there are a variety of social activities available such as the popular monthly dinner. In March they went to an Irish pub to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. She adds, "we make sure everybody gets there."

Sullivan says for people who want to age in place, it is important to get them out of



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY ARLINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD VILLAGES

The "butterfly" picture was taken in Oakland Park in Arlington after the weekly Tai Chi class.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY ARLINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD VILLAGES

This ANV group took a trip to Richmond in 2015 to George Mason University where Del. Patrick Hope gave ANV members an update on the General Assembly session.

their homes. "And they make friends; it's really fun to go." Also popular is the Wednesday morning coffee with a speaker at different places around the county.

Sullivan speculates the bocci team will form again this spring, they will head to a Nats game and "this month is an antiques roadshow. What we offer depends on what the members are demanding." They have three years of data now since this program was established in Arlington County "so we

can pretty well figure out what they will need."

Currently the village has 152 members between 55 to 105 years old. She says new members are getting older and are single.

"But I've learned that age doesn't tell you anything about the capacity of the person." Sullivan says they can also track people, do a daily check-in with the person. "Lots of kids want us to do that for their parents." Sullivan says. "We get to know people's



SHIRLEY RUHE/ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Arlington Neighborhood Village is a membership-based organization for seniors over 55 years old. It is supported by a robust and talented volunteer base willing to commit many hours to assist with services for seniors.

patterns and if they don't call in for the regular Thursday morning grocery shopping, we check in."

She adds, "I have a Ben Franklin impersonator who travels a lot and worries about his wife while he is gone so we call every day to check."

The Arlington Neighborhood Villages office is located in the Covenant Presbyterian Church on Military Road. It is open 10 a.m.-3 p.m., five days a week. ANV is part of the national Village to Village Network, but Sullivan says it's not true when you've seen one village you've seen them all. Each village responds to what their community needs.