Engaging in Place

YEAR IN REVIEW

JULY 2020 – JUNE 2021

Northampton Neighbors

ENGAGING IN . . . MISSION

For the past 35 years, my family and I have lived and run our business in and around the greater Northampton area. An essential component of our mission has been to serve and nurture this community and its people by giving our time, energy, and financial support to organizations that provide essential social services. Northampton Neighbors is such an organization. We are all aging in place, and I know that even while I offer support, I am receiving it from others with whom I work and live. Our American societal approach to supporting our aging population needs a reawakening. We must develop a keener and more compassionate understanding of the needs of our elders and be able to create better approaches to supporting them. I believe the mission and work of Northampton Neighbors does exactly that.

—TODD BARRON

A Message from Kenneth Dym

Last year I wrote that, even with the pandemic upon us, I envision Northampton Neighbors growing, becoming increasingly engaged with the community, and furthering partnering with the business community. As you read through this *Year in Review,* you will immediately see that we have accomplished this and much more.

Our membership is over 1,000, certainly the largest of any Village in Massachusetts. No doubt the pandemic limited our activities during the past year, yet we still managed to host Neighborhood Circles throughout the city; promote an extremely successful Speaker Series; launch the Pioneer Valley Memory Care Initiative; coordinate and lead a number of Interest Groups; and just recently sponsor a mayoral candidates forum. In addition, NN played an instrumental role with regard to our COVID-19 response, disseminating accurate, up-to-date information about the virus and the preventive measures necessary to limit its spread.

Moving forward, I see our horizons expanding even further. Through the tireless efforts of NN members, the organization is forging new links with local businesses, schools, city agencies, and nonprofit organizations. These collaborations strengthen our ties with the city, its various neighborhoods, and residents of all ages. And slowly, prudently, and cautiously, in accord with the latest health care guidelines, we are beginning to once again offer in-person services: rides, minor household repairs, and shopping, to name a few.

The year has been a tough one for all of us, but Northampton Neighbors is emerging stronger as we strive to fulfill our mission of helping each other maintain independence, dignity, and joy over time as we age—and engage—in place.

Kenneth Dym
President

Highlights: July 2020–June 2021

Education

The Vax Facts initiative was a successful and wide-ranging effort to disseminate information about COVID-19 with a focus on the availability and access of vaccines in our area. The intergenerational volunteer effort included: hand delivery of more than 5,500 door hang cards; phone outreach to more than 300+ members with little or no internet access; a social media campaign to engage a younger population; and collaboration with civic and community organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, Northampton Public Schools, businesses, and the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* to reach a broad audience.

Partnership

We are pleased to be part of the Pioneer Valley Memory Care Initiative, providing resources, support, and solutions for those in our community living with or caring for those with memory loss, Alzheimer's, and other dementias. Based out of Cooley Dickinson Hospital, the program is free of charge and tailored to the needs of each individual.

Connection

In an effort to provide meaningful membership communication in this pandemic year, we upped our outreach to members including more regular phone check-ins and the Birthday Card Project. We also continued to publish our bimonthly newsletter and monthly column in the Senior Center's *Conz Street Chronicle*.

Consistency

We continued to build on our community offerings and presence with NN's popular Speaker Series, Neighborhood Circles, Interest Groups, and two virtual talent shows, NNLive!

Visibility

Northampton Neighbors laid the groundwork for a new logo and website to bring additional clarity to our communications and all the work that we do.

ENGAGING IN . . . COMMUNITY

We learned about Northampton Neighbors early on through our friend and founding member Leigh Bailey—older people helping older people was a very fine goal, and we wanted to be involved. The fact that Northampton Neighbors is free sets it apart from other villages in the Village-to-Village Network we had heard about, and we thought that was a wonderful thing. Nicole started a neighborhood group for learning and speaking French, and we also enjoy helping out by giving rides to those who need them, given that public transportation in this area is so limited. Volunteering in this way is easy enough to do while we still can, and we'd like to have others do the same for us, eventually. We also like to occasionally participate in the listserve and especially appreciate the recommendations for things like plumbers and other services. That's very helpful.

—NICOLE AND DAVID BALL

The Story Behind NN's New Look

WE BELIEVE . . .

We believe that together, we can CREATE THE COMMUNITY we want to live in. We love our little city, and NN is one way of helping Northampton be even stronger. A vibrant Northampton is connected and supportive of one another.

We believe Northampton residents of ALL AGES AND ABILITIES can benefit from NN. We strive to make it easy to both give and receive. We do this by providing opportunities for people to plug into NN in whatever way works for them, as volunteers, members, donors, and doers.

We believe Northampton Neighbors should be ACCESSIBLE TO ALL. Anyone who wants to can be a member of NN. Fee-free is part of the organization's DNA, and we welcome people from every corner of the community.

We believe being RESPONSIVE AND FLEXIBLE is key. Part of what it means to age is adapting to needs as they change, and NN is no different. We pride ourselves on being resourceful and nimble: if there's a request, we'll do whatever we can to meet it through programs, services, or personal outreach.

We believe that "HOME" is where you want and are able to live. Our goal is to enable each other to live the good life that Atul Gawande advocates for: finding comfort and joy in our realities with the resources available to us.

It started with a conversation about *Being Mortal,* Atul Gawande's book on the inescapable realities of aging and living a good life to the end. The question: how can we best help one another maintain independence, dignity, and joy over time? The answer: Northampton Neighbors, providing volunteer services, support, and enrichment for seniors in our community.

For four years, our organization has focused efforts on everything from arranging household help, tech assistance, and rides to phone check-ins, social interest groups, special events, and more. As Northampton Neighbors evolved, so did the need for an organizational look and feel to match.

Northampton Neighbors

Eng**aging in place**

The beauty of a "brand refresh," as it's called, is that the organization stays exactly the same; the only thing that changes is how we communicate about it. There are many ways to describe Northampton Neighbors, but they all tie into the same core ideas. In speaking with members, volunteers, community supporters, and NN leadership, we articulated unifying truths about who we are, what we do, and why (see facing page). We then developed a new logo and tagline. "Eng**aging in place**" emphasizes the goal of our organization while also underscoring the aspect of NN that's about connection and involvement...with our community and each other.

As always, Northampton Neighbors continues to be fee-free, and to welcome members and volunteers alike to participate in whatever ways are meaningful to them: to give, to receive, and to feel connected and fulfilled either way. Because isn't that what a good life is all about?

Volunteering

At the heart of all we do are those who volunteer in a variety of ways to help our members continue to lead rich, engaged lives. Our most visible volunteers are those who provide direct services such as tech support, small home repairs and chores, a ride to the doctor, or a helping hand with groceries. We believe that connecting those who are able to help with those who need it benefits both, as well as the greater community. Many members note the joy in giving as well as receiving, and participate across the board. In addition, we encourage involvement on committees and helping to plan events such as our Speaker Series and Annual Meeting, as well as leading Neighborhood Circles and Interest Groups. And others may enjoy working with our strategic partners to expand our services. Whatever your interest, skills, and availability, there's a volunteer niche awaiting you at Northampton Neighbors and our community will benefit from your generosity.

For a volunteer application or questions, please contact us at (413) 341-0160 or info@northamptonneighbors.org.

Covid Silver Linings

We invited NN members to share some bright spots in an otherwise dark time. Here's some of what they said . . .

I started a COVID volunteer project with a school in Springfield and recruited numerous people from NN, who not only helped with the project but were fascinating people to get to know, as well.

The direct telephone contact to all members, inquiring about feelings and concrete needs. It was one of the few entities that carried on life as if it mattered; not the retreat into the cave, but a fire burning at the mouth to assure safety.

I developed an online friendship with a member after receiving an interesting response to one of my posts.

There is one person in my life who comes every week to make sure I set up my weekly meds in the little boxes and she is special to listen to my every medical story as we plunk every necessary pill in its perfect place. I can count on her to be there every time I need her. How lucky I am to have found Northampton Neighbors.

The Food Interest Group was a wonderful way to connect with people over Zoom.

I moved to Northampton in mid-January and as soon as I learned about NN and joined up, the sense of community and connection I longed for began to take shape. Members of the Monday Walking and Garden groups welcomed me warmly, and through them I began to meet various other neighbors, and myriad possibilities for becoming part of the community quickly started to emerge.

I developed a much greater appreciation for nature and the outdoors.

A human calling to see if I was alive was heartening.

That one dude who writes about COVID let me know I could get a booster.

I was overwhelmed by the reassuring response I got from the community when I expressed how terrified I was to get cataract surgery.

ENGAGING IN . . . ACTS OF KINDNESS

When we joined Northampton Neighbors, we thought maybe we would get help with errands on occasion or even find someone who might like to go with us up to the Conway Inn, which we love but is hard for us to get to since we don't drive anymore. Soon after joining, I actually fell and broke both ankles and felt lucky to have NN help us with some laundry and food shopping. Last year, we got a survey about services and I had the idea that it might be nice to connect with others by sending birthday cards. I was thinking specifically about my partner Glenn because he doesn't have a whole lot of people in his life who remember him and this would be something to brighten his day. In early 2021, it turned into a program of sending birthday cards out to NN members, which I do monthly, and I always sign my name and address to make it more personal. I hear that people are pleased when they receive them, so that feels good.

— LAURA OLDHAM AND GLENN NOVAK

ENGAGING IN . . . A SHARED EXPERIENCE

We've always known our neighbors, but have gotten to know them so much better through NN. We had an elderly neighbor who passed away last year, and when she was ill, all of us came together to support her; it was a meaningful shared experience, truly neighbors helping neighbors and taking an interest in one another. We are a retired nurse and attorney, so we've also been able to offer our expertise on occasion. Fran has brain lesions and learned to paint in order to form new neural pathways, and people tend to be very interested in this, as well; elderly people have a lot to gain by doing things they've never done before. Northampton Neighbors offers lots of opportunities for that. It's been a lovely experience all around

— FRAN CORRIVEAU AND ELAINE REALL

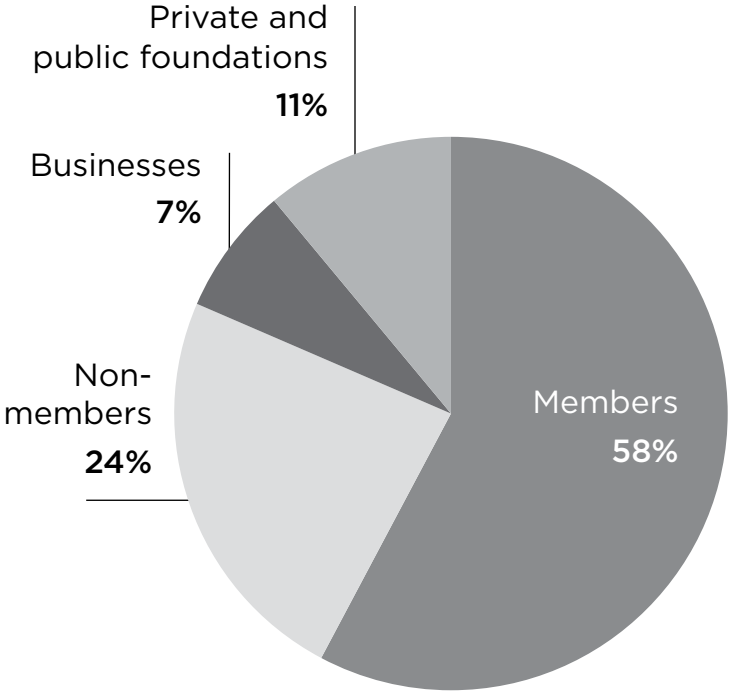
Financials

This past year, Northampton Neighbors saw a 17% increase in the amount of donations from the year before, and the percentage of members who made donations increased from 22% to 30%. We are grateful for the support of all those who made this possible. Every dollar—and donor—is meaningful and much appreciated!

FY 2021

Revenue:	$90,606.54
Expenditures:	$55,231.28
Net:	$35,375.26

NN Funding



Become a Sustaining Partner!

Our sustaining partners are individuals and businesses who make monthly or annual pledges that are automatically deducted from their bank accounts. These steady contributions are a wonderful way to support us throughout the year, while also helping NN maintain a stable financial base and plan for the future.

Please Support Your Northampton Neighbors!

Donate online at www.northamptonneighbors.org or send your contribution to Northampton Neighbors, PO Box 231, Northampton MA 01061.

Partners in the Community

In order to best serve our members with the most comprehensive and quality offering, we collaborate with local service agencies and other community nonprofits, healthcare, government organizations, and the business community including:

10,000 Villages
Cooley Dickinson Health Care
Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice
Daily Hampshire Gazette
Downtown Northampton Association
Forbes Library
Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce
Grow Food Northampton
Hampshire Regional YMCA
Highland Valley Elder Services
Northampton Bicycle
Northampton Health Department
Northampton Housing Authority
Northampton Open Media
Northampton Senior Center
Paradise Copies
State Street Fruit Store & Cooper's Corner

* Sustainer + Memorial Gift

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NN is deeply grateful for the support of our individual and business community donors, grantors and foundations, and the many other organizations and people who have contributed to our mission of enabling seniors to remain independent and engaged as we grow older.

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ENGAGING IN . . . CONNECTION

I'm not a Northampton native and I think I always had one foot headed somewhere else; but I can tell you with all honesty that since getting involved with Northampton Neighbors, I can now see myself growing old here. It gives me that sense of community, belonging, connection, and through that, a certain amount of safety. Even though I'm 71, I'm still working so I don't participate in as many things as I'd like but I enjoy the Interest Groups and Neighborhood Circles. And especially the Mix 'n' Mingles: there's something really special about that evening gathering time with neighbors and the chance to share a glass of wine and conversation before you go home for dinner. Through these activities, I've had the chance to meet people I never would have known otherwise. And Northampton Neighbors hasn't just been good for me, it's also been good for my family, giving my grown children a certain sense of relief knowing I'm connected to my community in this way.

—ALICIA GUIDOTTI

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Our dynamic, get-it-done committees, composed of volunteers and board members alike, are at the heart of our operations. If you have time and talent to participate in one of the following NN committees, we'd like to hear from you!

- Communications
- Community Partnerships
- Development
- Events
- Finance
- Speaker Series
- Support
- Volunteer

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On the front cover: Greta Kessler
On the back cover: Fred Zimnock
Member portraits: Paul Shoul
Design: www.twentysixletters.com

ENGAGING IN . . . SERVICES

As a solitary septuagenarian woman, I am grateful for the services and support of Northampton Neighbors. I live in a condo building from the 1920s that needs some upgrades and repairs, which isn't my strong suit; as an artist and writer, I'm very creative but I lack the practical gene for household fixes bigger than changing a lightbulb (and, unfortunately, I'm also a 'technophobe goddess!'). I feel so fortunate to have the help of generous and skilled volunteers in this community that I love, with like-minded people. Even though most of my dealings with Northampton Neighbors have involved receiving services, I'm very willing to volunteer services of my own: art lessons, jewelry making, home decorating and design, or writing a poem for a special occasion. Skills that may not necessarily be needed, but appreciated.

—SASHA BERMAN

Northampton Neighbors
Engaging in place

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