

Sea Cliff Senior Outreach
Five Years in Review
By Karen Montagnese

In 2012 we did a Survey of our senior citizens in our Village. The results informed a Plan moving forward, and encouraged me to expand programs and services. It is my goal to maintain a Village that supports independent living and aging in place. The Plan outlined 5 areas of focus: Housing, Health and Wellness, Transportation, Information and Referrals, Safety and Security and Recreation and Life-Long Learning. I am happy to report that we have expanded in all areas of the Plan. In addition there is an overall increase of awareness to all that the Village has to offer our Seniors.

Senior housing is a difficult issue nationwide. Here in Sea Cliff the nearest 55+ housing is in Glen Cove. In our village, however, we have many rental options that may ease the financial burden of owning a home. For homeowners who are low income, the County and the Village offer property tax exemptions. I know from my own work that we have made this application process easier for qualifying seniors. In addition the Village and the County offer Residential Rehab programs thru Community Development grants. These programs are designed to aid in home repairs for qualifying residents.

In the area of Health and Wellness we also expanded services and programs. One concern is nutrition and to insure healthy eating our local Mutual Concerns lunch program has added meal delivery to homebound seniors. This is a bi-weekly local offering, an addition to the larger Meals on Wheels program that is currently in place. In addition to the Mutual Concerns yoga exercise program and blood pressure screenings, we have added some educational programs. Topics have included elder law, fall prevention, stroke indicators, blood pressure awareness and immunization information, including annual flu shots. A new partnership with Northwell Nurse Educators offers our community an ongoing stream of informative seminars. The Northwell hospital in Glen Cove also has many out-patient rehabilitation and community educational programs including orthopedic, respiratory and diabetes chronic disease management.

Transportation is available to our seniors and provides valuable community access. Our senior bus has seen an increase of passengers. On Tuesdays and Fridays, it makes door to door stops to the Mutual Concerns lunch and on Wednesdays it travels to the grocery store. The need for additional lunch bus escorts is being evaluated. The Senior Action Committee volunteers provide local medical transportation as well as shopping bus escorts. I understand that they are quite busy and expanding their volunteer force. The County bus has 2 routes through Sea Cliff and because our Village is along this route it qualifies our disabled population to have access to AbleRide, paratransit service. The Long Island Rail Road has a local depot on the Oyster Bay

Line into New York City. Stops include Jamaica Queens where you can transfer to the MTA Subway or the “Train to the Plane” to JFK International Airport.

As far as information and referrals, the Senior Outreach office has become an information portal. Seniors have called and visited for a whole host of issues. Together we have addressed the maze of Social Security and Medicare, the complexities of discharge planning and the many challenges of independent living. The Office also can inform low income seniors of entitlement opportunities such as Medicaid, SNAP (food stamps), HEAP and Medicare Extra Help. Every fall there is a special information session regarding Medicare Open Enrollment provided by the Health Insurance Information and Counseling Program (HIICAP). The office also informs seniors of the wide variety of senior programs offered by the Village, its surrounding communities and the County. Referrals are often made to appropriate agencies that may provide specialized services. There is a focus on disseminating information with a goal of increasing the awareness of what is available. The free Village Bulletin has proven to be a good resource for our seniors as it provides a calendar of events and reports on local happenings. A new local subscription based paper has been good at providing weekly news updates specific to our community. For tech-savvy seniors there is the digital “Sea Cliff Circle”, a bi-monthly on line newsletter, and a number of informative local Facebook groups to join. The Village web site is becoming a real time directory and resource guide. All of these on line options provide regular reminders and announcements of what is happening in and around town.

Safety is important, and we want our seniors to feel secure. To this end, we have hosted Senior Scam seminars offered by the State’s Attorney General’s office. If you feel that you are being scammed please call and make a report. In addition, in conjunction with the Senior Action Committee, the Village is developing a Senior Emergency and Friendly Phone Chain. This initiative will provide our seniors with a weekly or bi-weekly phone call as well as a phone contact in cases of emergency. This will be an opt-in program and will offer a new level of Security, especially to those who are the most vulnerable. The Village also has an opt-in Code Red calling system. In the event of an emergency prerecorded messages can be sent out through this system.

Recreation and Life-long Learning are key components in vibrant aging. In our Village we have many opportunities to expand both mind and body. Our Library is a wealth of information and provides an ever expanding list of programs. They have embraced the concept of Life-Long Learning and their diverse monthly calendar reflects this, always filled with events to quell the curious mind. Tuesday afternoons at the movies has seen an uptick in attendance, a popular stop after the Mutual Concerns lunch. Book clubs include a cookbook category and lecture series cover a wide variety of topics including poetry, music, history and current events. Village volunteer organizations hold their own periodic lectures to the public covering topics such as architecture, gardening, wildlife as well as historic reenactments. Of course the social benefits of

these programs are invaluable. Our beach and the local town pool provide access to swimming and boating activities. Our parks and promenades are plentiful and provide safe access to recreation. The local YMCA offers the Silver Sneaker program and locally there are many gyms and yoga studios that serve our senior community.

Looking forward to the next 5 years areas of interest include access and awareness. We have relied on our Village Bulletin, local papers and word of mouth as ways to inform our seniors. As baby boomers enter the senior years they will be more computer savvy and technology will become a larger part of our senior community. It will be a way to connect seniors with vital information especially those who live alone. Currently the Glen Cove Senior Center offers a virtual program. It is in a trial phase but can connect seniors with information, programs and seminars. In addition such a techno-hub will steer services to seniors in need. It may one day even connect a patient to medical service and treatment. Our new friendly and emergency phone chain can be coupled with email correspondence and links to important material. Our Village has a Technology Task Force and Senior Outreach will collaborate with them to insure that our Village Website is a user friendly hub for our seniors.

Another priority is to build community partnerships. Services and programs are already in place throughout our community. Developing reciprocal relationships, like the ones with Northwell Hospital System and the Glen Cove Senior Center are valuable. Continuing these initiatives enriches our Senior Outreach capabilities.