We thank those who shared their stories for this report. We do our best work when we build on the strengths of the communities we serve. Our Vet to Vet visiting program began as a collaboration with American Legion Post #5 in Brattleboro, and has been built on one of our communities’ greatest strengths – our amazing volunteers, many of them older adults.

The spirit of community energizes all that we do. Our senior meals and wellness programs depend on local partners and many volunteer drivers, cooks and other helpers. Services provided through our highly capable and dedicated staff – case management, problem solving and help finding services – are a community effort. The story of Henry Hill and the phenomenal work of COVER (page 2) illustrates the value of partnerships.

Your donations allow us to serve more people and meet critical local needs that are not adequately funded by government or other sources. This past year there was a significant increase in vulnerable elders needing fuel. Donations allow us to pay for items such as repairs or replacement of hearing aids, medical supplies, appliances or other items that make daily life easier.

We are grateful to all who have supported our work this past year through donations, volunteering, as a member of our staff or through a valued community partnership. None of us can do it alone.

In gratitude,
Barbara Woods, Board President
Carol Stamatakis, Executive Director

Our Mission
To promote the well-being and dignity of older adults

Our Vision
Every person will age in the place of their choice, with the support they need and the opportunity for meaningful relationships and active engagement in their community.

Our Values
• We honor and respect the life experience and autonomy of Vermont’s older adults.
• We recognize the essential role of families, caregivers and communities in the lives of older adults.
• We foster a work environment where creativity, open-mindedness and resourcefulness are expected; our employees are compassionate, respectful and responsive to the needs and wishes of our clients.
• We are committed to maintaining strong community partnerships to assure our clients’ varied needs are met and to collectively strengthen the infrastructure of support for older adults.
• We embrace our role as advocates for older adults, including speaking out about current issues, identifying unmet needs, proposing solutions and believing that our collective voices can bring about change.
Collaborative Effort Enables Disabled Individual To Stay in His Home

Henry Hill started panicking when he was about to get out of the Springfield Hospital. “I knew I would need help when I got home and I had no idea where to turn for assistance. Fortunately, the Social Services Director at the hospital gave me a list of phone numbers to call for support. Senior Solutions was one of them.”

Several days after Henry called the agency’s HelpLine, a Senior Solutions benefits specialist visited him and assessed his needs. After discovering Henry had lost many of his benefits and support services and that his girlfriend had disappeared with many of his belongings, the specialist called in the Senior Solutions Elder Justice team. They got Henry’s health insurance coverage and Meals on Wheels deliveries reinstated. They also helped him obtain home insurance and file a police report about the theft of his personal property.

Henry, who is a recent amputee, also faced mobility issues. “I really wanted to stay in this house because my father built it,” he said. “But I was afraid I might fall down the rickety old stairs to the front door, and I couldn’t afford to have an accessibility ramp built.” Senior Solutions reached out for help to the Vermont Center for Independent Living, which provided funding for the ramp materials. The agency also called COVER Home Repair. The non-profit organized a group of volunteers from the Thoracic Surgical Department of Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center led by Dr. David Finley to build the ramp.

“As health care providers, we understand the close connection between health and housing,” Dr. Finley said. “If we can prevent even one accident, the benefit to everyone is significant.”

“This project demonstrates the power of collaboration,” Senior Solutions’ Executive Director Carol Stamatakis said. “It’s a wonderful example of how by joining forces community organizations and volunteers can address challenges we wouldn’t be able to solve alone.”

Ways to Give

Sharing your time or resources with Senior Solutions is a wonderful way to invest in the health and vitality of local elders and caregivers. The success of our mission depends on the support and generosity of many organizations and individuals.

Volunteer - Senior Solutions could not carry out its mission without the dedicated volunteers who give of their time and talents.

Join Our Advisory Council - The Senior Solutions Advisory Council, established pursuant to the Older Americans Act, advises the agency on matters relating to the needs of older adults, especially in their own communities. Meets monthly. Call to learn more 802-885-2655.

Make a Donation - Even the smallest donation is an important contribution and a vote of confidence in our work.

Contribute to Time Trade Credits - Members of Brattleboro Time Trade can donate their credits to Senior Solutions. We use the credits to get services from other Time Trade members. If you’re a member, simply search for Senior Solutions in the offers section.

Shop at Amazon - Amazon will donate 0.5% to Senior Solutions from eligible AmazonSmile purchases.

Make a Planned Gift - A planned gift can provide lasting value to organizations and causes you care about. There are many options.

Make a Bequest in your Will - A bequest is the easiest and most common method of making a planned gift.

Other Gift Options - You may make a gift of life insurance, name Senior Solutions as a beneficiary of your IRA or retirement plan or make a gift of tangible personal property or real estate.

Senior Solutions Partners with the Vermont Community Foundation to Provide More Options for Making a Gift - Senior Solutions has entered into a Planned Giving Partnership with the Vermont Community Foundation. Gifts established through this option are held and managed by the Vermont Community Foundation. Their staff is available to work with you and handle all administrative and tax reporting details. Options for gifts include annuities and trusts that can provide you with income during your lifetime. Please contact us to learn more about your options for making a planned gift.
New Vet to Vet Program Fostering Connections Between Veterans

“Veterans helping fellow veterans is such a natural outgrowth of what soldiers do. We share a special bond...”
-Tom Costello, Commander Brattleboro Post #5

Last April, Brattleboro Post #5 of the American Legion and Senior Solutions launched a program to serve older veterans in southern Windham County. The Vet to Vet program’s goal is to connect military veteran volunteers with veterans who are socially isolated and keep them connected to their communities. To date, Senior Solutions has trained 10 volunteers. Six of them have been matched. They make weekly visits to 7 program participants.

“Veterans helping fellow veterans is such a natural outgrowth of what soldiers do. We share a special bond,” said Tom Costello, the current Commander of the post. “The program provides a great way for the Legion to serve all veterans,” added John Hagen, who was the Commander when the initiative was founded. Army veteran Hal Lier worked with the Legion and Senior Solutions to develop the program. He was the first volunteer.

Volunteer Walter Stover’s Story

After reading about the Vet to Vet program’s launch in the local paper, 77 year old Army veteran Walter Stover knew he wanted to get involved. “I wanted to do something to give back,” he said. “I’ve had a good life, and I feel fortunate.” Shortly after being trained as a volunteer, Walter had his first meeting with a 57 year old Army veteran with some disabilities. Senior Solutions Volunteer Coordinator Vicki Mastroianni arranged the meeting at the veteran’s home so he and Walter could see if they hit it off. While talking about what they liked to do, the men discovered they both enjoyed outdoor sports.

The first few times they got together they went fishing. They rapidly developed a bond. “We’re good friends now,” Walter said. “I can’t say enough good things about the program. We’ve both gotten a lot out of it.”

Volunteer Jack Greene’s Story

Navy veteran Jack Greene got involved in the Vet to Vet program after he and his wife moved to Brattleboro from their longtime home in Brookline, Vermont. “The program seemed like a good opportunity to meet new people,” Jack said. After being trained as a volunteer, Jack, who is 87 years old, got matched with 95 year old Wells Cunningham, an Army Air Force veteran. When Senior Solutions Volunteer Coordinator Vicki Mastroianni first introduced Jack to Wells, he didn’t say much. Jack recalled how he wasn’t sure the match would work out.

Jack called Wells the next week. “When Wells picked up the phone and heard my voice,” Jack said, “I could hear his voice perk up. And when I asked him if he’d like to go hear a talk about the CIA he said: ‘Wow, that sounds good.’” On another visit, the two veterans had lunch at the VFW. Afterward, Jack drove Wells to see his alma mater Marlboro College. Wells had a great time visiting the campus.

“The bond that forms between two people is what makes this program work,” Jack stated. “Wells’ daughter told me our friendship has made a difference in Wells’ life. I also enjoy our weekly visits.”
On any given day Senior Solutions’ Helpline Specialists Mary Sanderson and Aimee Minbiole and Intake Specialist Lynn Watson may receive 30 phone calls requesting information on a vast range of topics.

“Sometimes we cover over a dozen subjects in one phone call,” Mary said. “Other times someone may call just to find out how to enroll in Meals on Wheels. More serious issues we deal with include calls involving potential cases of self-neglect, elder abuse and financial exploitation. The HelpLine is frequently the first way people connect with Senior Solutions. We are the gateway to the agency.”

In addition to inquiries from older Vermonters on every imaginable issue, many of the HelpLine’s calls are from the adult children, spouses, or siblings of those in need of services. “Our goal is to help older Vermonters improve the quality of their lives,” Mary said. “We see some of the heartbreaking things people face,” Aimee added. “But it’s also heartwarming to see how families and neighbors rally to support older Vermonters.” Mary agreed. “It always feels good when we get a call from someone and we can help. The thank you notes on our bulletin board are a reminder of the rewarding aspects of this job.”

“Hi, I have been a background volunteer for the last year and I am writing to express my gratefulness for your organization and the people you employ. I feel high anxiety every year when the ‘open enrollment’ begins. Senior Solutions lives up to its name. Lucky me, I had Pati help me twice. She is amazing! All my anxiety melts away as she does all the work which I am unable to do for myself. In one phone call we are all set up (well maybe two since we speak to set up the appointment call”). I am amazed by Pati’s speed, efficiency, and knowledge.

“I know we all take the time to complain. I just wanted to let you know how valuable your organization is for so many of us and I hope you will pass my appreciation on to Pati. She brought me peace. Thank You so much.”

– Marcia Bruno, Jacksonville, VT
Volunteer Visitor Programs Provide Over 6,000 Hours of Support

During the past year Senior Solutions’ programs that assist older Vermonters who are housebound or in need of social engagement have grown. “We have 30 volunteers who provided over 6,000 hours of support to 90 senior citizens through our Friendly Visitors, Senior Companions and Vet to Vet programs,” Volunteer Coordinator Vicki Mastroianni said. “We’re thrilled our programs are helping keep these at-risk elders living independently in their homes.”

Senior Solutions trains and provides ongoing education and support to all three programs’ volunteers, all of whom undergo criminal background and motor vehicle record checks. Individuals of all ages, incomes and time availability can participate in the Friendly Visitors and Vet to Vet programs. Senior Companions is a federally-subsidized program that pays a small stipend to volunteers age 55 and older who meet income and time commitment criteria. All volunteers receive mileage reimbursement.

Senior Companion Dennis Newman’s Story

Dennis Newman became a Senior Companion two years ago. The thought of helping people appealed to Dennis who is 69 years old. He currently visits several people each week.

One of Dennis’ clients is a 70 year old man named Jack Downing. Dennis and Jack go to the Brattleboro Senior Center each week where they have fun playing dominoes and card games. Then they head next door to Center Congregational Church for lunch. Dennis and Jack have become good friends. “Jack always gives me a hand bump, which he calls a respect punch, at the beginning and end of our visit,” he said. “It’s a sign of our friendship and makes us both feel good.”

Friendly Visitor Melissa MacKenzie’s Story

Eighty one year old Melissa MacKenzie got involved in the Friendly Visitor program after reading in the paper about the need for volunteers. “I thought to myself, well that’s something I could do.”

After Melissa received training, Senior Solutions’ Volunteer Coordinator Vicki Mastroianni matched her with a woman in her 80’s she takes food shopping each week. “During the time we spend together, I enjoy hearing her stories about what she has been up to,” Melissa said. She also visits a 90 year old woman who is completely homebound. Although she has macular degeneration that doesn’t stop her from reading. Melissa picks up four or five large-print books for her from the library each week. “We have a wonderful time talking about the books,” Melissa said. “She’s a marvelous conversationalist. The women I visit have become my friends. I look forward to seeing them and to hearing what’s happening in their lives.”

“I look forward to seeing them and to hearing what’s happening in their lives.”

-Melissa MacKenzie

People who Received Visits 90

30 Volunteers

6310 Hours Served

From the Friendly Visitors, Vet to Vet VT & Senior Companions programs

(From left) Dennis and Jack outside the Senior Center in Brattleboro

For more information about these volunteer programs contact Vicki Mastroianni at 802-376-3388.
Volunteer Home Visitors and Helpers – Two years ago we started a new Friendly Visitor program that supports volunteers of all ages, incomes and time availability to visit and engage in activities enjoyable to isolated elders. Visitors also may provide minor home repairs, assistance with shopping, and transportation to community events and activities. Our agency also expanded its Senior Companion program, a federally subsidized program that provides a stipend to low-income older adults to help support their volunteer activities.

HelpLine – Our HelpLine is the point of intake for our services and an important source of information, referral and assistance to older adults, caregivers and professionals. HelpLine staff assist people over the phone and in-person, providing benefits screening, service referrals and problem-solving. Through our State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), we help first-time Medicare enrollees and provide yearly Medicare Part D Open Enrollment, Community Education Programs (Boot Camps), and assistance with insurance questions.

Nutrition – Senior Solutions supports and oversees 13 home-delivered meals (“Meals on Wheels”) programs and 29 community meal sites, all operated through local community partners. These programs rely heavily on community volunteers and local financial and in-kind support. Food that is locally prepared in a caring community promotes quality and many important values. Our registered dietitians provide nutrition education to community nutrition sites and home-based nutrition counseling to older adults.

Case Management and In-Home Assistance – Case Managers and Outreach Specialists provide person-centered planning, benefits screening, application assistance and problem-solving in the homes of those who cannot easily travel or be helped over the phone. Case managers, with offices in three locations, provide care coordination and support for Medicaid Choices for Care clients and qualifying veterans through the VA.

Self-Neglect – Senior Solutions investigates and provides follow-up on self-neglect referrals. This can be extremely challenging work that involves encouraging people who are reluctant to accept services while honoring their autonomy and lifestyle choices. Case managers are trained on using risk assessments, developing care plans, and engaging community partners to support clients. Our Senior Helpline uses a screening tool to help identify potential self-neglect situations.

Outreach and Collaboration – We expanded direct outreach to vulnerable elders to help them access needed services and screen for public benefit eligibility, targeting Meals on Wheels recipients as a priority. As a result, many more individuals received case management services and were enrolled in programs such as Medicare Savings, Medicaid Home and Community-Based Long-Term Care, and 3SquaresVT (food stamps). We strengthened relationships with towns and the business community and participated in many collaborations related to health, aging, transportation, food insecurity, wellness and nutrition.

Elder Justice – Senior Solutions is implementing a 3-year grant from the US Department of Justice for a project in Windsor County to create a model coordinated community response to abuse in later life that includes elder services, police, domestic violence services, Adult Protective Services and prosecutors. The grant also supports training for law enforcement and other professionals. A community needs assessment was done and services to clients began in 2019.

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Wellness Programs Expanded – We offer the HomeMeds program that screens older adults for medication-related problems and are now taking referrals. PEARLS, the Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives for Seniors, has started back up after a 2-year hiatus and we are taking referrals again through the HelpLine. The Arthritis Foundation Aquatics Program is now offered in White River Junction, Springfield, and Brattleboro. Tai Chi for falls prevention and arthritis is offered at many locations. We are currently recruiting volunteers to expand wellness offerings.

Workplace Wellness – Senior Solutions has Healthy Workplace Wellness Activity and Nutrition policies. Activities have included an on-site exercise class, equipment that can be used while working, educational presentations at staff meetings, and providing fruit and other healthy snacks available in our break room.

Partnerships with Health Care Providers – We are coordinating care for clients with health care providers in collaboration with the OneCare Accountable Care Organization (ACO). We also use the PatientPing tool that provides real-time alerts when a client transitions to or from a health care setting.

Public Policy – We testified at a local budget hearing and educated legislators about issues impacting older Vermonters. We participated regularly in meetings of the Older Vermonters legislative caucus at the Statehouse. We hosted a “Meet and Greet” for candidates for the legislature and worked closely with community partners to better coordinate efforts to address elder abuse. We support and actively participate in the Community of Vermont Elders (COVE).

Supporting Family Caregivers – Senior Solutions helps caregivers find resources and provides counseling on self-care and guidance on dealing with caregiving challenges. We have supported and co-facilitated groups for people caring for older loved ones and groups for grandparents and other kin who are caring for children.

Other Services – Senior Solutions supports legal assistance (through Vermont Legal Aid) and home-based mental health services, in partnership with HCRA. We provide financial support to local agencies providing specialized transportation for elders and people with disabilities.

Total Expenses $3,468,569
Total Revenue $3,422,730
2019 Successful Aging Awards

The Successful Aging Awards recognize older adults who have made exceptional contributions to their communities. They are nominated by members of the communities Senior Solutions serves. The recipients were honored at the Senior Solutions Annual Meeting in Springfield on October 30th. The following are the 2019 award recipients at left: (Top) Ernest “Puggy” Lamphere, Georgia Ethier, Kamelia Wierzbicki; (Middle) Heidrun Mayer, Ruth Foster Rawson, Jerry Gorman; (bottom) James Hasson, Mildred Maloskie, John Tarbell. Not shown: Mary Jane Morin and Betty Witt.