



Lisa Naylor and COVID Response Volunteer Francis Griffin.

## 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.

Five years ago, I started my journey as Executive Director at Senior Solutions. At that time, the Board had decided proactively to embark on a strategic planning process to envision a future for the agency and older adults in our region and develop a road map to get there. As I prepare for my transition to the next stage of my life and career, I am excited to be able to help kick off a process to update that plan.

Strategic planning starts with a vision. In 2017, following an inclusive community-wide process, we developed a 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." It strikes me that our vision reflects what most people take for granted as basic human rights and the essentials for a good life. Yet when applied to older adults, this vision seems somewhat radical.

Together we have been able to achieve many goals and change many lives. It is hard to believe that the Friendly Visitor and Vet to Vet programs, highlighted in this Annual Report, did not exist in 2017 and were developed as the direct result of a strategic plan goal. It seems that when a vision is strong and shared, a powerful energy is created - resources materialize, and barriers fall.

May we realize the power of all we can do together. Whatever your relationship to our agency, there is a place for you to contribute and support our vision.

In gratitude,



Carol Stamatakis, Executive Director



# Volunteers Step Forward to Help Elders Cope During Pandemic



COVID Response Volunteers at a gathering to thank them for their service. Left to right, John Ogorzalek, David Lemal, Julia Lagrange, Gloria Cristelli, Barb Riotte, Karl Riotte, Francis Griffin. Back row, Craig Coleman, Patti Crimmin-Greenan.

Since the beginning of the COVID crisis last March, Senior Solutions has responded to the urgent need for services such as food shopping and picking up and delivering prescriptions to older adults who are sheltering in place to safeguard their health. The agency recruited and trained 40 volunteers who have been handling calls for assistance to the agency's HelpLine. These dedicated individuals also have been transporting elders to medical appointments and making telephone reassurance calls to those who are cut off from their family and friends. All the volunteers signed an agreement saying they would abide by a strict health safety protocol.

Senior Solutions staff member Patti Crimmin-Greenan coordinates the volunteers' activities. She has shared some of their stories here. Gloria Cristelli, 70 of Newfane, handled food pickups on two occasions from National Guard grocery distribution sites. By the time she had finished delivering food to people in Windham and Windsor Counties, she had driven roughly 360 miles.

**"One recipient who lives alone and benefits from the services of our volunteers called me in tears," Patti said. "She told me she didn't know what she would do without our help."**

Volunteer Mike Goldberg, 67 of Putney, compiled a comprehensive list of stores in Windham and Windsor Counties that provide curbside service and accept credit card payments by phone. The list made it possible for shoppers who didn't want to go into stores to fulfill the needs of many recipients.

Some volunteers like Craig Coleman, 74 of Springfield, do it all. From grocery shopping to installing windows, Craig is always doing something for someone. What he enjoys most about volunteering is "providing emotional support."

David Lemal, 86 of Norwich, made two round trips from Springfield to White River Junction (about 140 miles) so an elderly couple could transfer their money to a bank in their new hometown and handle several other errands when they moved to White River. "I like doing something useful in retirement, especially when there's so much need out there," said David.

Barb Riotte, 66 of Springfield, regularly speaks to a woman, 82, who is homebound after a fall. "We talk on the phone for about an hour each week." Barb also shops for seniors and gives them rides. "I think most of the people I assist are pretty isolated. I enjoy being able to help them out."

Patti said Senior Solutions is very lucky to have such a great group of volunteers. "We even have a retired seamstress, Mary Sanborn, 88 of Lebanon, NH, who has made over 1,000 masks for our volunteers and staff. It's a wonderful team, and we are so proud of them."

## 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 the Advisory Council** - The Council, established pursuant to the Older Americans Act, represents the interests of elders and advises the agency on matters relating to elders, 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.

**Give to the "Foxy Fund"** - Help older Vermonters care for and keep their pets.

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

**Make a Planned Gift** - Take care of the organizations and causes you care about. Gifts of any size can make a difference!

**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 for more information.

**40** New Volunteers  
since pandemic  
from **23** Towns

# Volunteer Programs Provide Vital Support During COVID

During the past year, the companionship and support Senior Solutions' Home Visitor and COVID Response programs offer to older adults who are housebound or isolated has been particularly important because the pandemic has cut off so many people from their normal support systems.

"We have 64 volunteers who continued to provide vital assistance to 129 senior citizens through our COVID Response, Friendly Visitor, Senior Companion and Vet to Vet programs -- even with the health safety restrictions we instituted to protect everyone from COVID," said Vicki Mastroianni, who manages the programs. "We feel so fortunate our volunteers have continued to support their recipients throughout the pandemic."



Friendly Visitors met for a socially-distanced lunch this past summer.

Senior Solutions trains and provides ongoing education and support to all the programs' volunteers. Volunteers undergo criminal background and motor vehicle record checks. Individuals of all ages, incomes and time availability can participate in the Friendly Visitor, Vet to Vet, and COVID Response programs. The Senior Companion program 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. This year because of the pandemic, all volunteers had to sign an agreement saying they would abide by a health safety protocol. Here are three stories about the Friendly Visitor program.

## VOLUNTEER



**Julia Lagrange**, 58 of West Dover, was a Friendly Visitor to a gentleman, 80, for about a year until he moved out of the state last summer. The two of them enjoyed numerous

adventures together, including exploring the countryside by car and going out to lunch. Before the pandemic, Wally was always eagerly waiting for Julia when she arrived for a visit and looking forward to a big hug.

Julia was traveling when the pandemic first surfaced in Vermont. When she returned she abided by the 14-day quarantine rule.

*"It broke my heart not to be able to visit Wally for two more weeks after I already had been gone for one,"* she said.

"When I finally visited Wally he stood in his doorway, and I stood outside on the far end of his porch. I shouted: 'I wish I could give you a great, big hug,' and his eyes lit up. Knowing that wasn't possible I suggested we both close our eyes, reach out our arms and pat the air - our 'air hug'. That was our thing until Wally moved away."

## PARTICIPANT



**Evelyn Chapline**, 96 of Brattleboro, has been matched with Friendly Visitor Beth Spicer, 64 of Putney, since this past June. Beth said she and Evy have enjoyed getting to know

each other and talking about things they both like such as the outdoors. "We share a lot about ourselves and are becoming good friends."

Evy talked about how much she looks forward to Beth's visits each week. "Not so long ago, I was much more mobile and very social. Now because of COVID and trouble with my balance, I can't get out much anymore. On the days Beth comes to visit, I think about what I'm going to wear and fix my hair nicely."

*"Having someone who cares about me and just likes to chat has made a huge difference in my life."*

## VOLUNTEER



**Arnie Knowlton**, 76 of Bellows Falls, has been a Friendly Visitor for a woman, 78, for the past two years. He does her grocery shopping each week and takes her to the doctor when necessary.

*"I enjoy talking with Irene and helping her out. I know how much she appreciates my assistance."*

Arnie also has been visiting a woman named Marilyn, 86, for the last year. "She's in a wheelchair so it's difficult for her to get out and go anywhere. She's got a lot of physical problems but she's a positive lady. We enjoy spending time together and talking about what's going on in the world."

**Even with Health Restrictions!**

**64** Volunteers

Supported **129** Elders

# Vet to Vet Program Continues to Strengthen Bond Between Veterans

In 2018 a group of military veterans from the American Legion and Senior Solutions launched a program to serve older veterans in southern Windham County and keep them connected to their communities. The Vet to Vet program matches veterans with veteran volunteers who provide support and companionship. The program is based on the same buddy system veterans learn in basic training. It replicates a highly successful Vet to Vet program in Maine that ultimately became a non-profit organization. For more details about that initiative log on to [vet2vetmaine.org](http://vet2vetmaine.org)

The Vet to Vet program provides a great way for the Legion to serve local veterans. Without the stimulation social interaction and friendship provide, an isolated or lonely veteran can experience poor health and depression. Weekly visits from a veteran volunteer can make an enormous difference in a fellow service member's life. Volunteers do anything with their buddy a friend would do, ranging from sharing a meal or hobby to doing errands or going to appointments together.

To date, Senior Solutions has trained 16 volunteers as vet buddies. Many of our veteran volunteers have continued to visit their buddies during the pandemic while adhering to a strict health safety protocol.

During the upcoming year, we plan to grow the Vet to Vet program by forming Veterans Advisory Councils in Windham and Windsor Counties that will help us recruit new volunteers and recipients.

We've heard from the veterans involved in the program that the friendships they have developed through these matches are equally rewarding for both parties. Here is a story about two of the veterans who have benefited from the program.



## Veteran buddies David Lane and Walter Stover

For the past six months since they were matched, veteran David Lane, 73, left, and his buddy Walter Stover, 78 of Jamaica, have been enjoying outdoor activities together. "We've hiked around David's property and even took a trip to Mount Tabor," Walter said. "We brought sandwiches and spent the whole day up there. We had a lot of fun looking for signs of moose, beaver and deer." Walter also spent time helping David cut down trees on his property and clear brush. On other occasions the Army veterans have gone out to lunch and talked. "We have a good time discussing what's going on in the world," Walter noted. "Our future plans include doing more hiking and going ice fishing this winter. We've developed a bond by doing things together. We're good friends now. We've both gotten a lot out of the Vet to Vet program."



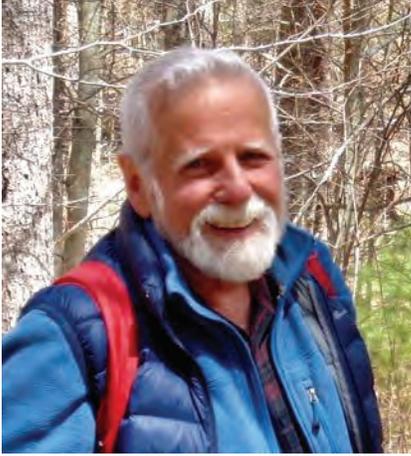
Vet to Vet volunteers from left, Jack Greene, Bill Guenther (back), Walter Stover, Howard Putnam.

## Senior Solutions Wins BCTV's Award for Best Nonprofit TV Show Producer

Brattleboro Community Television recently recognized Senior Solutions' Community Relations Director Joann Erenhouse with its annual award for producing the best nonprofit community tv show. Joann joined BCTV in 2018 with the goal of creating a show that would provide important information to aging Vermonters. Since then she and her co-host, the agency's Outreach Specialist, Jim Collins, have been airing a monthly studio show titled, "Keeping Up with Senior Solutions." So far the 13 episodes in the series have featured guest experts on topics such as advanced directives, dementia, Medicare, benefits, mail-in voting, and Reiki. To see the show go to: [www.brattleborotv.org/keeping-senior-solutions](http://www.brattleborotv.org/keeping-senior-solutions).



## Senior Companion Howie Peterson



Howie Peterson has been a Senior Companion for the past 8 years. The volunteer, 72 of Putney, enjoys helping the people he sees and knows how much they appreciate his assistance. He has been shopping each week for Mildred Malowski, 96, for the last 5 years. Because of COVID and the strict rules of the federally regulated Senior Companion program, Howie now stands out on Mildred's front porch and writes down her shopping list which she dictates from a safe distance while standing at her front door. "Mildred is pretty isolated. My shopping trips may be one of the only human interactions she enjoys each week. I know she is grateful for my help."

## Board of Directors

**President: Barbara Woods**  
(Brattleboro)

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## Communications and Technology Program Helps Connect Seniors

In May of last year, Senior Solutions received a grant that supports the distribution of laptops, access to the internet and computer training for older adults. Senior Solutions' HelpLine Manager and Caregiver Support Coordinator Moira Ennen runs the program in collaboration with her colleagues Information and Referral Specialists Mary Sanderson and Barbara Kurkul and Intake Specialist Lynn Watson. To date 32 laptops have been distributed to those who met the program's requirements. Some of the devices also have been given to Adult Day Care programs to get their participants socially engaged. The grant makes it possible to allocate up to 60 computers.

Moira screens clients interested in a laptop to determine if having a computer might help reduce their social isolation and enable them to access telehealth services. Once individuals qualify, they are loaned a device. After a 6-month screening, if the laptops have helped the recipients become more socially connected and access telemedicine, they can keep the computers.

Five laptops have been set aside specifically for volunteers in the agency's home visitor programs, according to Vicki Mastroianni who manages the programs. The Vermont Veterans Administration also is giving out computers to interested veterans.

A number of clients who have received devices from Moira and her team are family caregivers of individuals with dementia who use the laptops to engage their loved ones in all sorts of activities. Margo Honigman-Schwam is one of them. She said her husband uses the Grand Pad they received almost every day. "He likes listening to music and playing poker on the computer. We use it for everything from telephone video chats to finding answers to health questions."

Moira noted that having a computer has made it possible for another caregiver to do Bone Builders online. She also recounted how a woman who lives alone and was feeling very isolated, is ecstatic about being able to video chat with her friends and relatives.

"Making it possible for people to be more social has been really rewarding," Moira said. "And the computers are very helpful when it comes to enabling our clients to access telehealth services. It's so much easier for people who have to travel long distances or battle bad weather to meet with their healthcare providers online."

**1,061**  
**received**  
**9,885**  
**hours of case**  
**management and other**  
**in-home assistance**



Clockwise from top right: HelpLine Manager and Caregiver Support Coordinator Moira Ennen; Information and Referral Specialist Barbara Kurkul; Intake Specialist Lynn Watson; and Information Referral Specialist Mary Sanderson.

## 2020 Program Highlights

**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, problem-solving and reassurance.

# 4,981

**HelpLine callers received assistance**

### **State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)**

As the SHIP provider for Windsor and Windham Counties,

we provide free, confidential health insurance counseling that provides unbiased information to older adults and people with disabilities who are eligible for Medicare. We provide yearly Medicare Part D Open Enrollment assistance, help people choose a drug plan best suited to meet their needs, and answer questions regarding supplemental policies and prescription

drug plans. We also offer community education programs or “Boot Camps” (now via Zoom) for people who are new to Medicare. During the last fiscal year, SHIP provided one on one counseling to 1455 people.

**Nutrition** – Senior Solutions supports and oversees 13 home-delivered meals or Meals on Wheels (MOW) programs and 29 community meal sites provided by local community partners. There has been a substantial increase in MOW deliveries during the past year. These programs rely heavily on community volunteers and local financial and in-kind support for high quality food that is locally prepared in a caring community. Our registered dietitians provide nutrition education to community nutrition sites and home-based nutrition counseling to older adults. Even though congregate meal sites had to close due to the pandemic, many sites changed to a “drive through” system so people could still get meals. Those who couldn’t take advantage of the “drive through” option were switched to MOW.

# 1,194

**Elders received Meals on Wheels**

**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, from offices in three locations, provide care coordination and support for Medicaid Choices for Care clients and home-based services for qualifying veterans in collaboration with the Veterans Administration. Home visits have been limited due to COVID, but services have continued through regular telephone contact or video conferencing when possible.

**Volunteers** – We match isolated older adults with volunteers who visit and spend time with them, help with chores or take them out to do errands or for social activities. Our Vet to Vet program matches older and disabled veterans with veteran volunteers. We recruited a new cohort of volunteers to assist with grocery shopping and other needs during the pandemic.

**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 HelpLine uses a screening tool to help identify potential self-neglect situations.

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

**Elder Justice** – Senior Solutions is implementing a project in Windsor County funded by the US Department of Justice to create a model Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to abuse in later life that includes elder services, police, domestic violence services, Adult Protective Services and prosecutors. This past year the project provided basic and advanced law enforcement training on elder abuse in collaboration with the Vermont Police Academy. The project also educated other professionals, assisted victims, developed public service announcements, produced an educational brochure and hosted meetings of the CCR Team, where participants from many agencies shared information and resources and worked on systemic improvements.



Senior Solutions meets with Governor Phil Scott in February.

# 3,560

**Older adults received community meals**

# 150,755

**Meals on Wheels were provided**

**Wellness Programs** – We offer the HomeMeds program that screens older adults for medication-related problems. PEARLS, the Program to Encourage Active Rewarding Lives for Seniors, provides counseling and support to those experiencing mild depression and helps them set and achieve personal goals. Both of these programs have remained operational with modifications during the pandemic. We also supported Tai Chi and aquatics programs. All of these programs meet federal evidence-based standards.

**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 actively participate in local community health teams in all of the hospital regions in our area.

**Public Policy** – Members of our Board, staff and Advisory Council visited the Statehouse this past January. We met with Governor Scott and many legislators from our region and talked with them about issues impacting older Vermonters. We participated regularly in meetings of the Older Vermonters legislative caucus at the Statehouse until they were suspended due to the pandemic. We support and actively participate in the Community of Vermont Elders (COVE), a statewide advocacy group.

**11,817**  
Community meals provided to elders

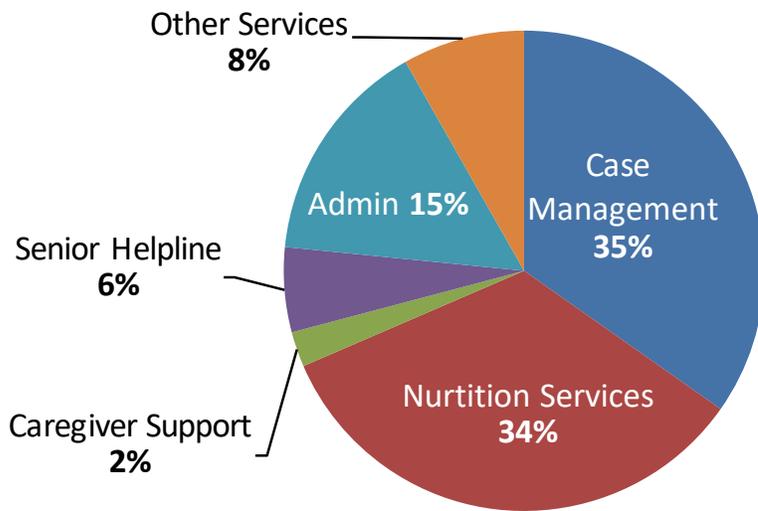
**7,631**

Older adults served

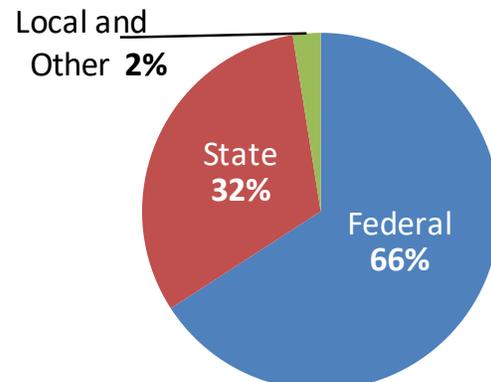
**Supporting Family Caregivers** – Senior Solutions helps caregivers find resources and provides counseling on self-care and guidance on dealing with caregiving challenges. We have supported and co-facilitated groups for people caring for older loved ones and groups for grandparents and other family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

**Other Services** – Senior Solutions supports legal assistance (through Vermont Legal Aid) and the Eldercare Clinician home based mental health program, in partnership with Health Care and Rehabilitation Services. We provide financial support to local agencies providing specialized transportation for elders and people with disabilities.

### Expenditure by Program



### Revenue by Funding Source



**Total Expenses \$4,473,543**

**Total Revenue \$4,539,743**



Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont

Senior Solutions, 38 Pleasant Street, Springfield, VT 05156

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Return Service Requested



Senior Companion volunteers gathering last fall. Left to right, Elizabeth Cole, Ruth Sheldon, Howie Peterson, Home Visitor Program Manager Vicki Mastroianni, Dennis Newman, and Roberta Streeter.



Screenshot of Senior Solutions staff enjoying our Zoom holiday gathering.



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