



## *Promoting Healthy Aging in Central Vermont*

### **New RSVP Collaboration for the Northeast Kingdom**

Starting in January, Central Vermont Council on Aging has partnered with the Area Agency on Aging for Northeastern Vermont to manage RSVP (the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) in the Northeast Kingdom areas.

NEVAAA has assumed the program functions that had been performed by CVCOA staff and will be adding staff hours and utilizing existing staff to manage this valuable volunteer program.

CVCOA Director Beth Stern says, "I am thrilled to be working more closely with our sister Area Agency on Aging on the RSVP grant. Having RSVP staff members who are employed by NEVAAA will strengthen our connection to other agencies in the state that serve seniors, and will allow for easier communication about senior needs and volunteer opportunities."

"The goals of the RSVP grant dovetail nicely with work that we are already doing to increase volunteerism in our area," says Lisa Viles, NEVAAA's Executive Director. "We look forward to working with CVCOA to support the valuable programs that the RSVP grant supports as we incorporate the work we are already doing with the growth of new opportunities for volunteers in our region."

Concurrent with these changes, Dan Noyes has stepped in to serve as the RSVP Director following the retirement of longtime staff member, Guy Isabelle.



*RSVP Volunteer Peter Ingvoldstad building a wheelchair ramp in 2012*

**You are never too old  
to set another goal or  
to dream a new dream**

**- C.S. Lewis -**

In taking up his new role, Dan observes, "RSVP volunteers in the Northeast Kingdom have helped thousands of people over the years, assisting many of the non-profit organizations that serve our communities. We will continue to work with new and long-time volunteers alike as Lisa and the staff at NEVAAA assume the functions of RSVP in the region. Together, we will continue to support the volunteers and programs that help people remain independent."



## Our Mission

Central Vermont Council on Aging is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that supports elders in leading healthy, independent, meaningful and dignified lives in their homes.

CVCOA provides assistance to Vermonters aged 60 years and over, their family and caregivers.

We serve 54 towns throughout the Central Vermont region:

Lamoille, Washington, and Orange counties (with the exception of Thetford), as well as the towns of Bethel, Hancock, Granville, Pittsfield, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon and Stockbridge.

We do not charge individuals for the services that we provide to Vermont's senior community.

Our programs and services are supported in part by your generosity.

## Board of Directors

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## Central VT Council on Aging

59 N. Main Street, Suite 200  
 Barre, VT 05641-4121  
 Phone: 802-479-0531  
 Fax: 802-476-4235  
[cvcoa@cvcoa.org](mailto:cvcoa@cvcoa.org)  
[www.cvcoa.org](http://www.cvcoa.org)

## From the Director's Desk



**Beth Stern**  
 Executive Director

When you think of the word *volunteer*, what comes to mind?

Or better yet, **who** comes to mind?

*The Health Benefits of Volunteering*, a recent study published by the Corporation of National and Community Service, found that volunteers have lower mortality rates, lower rates of depression for those over 65, and enjoy a greater sense of self-worth and trust, in addition to other physical and mental health benefits.

At CVCOA, we rely on volunteers for so many of our programs. The people that we work with range in age from teenagers to those well into their 90s. Though many are now retired, some receive community service credit from their schools, while others juggle full-time work and family life and still manage to fit volunteering into their busy schedule.

Over the past year, CVCOA has strengthened the Volunteer and Community Services Department. We have brought on new staff to these programs and have the help of an wonderful AmeriCorps member through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board who has brought so much energy to these volunteer programs.

We are focused on increasing collaboration with RSVP and the Senior Companion Program and building a strong cadre of active volunteers who can support seniors to remain as independent as possible in their homes.

People throughout the Central Vermont community support seniors in so many ways. Here are a few of the ways that individuals make a big difference in the lives of senior Vermonters every day:

- Preparing and serving meals at senior centers
- Driving to deliver Meals on Wheels
- Assisting with tax return preparation
- Providing respite to family caregivers
- Leading Bone Builders and other senior exercise classes
- Helping seniors in their homes: doing chores, stacking wood, cleaning, or providing transportation
- Serving on CVCOA's Board of Directors or Advisory Council

In this newsletter, we're going to explore our volunteer programs in detail and take a look at the wonderful people who give freely of their time and skills to better serve our seniors.

And don't forget to let us know if **you** want to serve as a CVCOA volunteer: a few hours a week can make a difference in elders' lives!

*Beth Stern*

## Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

A part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, RSVP of Central Vermont and the Northeast Kingdom serves as a one-stop clearing-house connecting volunteers aged 55 and older with meaningful community service opportunities.

Collaborating with more than 100 non-profits, RSVP matches volunteers with the needs within their community. Volunteers share their knowledge, life experiences, and skills at organizations in their own neighborhood.

RSVP volunteers gain satisfaction knowing that they are making a positive difference in the lives of local seniors by helping to improve their nutrition, health and wellness, socialization and general well-being, while supporting seniors to remain in their own homes and communities.

In particular, RSVP helps to recruit volunteers for a number of specific programs:

- **Meal on Wheels Drivers:** Volunteers deliver warm, nutritious meals throughout the week to seniors who are unable to prepare meals on their own or attend the community meals at one of CVCOA's 14 partner meal sites in Central Vermont.
- **The Tele-Care Reassurance Program:** As easy as dialing a phone, callers make daily calls to one or more area seniors. By reaching out to them, volunteers are able to ensure the safety and well-being of these seniors. Further, they reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness by increasing social connections.
- **Volunteer Drivers:** Helping seniors to get to medical appointments, activities at senior centers, or the grocery store are a few of the ways that volunteers provide transportation to meet the needs of elders. By having access to rides, many seniors who may no longer be able to drive themselves are able to live more independently.
- **Bone Builders Leaders:** Class leaders receive training and guidance to help them lead these classes, which focus on balancing exercises aimed at preventing falls and fractures. The participants use weights to increase muscular strength and bone density, protecting against fractures caused by osteoporosis.
- **Wood Bank Volunteers:** Vermont winters are long and cold and heating costs can outpace the financial means of seniors living on a fixed budget. However, there is a local, low-cost solution that helps keep seniors independent. Wood banks receive donated firewood from the State of Vermont and volunteers are called upon to cut, split, stack and deliver to those in need. Through their efforts, this program is able to supplement the heating needs of area seniors.



*A Bone Builders Class Participant*

You too can share the experience of a lifetime while keeping your mind sharp, body active and spirits alive.

If you are interested in volunteering, please call our RSVP staff members:

- Kate Reilly-FitzPatrick at 479-1953
- Robert Pierce at 241-4840
- Dan Noyes, Program Director, at 888-2190

# RSVP

## Welcoming New CVCOA Staff

We are pleased to welcome four new people to the CVCOA team! They are a group of talented and caring individuals who have already proven themselves to be adept at benefitting the senior community as well as a pleasure to work with!

**Davoren Carr** joins us as a Case Manager serving communities throughout Washington County. In



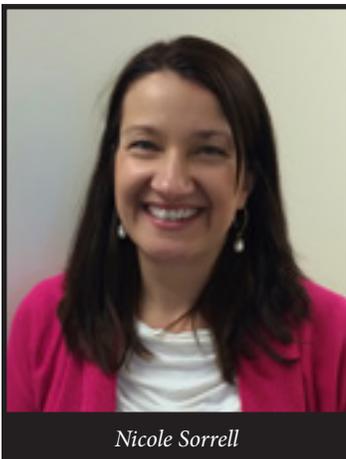
*Davoren Carr*

her role, Davoren will be assisting clients access programs and benefits, solve problems, and make difficult decisions.

In addition, Davoren supports these clients by providing information, making referrals to other agencies and coordinating access to services.

She is looking forward to meeting more of her clients and working with the CVCOA team to match people with vital services to achieve the goal of independent living.

**Nicole Sorrell** is the new Director of the Senior Companion Program. In this position, she will be responsible for the administration of this statewide



*Nicole Sorrell*

program that connects volunteers aged 55+ with other older adults who need additional support to remain independent.

With her staff of program coordinators, Nicole will work to recruit, train, and place volunteers to provide companionship, home-making assistance, and transportation to vital destinations to Vermont elders.

Regarding the opportunity to join CVCOA, Nicole says, "What inspires me most about working in the Senior Companion Program is the peer support aspect of the program. I am grateful to be a part of helping seniors to remain in their homes longer."

**Robert Pierce** has come to our staff as an RSVP Program Coordinator serving Washington and Lamoille Counties. He is responsible for recruiting volunteers and matching their skills and interests to provide service at non-profit organizations in their communities.

Having worked for several years in the state government, he has made the transition to working with seniors in the non-profit world, finding it fulfilling to work to make a difference in the communities in which he lives, saying "This is important work. It should be our inherent responsibility to care for our seniors because they have worked so hard for our generation."



*Robert Pierce*

**Martha Smyrski** is taking a year away from her practice as a lawyer to do community service with CVCOA as an AmeriCorps volunteer. She will be working with the agency through August 2015.

Martha is helping CVCOA to develop its volunteer programs. She is instrumental in recruiting and conducting interviews with new volunteers and guiding them through required background checks.

Finally, she matches their interests, skills and availability to needs of our clients. She also provides some direct services to clients as well, serving as an example to all those she works with!



*Martha Smyrski*

## The Gift of Companionship

As we grow older, it's not uncommon to find that keeping up with daily tasks gets more difficult. Senior Companions are a group of volunteers age 55 and over who make a difference by working 15-40 hours per week, providing assistance and companionship to seniors who need a helping hand to remain independent.

Through this program, CVCOA helps to match volunteers with seniors. Last year, 66 Senior Companions provided nearly 58,000 hours of service to 346 seniors throughout the state; nearly 12,000 of those hours helped seniors living in Central Vermont.

This amazing group of volunteers helps Vermont's elders in so many ways: light housekeeping, food preparation, paying bills, writing letters, and filling out forms. Senior Companions also provide transportation and assistance with grocery shopping and medical appointments. In many instances, Senior Companions are also able to provide much needed respite for family caregivers.

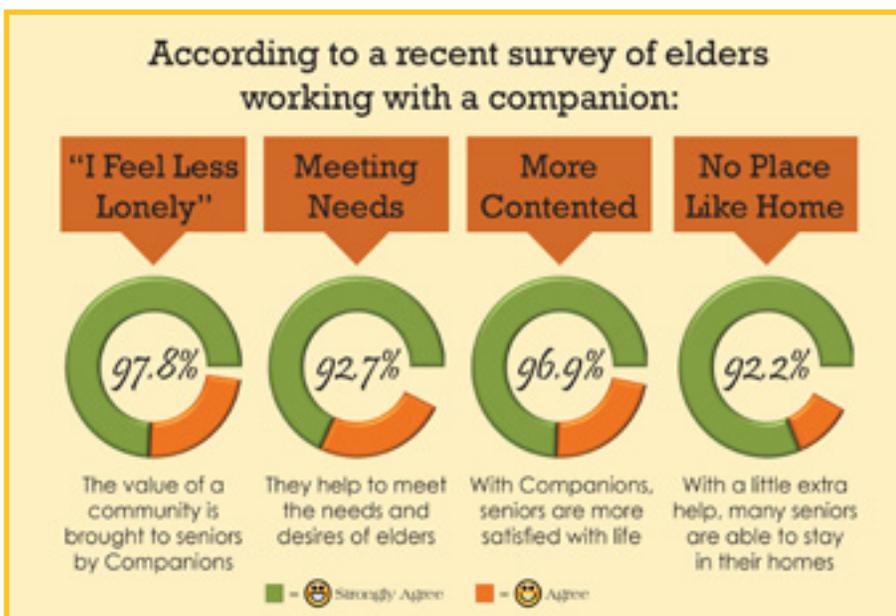
For their service, Senior Companion volunteers receive a tax-exempt stipend and travel reimbursement, as well as monthly in-service trainings conducted by community leaders on topics such as health and wellness, falls prevention, Medicare, and other issues of concern to seniors.

Senior Companion volunteers are making a positive difference in the lives of seniors by helping to improve their health, wellness and social connection and play a vital role in helping seniors remain in their own homes and communities.

In the words of one elder, "It's a good feeling and means a lot. I couldn't do it without my senior companion!"

We couldn't say it better.

See our Senior Companion Infographic at [www.cvcoa.org/2015\\_seniorcompanion\\_survey](http://www.cvcoa.org/2015_seniorcompanion_survey)



## An Opportunity for Everyone

The end of our Neighbor to Neighbor AmeriCorps program two years ago was a great loss to CVCOA, but it left a tremendous legacy. To continue the important work of N2N, last year we created the [CVCOA Volunteer Program](#).

Several former volunteers continued on with us, creating a strong base on which to build the program. New volunteers continue to offer their skills to elders and the program is growing!

### What Do Volunteers Do?

- Volunteers might help an elder with transportation to their medical appointments.
- They might help someone go shopping at the grocery store.
- They might help stack firewood, ensuring that an elder can stay warm through the winter or get a garden ready in the spring.
- Some volunteers help to sort mail and organize files
- Others might fix a leaky faucet.

There are so many ways to make a positive difference in the lives of our elders.

Even something as simple as a friendly visit and a game of cards goes a long way in helping elders to remain at home and connected to their community.

To find out how you can serve seniors in your town, contact Sarah Semler, CVCOA's Volunteer Program Coordinator, at 476-0151 or [volunteer@cvcoa.org](mailto:volunteer@cvcoa.org).



59 N. Main Street, Suite 200  
Barre, VT 05641-4121

*Giving Back to our Elders...  
CVCOA & You!*

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Empowering Seniors & Caregivers ♦ Senior HelpLine 1-800-642-5119

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## CVCOA's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Art of Creative Aging

On the evening of May 4, CVCOA is hosting an opening reception for the 6th annual Art of Creative Aging exhibit: a juried show featuring recent work of older artists living in Central Vermont.

Celebrating Older Americans Month, this exhibit highlights the important role of creativity in seniors' lives and underscores their role in Vermont's culture and society.

The exhibit will remain on display through the month of May at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library.

All work selected for the exhibit will be offered for sale. Proceeds of the sale of the artwork will benefit the artist, the library, and Central Vermont Council on Aging.



*Snowed In* by Jan Fowler of Randolph

Please join us for the opening reception!

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 ♦ 5:00 - 7:00 pm  
Kellogg-Hubbard Library ♦ Montpelier

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Phone: 802-479-0531  
Fax: 802-479-4235

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Web: [www.cvcoa.org](http://www.cvcoa.org)

