



Promoting Healthy Aging in Central Vermont



Transportation

Living in the rural communities of Vermont brings us so many gifts: a connection to the seasons of the year, an appreciation for the landscape, and a simpler way of life.

However, the remoteness of many of our towns poses a particular challenge for seniors. Many either limit their driving or have given it up entirely and have difficulty traveling to meet their basic needs. This presents real obstacles to their ability to remain in their home.

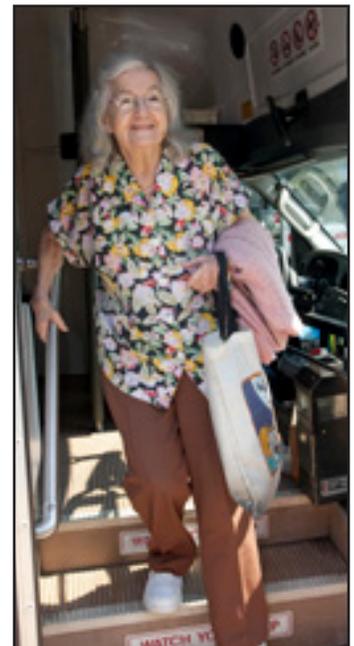
To address this need, CVCOA works with three transportation providers to help seniors get to medical appointments, go shopping for groceries, and stay connected to their friends within the community. We partner with Stagecoach in Orange County, RCT in Lamoille, and GMTA in Washington County.

Each agency differs slightly in the number of rides available to seniors each year, but all offer additional rides for those who need critical care treatment, such as dialysis and cancer treatments.

So far this year, over 500 seniors have gotten an estimated 18,000 rides to critical destinations!

All of the rides are provided by bus or through the generosity of volunteer drivers. These volunteers are a critical part of the rural transportation system and receive reimbursement benefits for the distance they travel.

Our partners are always in need of more volunteers. If you have a car and want to help elders in your community, please let us know. Call Kate Reilly-FitzPatrick, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator, at 802-479-1953 or send her an email at KReilly-Fitzpatrick@cvcoa.org.



Father Time is not always a hard parent
& though he tarries for none of his children,
often lays his hand lightly upon those
who have used him well.

- Charles Dickens -



Our Mission:

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

CVCOA provides assistance to Vermonters aged 60 and over, their families 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.

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From the Director's Desk



Beth Stern
 Executive Director

OK, I'll admit, I'm addicted... to hiking.

This summer, I have been out on the trails almost every weekend, occasionally sneaking in a weekday hike as well.

Primarily I've been hiking in the White Mountains of New Hampshire – with a goal to summit the “high peaks” (over 4000 feet) by the time I'm eligible for Medicare.

21 down, with 27 left to go!

One of the highlights of this adventures has been seeing many older people hiking.

One day I spoke with an 82 year old man and his 78 year old wife, who were completing their 47th high peak. Their last one, scheduled for mid-September, was an 18 mile hike with no distinct trail to the summit.

Recently, I also read about a 90 year old man who just hiked Mt. Washington, New Hampshire's highest mountain who said, “I'm not hiking because I'm 90, I just happen to be 90.” He took several days to complete the trip and said that this was his “last time up... Until the next time.”

Last week while hiking up Mt. Jefferson on a very rocky trail, I met two retired Vermont state employees, who were camping nearby and taking advantage of the beautiful fall weather.

Not everybody can - or even wants to - climb up mountains every weekend. But as we age, it's important to have pasttimes which keep us active and engaged with others. It's great to have a goal and to work towards it, no matter how old or young we are. It's good to know our limits and to take our time, rather than to rush through our days without appreciating our environment.

In this newsletter, we share the story of an 86 year old woman who is passionate about her work with CVCOA as a volunteer Senior Companion. Please read and enjoy her story. Then consider how you like to be active and involved.

If you have passion for elder services and have a few spare hours during the week, give me a call at 476-2676. We have many ways for you to serve seniors.

Thanks and happy trails!

Beth Stern

Volunteer Spotlight: Ruth Hood

At 86 years of age, Ruth Hood has volunteered with CVCOA as a Senior Companion since 2006.

Every week, Ruth serves as a companion to three seniors, most of whom are younger than she is. She takes them to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and on a variety of other errands.

Ruth grew up on a small farm in South Strafford where she married and started her family. Life took her around Vermont, ending up in North Hero for 25 years and then ultimately in Websterville, where she now resides.

In addition to raising her five children, Ruth cooked at restaurants, schools, and at the Barre Senior Center. Even though she has now been retired for quite some time, she says that she still has a hard time cooking for one!



Ruth Hood in the 2015 Barre Heritage Festival Parade

After retiring, she wanted to stay active and engaged, so Ruth came to the Senior Companion Program “to get out of the house.” Now, after 9 years as a companion, she sees the difference that she has made, observing, “people really appreciate what you do for them and that makes you feel good.”

In recognition of her many years of service, Ruth was honored as the Senior Companion representative at the Barre Heritage Festival this summer.

To become a Senior Companion for those in your area, write to us at volunteer@cvcoa.org.

Remembering Kay Charron

On September 16, Central Vermont Council on Aging lost a treasured part of our family with the passing of Kay Charron. As a member of our Board of Directors, Kay made significant contributions to the direction and governance of the Council. In particular, she helped to shape our five year strategic plan in her role as Board Vice-President.

We remember her as a cheerful and compassionate woman who cared for all those around her.



Kay was born in Montpelier on September 2, 1949, the second child of Bertrand Charron and Catherine Charron. She attended schools in Barre and Montpelier, and graduated from Barre’s Marion High School in 1967. Kay graduated from the University of Vermont in 1971, and began teaching high school English.

For most of her career, Kay worked in the Vermont state government. Before retiring in 2009, she had worked for many years at the Department of Education.

Throughout her rich life Kay was a teacher and a builder. She loved to share her amazing skills with others and was always giving of her time and talents. Kay loved to create. She planned and built three houses and assisted many friends and family members with house building projects all of her life.

Her recent work on local boards allowed her to use her organizational skills with the goal of better serving our Vermont community.

For the past 20 years, Kay has lived in the Hardwick area with her partner, Arlene Averill, and their son Patrick. She loved them dearly and will be deeply missed.

Medicare Fraud

Medicare provides health insurance for Americans aged 65 and older and those with disabilities. In 2010, this program provided health insurance for 48 million Americans.

As you might imagine, the scope of the Medicare system makes it a major part of the Federal Budget. Each year, the Medicare system distributes more than \$500 Billion to pay for the health care of our nation's elders. The scale of these expenditures makes the Medicare system a tempting target for those who may want to take advantage of the system for their own gain.

Though there are no official estimates for the amount lost annually, tens of billions of dollars are lost each year to Medicare fraud. This illegal activity leads to rising health care costs and places an increased burden on taxpayers.



There are many ways that people defraud the Medicare system. A few examples are:

- Healthcare providers overcharging for services beyond the amount allowed by Medicare.
- Doctors who charge for services that were not provided.
- Providing unnecessary tests or procedures in order to receive additional fees-for-service.
- Doctors prescribing unnecessary medications.
- Someone using your identity to obtain medical care, supplies, or equipment.

Eliminating fraud cuts costs for families, businesses, and the government and can lead to increases in the quality of services for those who need care. It seems an overwhelming problem, but addressing this issue can be done by all of us, in very simple ways.



Members of Vermont's Senior Medicare Patrol, Photo courtesy of COVE

What can be done about it?

- Keep a health journal, a record of the services that you have received.
- Learn how to read and understand your Explanation of Benefits and your Medicare Summary Notices that you should receive at least quarterly.
- Compare these documents to your record of services in your health journal.
- Examine the notifications, looking for charges for services or procedures that were not provided, double billing, and other problems.

- Finally, don't be afraid to ask your doctor why they think that a service or medication is necessary. You have a right to know everything about your medical care!

If you have any concerns or find a Medicare error or have been a victim of a Medicare scam, please call the Vermont Senior Medicare Patrol at (888) 865-2683.

The Vermont SMP is a group of senior volunteers who educate their peers to identify, prevent, and report health care fraud. In our state, the Senior Medicare Patrol is sponsored by COVE, the Community of Vermont Elders. Learn more about COVE at www.vermontelders.org.

Working with Grief and Loss

It is not uncommon for seniors to face depression, grief, and anxiety, even if they've never faced these challenges before. Often these arise as a normal part of the aging process: as we lose loved ones, as we become less mobile and active in our community, or as our health or living situation changes.

For 15 years, CVCOA had collaborated with Washington County Mental Health to provide counseling for Central Vermont seniors with mental health concerns that interfere with their daily life. Three clinicians work hard to provide more than 100 elders with nearly 1,400 hours of support every year. Bobbi Rood primarily works in Washington County, Nancy Hudgens serves Lamoille County, and Debbie Deforge helps those in Orange County.

Elder Care Clinicians provide home-based psychotherapy services for those aged 60 and older who are not able to access these services through more traditional programs. Generally, this is due to medical or mobility issues that prevent easy travel out of the home.

Often, clinicians will be able to meet with individuals biweekly to listen and help elders and their loved ones to find what may be helpful for each family. In some cases, it may be finding acceptance in times of loss and change, or working to identify and solve specific problems.

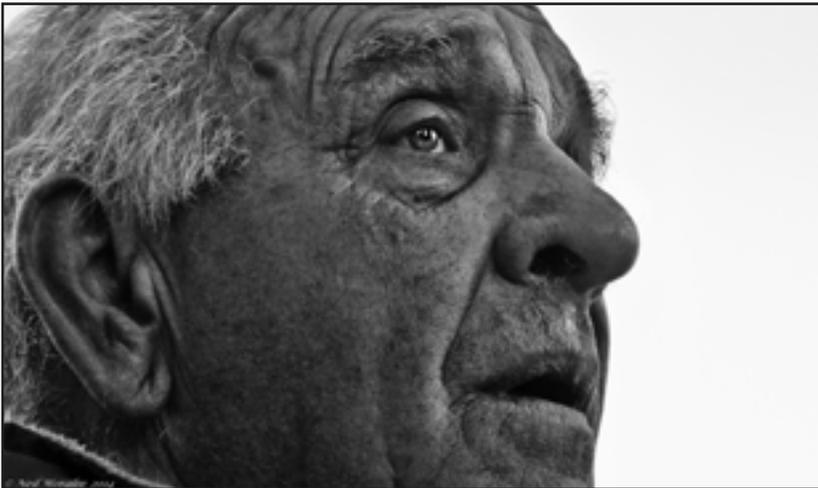


Photo by Neil Moralee / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Bobbi Rood, the clinician serving seniors in Washington County, has expressed a joy in listening to elders, “bearing witness to lives that have meaning and purpose.”

In listening, Bobbi has learned to identify and share solutions to many challenges that older Vermonters face. In doing so, she is proud of helping people to feel good about who they are, improving the quality of their life.

Referrals to the program can be made by CVCOA case managers or friends and family of seniors.

If an elder in your life may need extra support, please contact the Elder Care Program Coordinator, Mark Schmoll, at marks@wcmhs.org or by calling (802) 223-6328.

Interested in Guiding Senior Services in Central Vermont?

We are seeking individuals interested in serving in positions on our Board of Directors. The Board is responsible for and has authority over the overall management and performance of the Council.

Executive Director Beth Stern praises the Board of Directors as “a hard-working, passionate group of leaders interested in serving the elder communities of Vermont. Sitting on the Board of Directors allows members from throughout the Central Vermont region to serve their community and have a voice in Council policies.”

You do not have to be an elder to be a candidate to join the board. However, you must have interest and experience in senior matters and live within CVCOA's 54-town service area.

For more information, please visit www.cvcoa.org/board-of-directors.



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*CVCOA: Working hard
for your good health!*

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



Our Mission

Central Vermont Council on Aging supports elders & family caregivers to lead healthy, meaningful and dignified lives in their homes and communities.

Let's Talk Healthy Aging

Please join us on November 19 for our Annual Meeting, held at the Steak House in Berlin, beginning at 9:00 AM.

This is an opportunity for you to have conversations with the leaders and staff of the agency and learn about direction of elder services in Central Vermont.

We are pleased to announce that we will be joined this year by Monica Hutt, the incoming Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Disability, Aging, and Independent Living.

For more details and to RSVP, please call [\(802\)479-0531](tel:8024790531).

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