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## Dear Friends

It is a time of change at Valley Cares. Some changes are quite evident, as anyone who has passed by our assisted living would surely recognize. Other changes are more discrete, such as the smooth transition from one Director to another. In February, Susanne Shapiro became the Executive Director of Valley Cares, and Bob Crego transitioned into his new role as the Project Manager for our assisted living expansion.

Five and a half years after opening West River Valley Senior Housing, we are again engaged in an effort to expand the supportive senior housing options for rural Vermont elders. Bob began planning this expansion of our assisted living over two years ago. Building such housing has never been a simple task, but the current financial climate made it even more challenging. With his knack for development projections and knowledge of the interweaving government programs for housing development, Bob has quite naturally assumed the role of Project Manager and dedicates his expertise to the success of this development. In this newsletter, you will read about project progress, news and updates.

Now at the helm as Executive Director, we first introduced Susanne Shapiro, RN, to you a year ago, as she had joined Valley Cares as the nurse in charge of our assisted living. In the past year, she has been a strong leader of the assisted living, showing particular attention to detail and communication. As this eventual transition in leadership had been planned since her start at Valley Cares, over the past year Susanne has made every effort to learn about the organization from her predecessor. With a background in administration and nursing, Susanne brought much knowledge and skill to our organization. Together, Bob and Susanne have worked to ensure their seamless transition.

Becca Schaefer, H.R. & Outreach Director & Jen Gagliardi, Property Manager

*It hardly seems possible almost a year and a half has gone by since I had the fortune to begin my work with the Valley Cares' excellent team. It has been such a pleasure to work in this atmosphere of highly skilled staff and with a group of wonderful residents who make my day every day. I am so honored to be here.*

*Rarely does one get such an opportunity as this where you get to keep your predecessor onboard for a long transition – having his support to assure all aspects of operations are maintained “just so” and also giving the organization time to part with their highly respected Director. Weekly check-ins remain a fruitful opportunity for all of us, and we surely appreciate Bob Crego's continued oversight of our much-needed expansion, with all of its intricate facets and financial aspects. I am truly thankful.*

*Susanne Shapiro, Executive Director*

## Construction Underway!

By Bob Crego, Project Manager

As April showers turned to May flowers West River Valley Assisted Living's building project reached the second floor. Thanks to the diligent work of our general contractor, Wright Construction, in just three months time we have four walls and a roof!

The project, which consists of a 2-story, 12-apartment 10,000 square-foot addition, began in early February. Much of the first month was spent excavating the foundation and preparing the existing building to accommodate secondary egress out the north wing to work around the construction going on outside. By early March, walls were formed and poured, plumbing and electrical work was roughed in later in the month, and by the first of April the slab was poured. Framing of walls then began later in April. By the beginning of May, roof trusses were raised and lowered into place. As I write this piece, workers are busy installing roofing.

Now that the building is enclosed, interior carpentry and systems work can begin on the addition. We are also enlarging many of our common areas, including the kitchen, dining, laundry, and living rooms, along with adding some much needed staff offices. Soon work will start outside on the expanded dining room. If all goes according to plan (Oops—I shouldn't have written that!), we hope to complete construction by the end of October.



Wright Construction has done a good job keeping work going as they deal with multiple challenges inherent in working on a tight site crisscrossed with existing drainage and utility lines, many of which need to be relocated. They have also been extremely respectful in dealing with our on-going programming needs and in particular with ensuring the safety of our residents. Indeed they are quite a source of entertainment. I wonder if they have ever had such an attentive audience as our community!



The new Bob & Virginia Barrett Wing takes shape

Jen Gagliardi, Valley Cares' Property Manager, is the organization's daily liaison with Wright Construction. This facilitates two-way communication on any and all resident and staff construction-related issues. To date, Jen has been holding weekly update meetings with the residents, and posting project update sheets, complete with visual graphics, in the hallway for everyone to review at their leisure. We anticipate more frequent meetings as the construction activity enters existing living spaces.

## New Apartments will offer New Options for Supportive Housing

By Bob Crego

With the construction crews making leaps and bounds on our 12 new senior apartments, Bob, Susanne and Jen have been touring the area, reaching out to community members for input on the selection of supportive services we will offer. Like the existing West River Valley Assisted Living apartments, each new apartment will have a kitchen, living room, bedroom and bath. However, the new wing will be different in that residents will be able to access a range of services depending on what they need, starting from a main meal a day plus cleaning and laundry services on up to medication management, nursing overview and personal care services.

The new wing will have 12 single-occupancy apartments (433 square feet), each with a living room, spacious bedroom, private bathroom w/shower, and the choice of a full kitchen with refrigerator, stove and microwave or a kitchenette with microwave and small refrigerator. Residents of the

new wing will also have access to group dining, activity and living rooms, laundry facilities, first- and second-floor porches, and a nurse's office/exam room.

Services support healthy living and preventive care. Packages will include options for home-maker and laundry services, meals, activities, transportation to medical appointments, and periodic nursing check-ins. For those who need a greater level of care services, we provide 24-hour staff, a full meal plan, nursing assessments and care planning, and personal care and assistance with medications.

Monthly charges will start from about \$700 for rent, including all utilities, and \$600 for basic meals and services. There are additional charges for those who need nursing and care services, depending on the level of need.

We expect the new housing to be completed and ready for residents to move in by November 2013 – exactly 6 years after we first opened our doors in 2007.

For more information contact Jen Gagliardi, Valley Cares' Property Manger at 802-365-4115 ext.104.



1 GROUND FLOOR  
Scale: N.T.S.



### Are You on Facebook?



We are! For the latest photos and updates about our events, activities, expansion, resources and much more, check us out on Facebook. We post our monthly Activities Calendar and LOTS of fun photos.

The page is administered by Becca Schaefer, our H.R. & Out-

reach Director, but several other staff members can also post on it.

Find us at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Valley-Cares-Inc/380958931965511> or search for "Valley Cares Inc" on Facebook.com

And don't forget to "Like" us!

## Staying Strong

By Jean Allbee, Board Member

If you happen to arrive at West River Valley Assisted Living on a Tuesday or Thursday morning you're likely to see the dining room filled with residents sitting in or standing behind chairs which have been arranged in a large circle filling all the available space, the tables having been pushed back against the walls.

If you look a little more closely and listen for a moment you'll probably hear something like this:

"Arms up; stand up, one, two; pull back, squeeze; push forward; down, one, two, three, four" - or - "Up, one, two, hold; down, one, two, three, four, and breathe!"

On further inspection, you'll notice that the residents are standing, lifting weights, or holding their legs up or out to the count that is being chanted by the two leaders of the group.

The group is following an exercise program pioneered by a young graduate student at Tufts University whose doctoral thesis was based on the idea that elders can greatly benefit from a guided, twice weekly exercise program designed to exercise all the major muscle groups. Her research had shown the exercises helped to maintain muscle tone, increase bone density and improve or maintain balance in the elderly participants who took part in the study.

The class at Valley Cares is led by two retired educators who trained with the above mentioned Tufts graduate student when she offered training through Grace Cottage Hospital several years ago.

Clara Robinson and Jean Allbee started leading the class when many of the residents were living at Heins Home and Valley Cares was still an idea in the feasibility and planning stages. Since then they have offered the class twice weekly. The two friends say they love teaching the class and also cherish the connections they have made with the residents.

Jean and Clara are excited about the new addition to Valley Cares and look forward to the enlarged dining space which should allow them to include more residents in the program as well as provide a little more breathing room.



Strong Bones exercise class led by Clara and Jean

## Lively Living with a Full Calendar

By Dawn Slade, Recreation & Volunteer Coordinator

We have several exciting events and performances coming up. We welcome you to join us! Here are a few:

- ♪ **Cathy Martin on Piano**, Thurs., May 23, 3:00pm
- ♪ **Casino Night**, Sat., May 25, 6:00pm
- ♪ **Morris Dancers**, Sun., May 26, 3:30pm
- ♪ **Flag Dedication & Memorial Day Service**, Thurs., May 30, 3:00pm
- ♪ **Windham School Singers**, Fri., June 7, 1:30pm
- ♪ **Josh Wien**, Thurs., June 13, 3:00pm
- ♪ **Warren's 102nd Birthday Celebration**, Thurs., June 13, TBA
- ♪ Looking ahead — **The Grafton Band**, Sun., Aug. 11, 6:00pm

You can find our full calendar on Facebook or posted in the assisted living.

If you are interested in performing or volunteering in our community, please contact Dawn, at [dslade@svcable.net](mailto:dslade@svcable.net) or 802-365-7190 ext.107. Thanks!

## In-Service Trainings Open to All LNAs

In order to maintain their professional licenses, Licensed Nursing Assistants (LNAs) must fulfill certain practical and educational requirements on an annual basis. Likewise, as a licensed assisted living facility, West River Valley Assisted Living must provide at least 12 educational in-services for our caregivers annually.

In the interest of the greater community, we are pleased to announce that we are opening our doors to LNA's throughout the surrounding communities who either need education credits to maintain their professional licenses or would just like to continue learning. Our in-services cover a variety of topics related to gerontological care and are offered free-of-charge.

If you are a LNA looking for continuing education in the field of gerontology, please contact Deb, our Nurse Manager, at (802) 365-7190 ext.103, to find out about upcoming in-services.



## Bringing Alzheimer’s Awareness to the Forefront in the Nation’s Capitol

By Susanne Shapiro

Alzheimer’s disease has been said to be the single most expensive malady in the U.S. – exceeding heart disease AND cancer – because there is no prevention, no cure.

As a registered nurse for over 25 years, working primarily with the geriatric population, I find it my duty to advocate for this cause. Alzheimer’s disease is the sixth-leading cause of death in this country and the only one in the top ten without a way to prevent, cure, or even slow its progression. We will die from this horrible illness.

The *New York Times* wrote on April 1, 2013 that “Alzheimer’s disease is skyrocketing at a rate that rarely occurs with a chronic disease.” Yet financially we have not proactively addressed this disease the way we have others. The National Institute for Health reports that research funding for FY 2013 for cancer is close to \$6 billion, for HIV/AIDS it is \$3 billion, and for Alzheimer’s it is less than half a billion! We have learned with other diseases that it is much more beneficial and cost effective to spend money on research rather than continue to treat symptoms that we don’t understand. If we don’t address this issue, Medicare/Medicaid spending could exceed \$1,200 billion by 2050.

As a member of the Governor’s Commission on Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia I was invited to attend the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Alzheimer’s Advocacy Forum last month in Washington D.C. What a great time! About 1,000 advocates came from all over the country to speak for the cause.



Our team at the 2012 Walk to End Alzheimer’s in Brattleboro

Our team, organized by Martha Richardson, E.D. for the Vermont Alzheimer’s Chapter, had the opportunity to meet our Vermont representatives in Washington D.C. We met with Senators Bernie Sanders’ and Patrick Leahy’s staff as well as staff of Congressman Peter Welch. It was a distinct honor to meet them, as they already do such great work in advocating for health and wellness and have a keen eye on our state’s aging population. This is important work for them because we have the second oldest state in the country (only superseded by Maine). During these office visits we were pleased to be able to thank all of our representatives for their support of the search for a cure. All were supporters of the “**HOPE for Alzheimer’s Act**” during last congressional session and have either co-sponsored or are considering co-sponsorship of the bill this session. This Hope for Alzheimer’s Act will improve care and outcomes for people living with Alzheimer’s disease and their caregivers by improving access to diagnosis, providing care planning services, and ensuring that a diagnosis is recorded in the medical record. All three members also have expressed **support for the addition of \$100 million for Alzheimer’s research** in President Obama’s 2014 budget.

Thank you again to the offices of Senators Bernie Sanders and Patrick Leahy as well as Congressman Peter Welch for their time meeting with us on Capitol Hill to speak about how to move these messages along. This disease looks more and more like a public health issue and needs your attention NOW. It WILL take a village to deal with it.



Susanne Shapiro with Kelly Mazza, Dir. of The Arbors; and Dan Bean & Jeanette Voss, Ambassadors from Shelburne - meeting Senator Bernie Sanders at his office in Washington D.C.

## VALLEY CARES, INC.

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As you plan for the future  
think of Valley Cares...

*Because our senior years are  
a time to revel in the company  
of friends and family—not to  
move away from them!*

Visit us on the web!

[www.valleycares.org](http://www.valleycares.org)

## Quality Life at Valley Cares

By Susanne Shapiro

*First a Note: As we parted ways with long standing resident, Virginia Barrett of Grafton, Vermont, we also said goodbye to our biggest advocate for quality. "Ginna" was a daily reminder of the importance of quality in all of what we do and what we represent. She was an avid member of our Board of Directors, a Food Committee member, a Quality Improvement Committee member, and the voice for our entire resident population. Ginna put food quality at the forefront, hearing the voices of many different community members with many different likes and dislikes. She advocated for the purchase of a much needed flag for our building. She also gave us feedback on our laundry services, housekeeping services, and the qualities we foster in our caregiving staff. She will be forever missed, and we will always keep her many insightful requests for quality close in mind. We thank her for the many strides she helped us make as a community for seniors.*



In the past year, we revived our Quality Improvement Committee. This resident and staff forum meets on a quarterly basis to address all aspects of quality and services provided. We review the annual surveys completed by assisted living residents and families and make action plans to address any issues. Especially as we are expanding our assisted living, we consider it a priority to maintain and strive for excellence in our existing housing and services. We are always looking for ways to improve and welcome input from residents, families, staff, friends and visitors, alike.

Food is one area where feedback is always appreciated. As we count the daily and weekly meals provided for our in-house population and staff, as well as Meals-on-Wheels home delivered meals, the striking

total of over 42,000 meals per year seems daunting! Yet our newly contracted food service management company, Fitz Vogt – together with the core group of kitchen staff – has stepped right up to the task. We contracted with Fitz Vogt knowing that they could provide kitchen staff a level of expertise and support that we could not, and that this expertise would only grow in importance as we expand. In the past year they have honed our food service management in many ways. From hosting monthly meetings with our resident Food Committee to working with various staff in assuring continued strengthening of the quality food we serve and ongoing compliance with dietary restrictions and regulations, they have all done a great job.

The past year has also been a year for refreshing our in-house education program. We must provide staff with training each year in topics relevant to the work we do. Although this is a requirement, we also enjoy the opportunity to learn from interesting and knowledgeable professionals. Many outside instructors were here every month to make sure our staff has the best skills possible to assure excellence in care and services. Among these presenters were Maggie Lewis from the Alzheimer's Association, Nancy Hood from Vermont Legal Aid, and several pharmacy students from Ohio Northern University who came to Grace Cottage as part of their last training before graduating. These students are an inspiration to us as they review medical records, meet with residents, and work with physicians and Valley Cares' staff to ensure quality medical treatment of our residents.

We feel very fortunate to be a part of this quiet Vermont community. We have a very hardworking, dedicated, and compassionate team of staff at Valley Cares, and we have the fortune of working with many caring medical professionals and community volunteers, who all assist us in carrying out our mission every day. Together we can pride ourselves in being an award-winning senior housing option.

As we are now expanding, the challenge is upon us to uphold the exceptional quality for which we all strive. Becoming bigger is no small feat – for residents and staff alike. Our weekly construction meetings ensure everyone has a chance to have their questions about the construction process answered. As this process moves forward, we focus on maintaining a sense of stability for our existing residents and keeping up the routines we have as a team in our community. We will hold a keen memory of Virginia Barrett and her husband, Bob, in whose names the addition is being built. We will strive to carry on their sense of excellence as we get closer to welcoming new members to our remarkable community!

*Valley Cares Inc. is an independent community-based 501(c)(3) organization committed to providing affordable housing and supportive services to the elderly residents of the West River Valley and surrounding towns.*