

# News from West River Valley Senior Housing



SUMMER 2016

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## Dear Friends A word from Susanne Shapiro, RN, ED

*I am pleased to report that our house is nearly full! Our independent living is full, and our assisted living has just one or two openings. This is the way we like it—both for financial stability and for the general feel of our community. And I believe that this is a true testament to the pleasant environment and friendly community we have here. I hear this time and time again when people come for a tour and compare our housing to what they imagined or saw elsewhere.*

*But we did not happen upon this alone! There are a great many people to thank for the atmosphere and community at West River Valley Senior Housing. You've no doubt heard the adage, "it takes a village." Well I believe in our case, **it takes a Valley!** We are so grateful to all of you for your part.*

*I am especially thankful for our staff, who have been working tirelessly. Residents, family members and visitors always take notice of the wonderful dedication of our employees. Staff work as a seamless team, and are often kept on their toes attending to residents when our community is full. It can be a bit of a staffing puzzle in the summer, trying to schedule everyone so that they may take much deserved vacations and time off. Yet we believe it is important that everyone has the opportunity to do so, and each person is appreciated anew upon their return.*

*If you are looking for a new home, volunteer opportunities, or a wonderful place to work, you are always welcome to come for a visit. We hope to see you at the benefit concert on Townshend Town Common, July 30th!*

## Farm Fresh By Becca Schaefer

Is there a particular thought that comes to mind when you think of fresh produce? Maybe you think of the farmers market or your garden. Perhaps it's that first bite of a fresh tomato straight from the vine. Or picking berries with your family (and somehow having more end up in your mouth than the basket). Whatever your memory, doesn't it bring a smile to your face?

We all love fresh local produce. Several residents cultivate their own gardens here on our property, growing everything from lettuce and greens to tomatoes, squash, peppers and peas (and of course, flowers).

This year, thanks to a generous donation from Rob & Sue Rowell, our Assisted Living will enjoy fresh produce all season long from local CSA, Wild Carrot Farm. Their donation enabled us to form a valued partnership with this Brattleboro farm; our kitchen receives weekly deliveries of whatever produce is at its peak. Residents couldn't be happier to have fresh, locally-grown produce. Farm-fresh..."the way food ought to be!"

For years, our Independent Living residents have also benefited from the Northeast Organic Farm Association's "Senior Farm Share" program. Through this program income-eligible individuals age 60 or older (or younger individuals with disabilities) are eligible to receive free weekly shares of fresh produce from a local farm. We have been very lucky to partner with Walker Farm in East Dummerston and always look forward to their weekly delicious bounty.

We are so pleased to offer these local farm connections and grateful for those who have made these partnerships possible. After all, there's nothing better than farm fresh!

## Resident Highlight: Ruth Romano By Jean Allbee

"I've had a good life," Ruth Romano said as I sat down in the guest chair by her living room window. From the stories she proceeded to relate, it would appear she has been living it to the fullest.

When Ruth and her husband, Tim, moved to Vermont they figured the first thing they had to do was get Tim a job.

"We figured nurses could always get a job, but it might be harder for him."

Tim went for an interview at the (Brattleboro) Retreat for the job of maintenance supervisor. He told the prospective employer that it would be nice if his wife could also have a job there.

"We don't need any housekeepers at the moment," the Retreat interviewer told my husband.

"She's not a housekeeper, she's an RN," he replied.

"Well, where is she?" the man said, nearly jumping out of his chair.

"I was right outside the door, so they hired me on the spot and they had to take Tim to get me."

"I trained at St. Mary's Hospital in Waterbury (Connecticut) and I worked at Bradley Memorial Hospital in Southington. Then we moved to Vermont and we both worked at the Retreat for a couple of years."

At that time Tony Cersossimo was doing a lot of development in the area. Ruth and her husband wanted to buy a piece of land and build a house.

"There was a lot at Snow Mt. Farm we fell in love with. The

agent told us it was not for sale, but we talked him into selling it to us. We really liked some of the log cabins Tony was building there, and went to find him at the plant to ask him to build our house. We had never met him but we were able to pick him out as the boss."

"I don't build log cabins for people unless it's on land they bought from me and you don't own any of my land," Tony said.

"Oh, yes we do; lot #2 at Snow Mt. Farm!" my husband told him.

"So you're the #\$%!!& who bought that lot. It wasn't for sale!"

Apparently Tony had set that lot aside to build a house for his wife, but, luckily for Ruth and her husband he ended up building the house for them.

After that Tim went to work for Tony as a real estate agent

and eventually quit his job at the Retreat.

Living in the development didn't work out because, according to Ruth, the other owners didn't want anyone living there year round. So, though Ruth hated to leave it, they sold their log cabin and moved to Wardsboro.

Ruth went to work for Dr. Otis.

"I didn't even know there was a hospital there (in Townshend) but it was closer to home so I took the job."

"One day, Dr. Otis was acting antsy. When he started acting antsy I knew there were some 'Big Wigs' coming. That day three men in suits and ties came into Dr. Otis's office.

"Watch yourselves," Dr. Otis said, "these men are sheriffs!"

"I looked at the three men and suddenly ran over and kissed one of them! I thought Dr. Otis was going to drop his teeth!"

In Connecticut my father was in the newspaper business and my husband had a lot of contacts and relatives, so we knew a lot of people. The sheriff I kissed was my husband's uncle!"

As I was leaving her apartment I asked Ruth how she was settling in at Valley Cares. She shrugged and gave a woeful smile.

"I'm doing alright, but I want my 'Dopey' back," she said as she gestured to their wedding photo from 1963. "'Dopey' is the nickname we had for each other. I called him 'Dopey' because he was the kindest and most lovable of the Seven Dwarfs."



Ruth Romano shares a few laughs

## Employee Highlight: Carlena Lee By Jean Allbee

I recently sat down in the little gazebo on the grounds of Valley Cares to talk with Carlena Lee, a long time employee and LNA Team Leader. It's clear how much Carlena loves working at Valley Cares. With her bright clothing and infectious smile she lights up the hallways. You will often see her pushing a cart of juices and water to deliver to residents at mid-morning or mid-afternoon. But if you don't see Carlena for a while you know she is in one of the apartments, helping a resident in one way or another.

"I knew that I wanted to be involved in the healthcare field from the time I was caring for my father when he became ill many years ago. I wanted to become a nurse, but life got in the way, so I took the LNA course at Eden Park in Brattleboro when it was offered."

Becoming an LNA assured Carlena of a job in her chosen field. She has worked and lived in various places in Vermont including Guilford, Brattleboro, and St. Albans. In St. Albans she worked in a community residential home similar to Heins Home.

"My responsibilities included scheduling, dispensing medication and whatever else needed doing plus cooking. The owner would go out and buy the food and we'd cook it."

Later Carlena moved to Brookline in order to be able to raise her children in a country environment. Though she had to commute to Brattleboro where she worked at Thompson House she said,

"I didn't mind the drive; it was worth it to live in the country."

When Valley Cares opened in 2007, Carlena soon left Thompson House to work closer to home where she's been ever since, much to the benefit of Valley Cares.

Carlena was born in Brattleboro, but she was raised on a small farm in Guilford where her family had a few milking cows, chickens, turkeys. Later her father bought Tony's market across from Canal Street School (now Gouger's Market), where she worked after school when she wasn't busy playing basketball and softball for the BUHS teams.

As our interview wound to a

close, I learned that Carlena has four grown children and five grandchildren! I also learned of her daughter's upcoming wedding on the Townshend Common this September. Carlena seems happy and excited about the wedding. She will have the dual role of Matron of Honor, as well as the parent who walks her daughter down the aisle to give her away.

At the very end of our interview Carlena mentioned going to Maine on vacation this summer.

"Bill and I wanted to get married while we were in Maine, but it was becoming complicated, so now we've decided to get married in Vermont this summer; a small quiet wedding with a JP!!"

Her own wedding! I was not expecting that!

Carlena had said to me before our interview,

"I won't have much to say."

Not so! Carlena's caring and warm personality shone through and she was full of surprises. I drove home smiling all the way. What fun!

## SASH: Collaborating to Offer Inspired Programs By Alicia Moyer

Alicia and Kate are working hard to stay on top of the ever changing needs of our growing SASH program. To offer the best programming possible, SASH keeps an ongoing record of participants' needs and topics/classes that might benefit them. From this, we create custom programming for the communities we serve. Some new offerings include: a new Tai Chi for Falls Prevention class in Jamaica, a support group for those living alone, informative sessions regarding medical insurance and fraud, an upcoming collaboration with Grace Cottage and Stay Steady Vermont which will bring individualized falls risk screening to participants.

This autumn Alicia will co-teach a class on Chronic Condition Self-Management with Dover SASH Coordinator Becky Arbella. This will be a six week series focusing on overcoming the physical, mental and emotional challenges caused by a chronic condition. Both instructors have been certified to lead this Stanford University program.

SASH Team meetings continue to be well attended each month, and provide an essential place for all providers to come to the table in support of shared participants. We are grateful for all the wonderful collaboration!

## VALLEY CARES, INC.

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

*Because the West River  
Valley is a wonderful place  
to call home!*

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



## Our Wish List

Summer is here in all its splendor! Time to get outside to enjoy our beautiful surroundings. Will you consider contributing to one of these outdoor wishes?

- **A Shade Sail for the Assisted Living Patio**
- **2 Lids for our Backyard Pro Gas Grill**
- **Share your Classic Car!**  
Dawn will host her annual **Classic Car Show in the late Summer/early Fall. Anyone with a classic car interested in participating should contact her. (802) 365-7190 ext.107**

Previous wishes granted:

- Annual Flowers
- All-Purpose Greeting Cards

*Thank you!*



## Join Us for a Concert!



On a beautiful day in the Summer (or Spring or Fall), where would you rather be? Inside? Or Outside enjoying the benefits of fresh air? Outside! The folks living at West River Valley Senior Housing absolutely agree. That's why we are "extending the living space" at our senior housing to include the great outdoors.

On **Sat., July 30**, Valley Cares Board will host a benefit concert to help fund this endeavor. The concert – featuring fun and talented favorites, *The Bondville Boys* and *The Tuesday Night Town Hall Boys* – will be held on the **Townshend Common from 5:30 to 8:00pm**. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. Food vendors will be on site. If it rains, the concert will be in the Townshend Town Hall. Come enjoy this fun, family-friendly event!

With your help, Valley Cares will increase the availability of accessible outdoor activities by:

- Improving the surface of our walking paths
- Installing distance markers and guidelines for stretching along the paths
- Adding more benches for rest and enjoyment

Who among us hasn't experienced the benefits of a little fresh air and sunshine? Time outdoors is well documented to lift moods and provide relief from anxiety or grief. Walking and other outdoor exercises are extremely beneficial to health and wellbeing – at any age. Please help our residents enjoy the wondrous outdoors!