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## Dear Friends

Springtime brings growth and new opportunities, and it is certainly an exciting time for us! As you will read in this newsletter, we have two new faces at West River Valley Assisted Living: Program Director, Susanne Shapiro, and Nurse Manager, Debra Rodgers. We are fortunate to have such a skilled pair as these two and look forward to the contributions they will bring to our residents and staff. We also have new solar panels on the roof of the Independent Living building, providing hot water for our entire facility. Also this spring, Valley Cares is launching a local fundraising effort to support our proposed addition of 12 more units to West River Valley Assisted Living. Though we are seeking public funds for the bulk of this \$2.7 million project, contributions from the local community will be crucial to making this project a reality.

In the midst of all this change—a big thank you goes out to our kitchen, caregivers and activities staff, who maintain a consistently top notch program for our residents! Thanks to you—too—for your support!

Bob Crego  
Executive Director

## Seeking Local Support for Assisted Living Expansion

By Becca Schaefer

Last summer, we came forward with the news that, due to our long waitlist and the enduring need for such housing, we hoped to expand West River Valley Assisted Living, and that the proposed expansion would add 12 more units for seniors who need some assistance with activities of daily life. Since then we have been working tirelessly to develop plans and raise funds for this \$2.7 million project. As noted by the appeal included with this newsletter, we are officially launching a local fundraising campaign to get *essential* support from those who personally know our facility and the benefit it provides to the surrounding communities.

Grant writing is paying off! In September 2011, the Vermont Community Development Program granted the project \$575,000. Then on April 16, our request to the Vermont Housing Finance Agency for over \$1.1 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credits was approved. We currently have a request under review with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for \$425,000—the remaining portion of public funds we will need for this project.

Still, in order for the expansion to happen, it is vital we get support from the local community. At this point, we have raised about \$200,000 from private donors; so we are going public, hoping to raise the remaining \$200,000 needed from local donors, funds and foundations in the West River Valley community. As you read this newsletter and the enclosed appeal, please bear in mind the benefit of such rural senior housing and consider sharing your support for this unique project. Thank you.

### Valley Cares, Inc.

#### Board of Directors

- John Nopper (President), Putney
- Rick Chapin (Treasurer), Guilford
- Greg Record (Secretary), Newfane
- Shirley Clark (ILF Rep.), Townshend
- Virginia Barrett (ALF Rep.), Townshend
- Jean Allbee, Brookline
- Maggie Bills, Townshend
- Mick Brant, Londonderry
- Sally Wadsworth, Stratton
- Edith Serke, Windham

## Bob Barrett, the Greatest Generation, and Valley Cares

By John Nopper, Board President

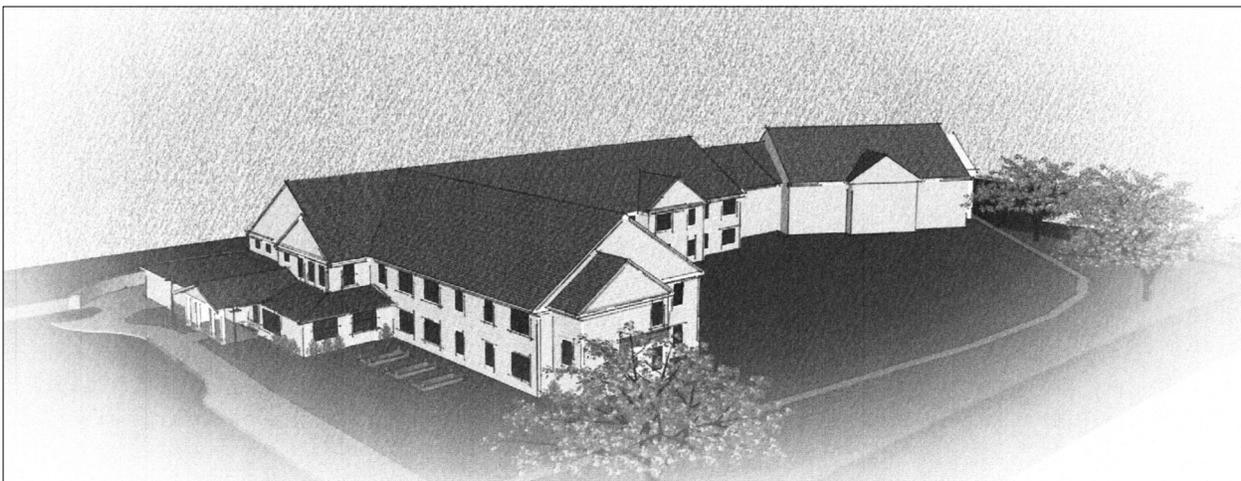
We all have a deep sense of respect and admiration for the men and women, now in their 80's and 90's, who answered the call to duty in the 1940's. They did what had to be done, often making great sacrifices, using what they had to preserve civilized society. They went to war in foreign lands and supported that effort at home. As time passes, we remind ourselves of their courage and commitment, even as their stories and lives grow distant.

One distinguished representative of the passing great generation is Russell Robinson Barrett, Jr. Bob Crego and I first met Bob in 2006. He had indicated his support and interest in helping us build independent and assisted living for seniors in the Valley. So, we traveled to his very small office at the back of Barrett Real Estate in Grafton. From that time, until the last day of his life, Bob was a solicitor and ambassador for the success which is now Valley Cares. He believed in this project for his community, supported it with successful requests, and benefited from it—spending his last days comfortable, at peace, surrounded by family and friends. Because he was such an important part of building this project, and because he is such an important representative of this great generation, we honor him with the naming the new addition the Bob and Virginia Barrett Wing.

We know much about Bob's wartime work as a Naval aviator in the Pacific theater. At the request of his daughters and completed by his fam-

ily after his final mission, his memoir, *Hawk: Patrol Wing Ten, Diaries And Letters, 1940-1942* tells the story of what it was like—as the war began, as a brave group of soldiers battled overwhelming enemy forces, suffered defeat and surrender, but then escaped to continue service... until final victory. Bob has been an example of a life lived fully and well, from the time he first danced with Virginia Mulford to Glenn Miller's "A Million Dreams Ago", to building successful real estate businesses in New Jersey and Vermont, to raising a family with Ginna, winning the personal battle with alcohol, and distinguishing himself as a community leader. We thank you Bob for what you have given us.

And while we are very specific about honoring Bob and Ginna, we extend further that honor to others of the passing greatest generation. Many of our residents, past and present, answered the call to service, some in battle and some sacrificing at home to support those efforts. So, in a very important way, while we are recognizing and honoring the memory of Bob Barrett, we include in this honor others of the greatest generation. This is for you, Bob, Elbert, Harry, Ken, Lucy and all the men and women who answered the call to put a stop to what was wrong, and came home to make things better!



Architect's rendering of WRV Assisted Living expansion with new *Bob and Virginia Barrett Wing*

Visitors to our Assisted Living will see a few friendly new faces these days. As introduced below, Susanne Shapiro, RN, has assumed the lead role as Assisted Living Program Director, and Debra Rodgers, RN, is 2nd in command as Nurse Manager. Residents, staff and board members were actively involved in selecting these new employees. We are extremely pleased that these two women—both strong leaders and competent, compassionate nurses—have joined our community. Along with Linda Leavitt, our Assistant Nurse Manager, and an extremely capable staff of Caregivers, we could not be more proud of the round-the-clock care provided at West River Valley Assisted Living!

### Susanne Shapiro, Assisted Living Program Director

Valley Cares is pleased to announce the hiring of Susanne Shapiro as Program Director for West River Valley Assisted Living. Susanne joined our team in February and has already established herself as a strong leader and caring nurse.

Susanne is a Registered Nurse with over 20 years professional experience in a wide range of settings including hospital care, health care management, home health nursing, and senior residential care. A native of Denmark, Susanne has a degree in Nursing Management from the School of Advanced Nursing Education at the University of Aarhus, Denmark.

Susanne has held several leadership positions in southern Vermont including Nurse Manager of Professional Nurses Services, Inc. in Brattleboro, and Administrator at Hilltop House, also in Brattleboro.

Well respected in the long-term care field, Susanne serves on the Governor’s Commission on Alzheimer’s Disease, Dementia and Related Diseases, and is a member of the Steering Committee at Brattle-

boro Memorial Hospital that is tackling a community health care needs assessment as part of Vermont’s Blueprint for Health.

A resident of Marlboro, Vermont, Susanne and her husband, Robert, have two children.



Debra Rodgers (left) and Susanne Shapiro (right)

### Debra Rodgers, Nurse Manager

We are also delighted to introduce Debra Rodgers as the new Nurse Manager of West River Valley Assisted Living.

Like Susanne, Deb is also a Registered Nurse with over 20 years professional experience in a variety of nursing and administrative roles. She studied both nursing and business in college, earning her title as a Registered Nurse at Saint Francis School of Nursing and her Masters in Business Administration at Renssaler Polytechnic Institute – both in

Hartford, Connecticut.

Over the past 14 years, Deb’s work has primarily been with elders as a nurse and supervisor in an assisted living facility and a nursing home. She has worked in facilities much larger than ours (with over 200 beds!) and looks forward to the intimacy of our smaller community.

We truly feel that Deb’s coming here to West River Valley

Assisted Living was “meant to be.” Just as we were looking for a Nurse Manager, she and her husband carried out their long-time goal of moving to Winhall, VT. Deb was looking for a local nursing job that would allow her to keep working with the elderly population. She started working here in mid April, and already we are confident Deb is a fantastic fit!

## Getting Meals to Those in Need

What can seniors do to get food if they can no longer drive to the store or are unable to prepare food? Who can seniors call on if they live at home but have a hard time obtaining healthy food?

For many people in West River Valley communities, the answer is to sign up for Meals on Wheels. Since opening in 2007, Valley Cares has provided this service for many seniors throughout the Valley. We take great pride in preparing delicious and nutritious meals that seniors will enjoy receiving.

However our preparing the meals is only half of the picture. We coordinate and rely on caring community members who volunteer to deliver these meals to seniors throughout their communities.

Valley Cares is currently looking for volunteer drivers for the following Meals on Wheels routes:

**Monday - Townshend**

**Friday - Townshend**

**Friday - Newfane**

- Meals are available to go out at 11:00 am.
- Routes take approximately 1 ½ hours to complete.
- A 25 cents per mile gas reimbursement is available for drivers.

If you think you may be interested in volunteering please contact Meals on Wheels Coordinator, Amanda Bills, at (802) 365-7190 ext 101 for more info.

### Asparagus Quiche

Adapted from Martha Stewart's *Everyday Food*, April 2009

1 Tbsp butter  
 1 leek (white and light green parts only), halved  
 & thinly sliced, then well washed  
 Coarse salt & ground pepper  
 1 pound asparagus, tough ends removed, thinly  
 sliced on the diagonal  
 4 large eggs  
 1 1/4 cups milk  
 Ground nutmeg  
 1 pie crust  
 1 cup Swiss cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees, with rack in lowest position. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium. Add leek and asparagus; season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until asparagus is crisp-tender, 6 to 8 minutes; let cool.

In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, 1/2 teaspoon salt, teaspoon pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg. Place pie crust on a rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle with cheese; top with asparagus mixture. Pour egg mixture on top.

Bake until center of quiche is just set, 50 to 60 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through. Let stand 15 minutes before serving.

### Connecting in New Ways with Skype

By Becca Schaefer

Thanks to a generous donation from Father Fred McLachlan of Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church, West River Valley Assisted Living now has a Skype computer available for residents who want to use this audio/visual technology to talk to their loved ones. Skype is a computer technology that uses an internet connection to allow people to both hear and see other Skype users while they talk to each other. It is a step up from a phone conversation because you can see the other person on the computer screen, and they can see you.

“We are learning this technology together,” said Dawn Slade, the Recreation & Volunteer Coordinator. “It really is a great way for residents to connect with their family when they aren’t able to visit in person.”

Slade hopes to make the computer available for residents to use at anytime they want. It is already used by a few residents whose family members are Skype-savvy. She encourages any friend or family member with Skype to share their Skype address with us so more residents can take advantage of this technology to connect with their loved ones.

## Local High School Students & Elders Find Inspiration Together In an After-School Writing Program

By David Ahern and Kate Conklin

Students from Leland and Gray High School received a warm welcome this winter during their writing group time with some of the residents at West River Valley Assisted Living. The group – lead by David Ahern, a teacher at the school – was made possible by a Vermont Department of Education Twenty-First Century Grant. The purpose of the grant is to build strong connections between after school programs and success in school. Including the community at-large is an important part of this program.

With the help of Dawn Slade (Valley Cares' Recreation & Volunteer Coordinator) and Kate Conklin (volunteer & family member), David was able to bring a small, but enthusiastic, group of students to meet residents and explore building relationships through the creative writing process. From both the students' and David's point of view, it was a grand success! They all looked forward to the warm cookies and warm relationships that greeted them on Tuesday afternoons.

For this writing workshop the group used the writing methods of Natalie Goldberg, the author of "Writing Down the Bones." This method is a very simple, but meaningful, approach to writing down thoughts and making sense of them. Goldberg's insights about writing as a regular practice seemed to resonate with young and old alike. The students and elders would write together for 10 or 15 minutes on different topics or prompts that

were accessible and universal subjects for both age groups, such as: summer, a memory of a grandparent, something [I] lost, and [my] name. When the writing period was over, each person would read their piece aloud – which would always inspire an interesting dialogue. The group reflected on how a collection of these short writing pieces over time could represent a non-traditional type of memoir for both age groups, as they revealed so much about the authors.

This format of creative writing and sharing quickly became a comfortable vehicle for the high school students to use to get to know their new friends and to share some important personal experiences with adults. One Tuesday, unbeknownst to each other, a student and a resident both chose to write about the eventful days that their squirming, crying, baby siblings arrived home from the hospital. The events of the fateful days were separated by six decades, but the impressions of the day were amazingly similar...“I've been displaced!”

Every week brought surprising reflections and memories, some happy and some sad, that enriched the experience for all those involved. Hopefully, in the future, we will be able to bring together the group and expand participation to further build these wonderful relationships across generations.

## Casino Night—Fun & Fortune for All!

By Dawn Slade

Make way for the high rollers! In March, West River Valley Assisted Living hosted our first ever Casino Night for residents...and it was a big hit! Volunteers and staff hosted rounds of poker, bingo and the ever-popular roulette wheel. In true casino form, many attendees dressed up for the event, and a good time was had by all.

Before anyone alerts the authorities, all games were free, so no actual gambling took place. However, all participants were winners, and some made out quite well! We hope to make this a biannual event in the future.



## 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)



of assisted living and the additional 12 units of assisted living that will be constructed this fall. This environmentally-friendly source of hot water will allow Valley Cares to shut off the wood pellet burner and back-up oil burner in the summer months, thus saving the organization \$4,000 - \$9,000 in pellets or oil.

## Valley Cares Goes Green with Solar!

By Becca Schaefer

Valley Cares, Inc. is pleased to announce its installation of solar panels to provide our facility with hot water! That's right. When you are heading north on Rte 35/Grafton Rd, keep an eye out for the new solar panels installed on the roof of the West River Valley Independent Living Building. The panels were installed in mid-February, and were operational by April.



Thanks to a Department of Energy grant secured by Housing Vermont, Inc. – our partners in developing West River Valley Senior Housing – we found out last summer that we would be able to install 24 solar panels, enough to supply hot water to our entire senior housing facility. Originally the panels were supposed to go in by November, but due to a few schedule delays, the project was pushed out until February.

“The idea of installing solar panels on a roof in Vermont in January or February had us a little nervous,” admitted Martin Bozetarnik, Valley Cares’ Maintenance Technician. “However, we really lucked out. What little snow we had on the roof melted out a few days before the panels went up.”

The solar panel system was installed by The McKernon Group, a multifaceted design/build construction firm out of Brandon, VT.

The 24 solar panels on the roof will heat 1,100 gallons of water in storage tanks in the basement of the building. This is enough hot water for the entire senior housing facility, including the 24 units of independent living, 28 units



*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.*