



At Home in Darien

Helping Darien seniors live independently, comfortably and with dignity in their own homes and the community as long as possible

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OUT AND ABOUT

FALL 2012

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3

Getting Organized



Dear Friends –

We invite you to get organized!

First off, mark your calendar for our **Annual Luncheon on Thursday, November 15th** at noon at the Darien Community Association.

This lovely event is free for all Darien seniors and promises to be informative and helpful as we learn how to **Reduce Stress by Removing Clutter**. Please see the box to the right for more information and rsvp as soon as possible to save your seat.

Second, mark your calendar for our Annual Meeting on Monday, December 10th at 10:00 a.m. at the Darien Library. Join our Board of Directors for refreshments and learn more about our plans for the coming year.

And lastly, this newsletter is dedicated to getting organized. We hope you find the articles useful and take away a few good ideas that will help you. Aging in Place+Gallivant is delighted to be a resource for seniors and their loved ones. We not only help Seniors unclutter their lives, but we assist Seniors in making their lives the best they can be.

We are here for you – give us a call!

All the best,

Gina

Gina Z. Blum, Executive Director, Aging in Place+Gallivant

You're invited!

Join the **Aging in Place+Gallivant** Board of Directors at their

Annual Meeting
Monday, December 10, 2012
at 10:00 a.m.

at the Darien Library Community Room
 1441 Post Road, Darien

Join us for refreshments and learn more about how we meet the needs of seniors in Darien and what we have in store for the coming year.

R.S.V.P by December 3rd **203.585.4094** or
admin@aginginplacegallivant.org

Aging in Place+Gallivant and The Darien Community Association invite you to attend the

Aging in Place+Gallivant



Annual Luncheon

**Organize and Simplify:
 Reduce Your Stress by
 Removing Clutter**

Featuring

Cara M. Brook

Professional Organizer
 Strategize. Organize. Simplify. LLC

Join us for an informative and helpful presentation to eliminate the clutter. Are you feeling overwhelmed by the amount of "stuff" you have in your home? We spend years accumulating papers, memorabilia, photos and other items. However, there comes a time when we need to make a decision — keep it, donate it, gift it, or toss it? Learn some simple strategies to eliminate the clutter. You will learn how to:

- get the decluttering process started,
- decide whether to keep or toss an item,
- stay motivated during the organizing process, and use basic organizing principles to determine the best way to store each item.

Thursday, November 15, 2012
12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Darien Community Association
274 Middlesex Road, Darien

**Free presentation and lunch
 for all Darien Seniors**

R.S.V.P. by November 8th
**Space is limited, please respond early to
 ensure a seat at this popular event**
203-585-4094 or
admin@aginginplacegallivant.org

**Did you know that
 Aging in Place+Gallivant
 sends out a monthly e-mail?**

We compile and share important opportunities, events, and reminders that are of interest to seniors in and around town.

Join our distribution list! Please e-mail us at **admin@aginginplacegallivant.org**. Put **"e-mail"** in the subject line and include your name and address.



**Need help
 with leaf raking
 this fall or
 shoveling snow
 from your public
 sidewalk this
 winter?**

**Please call Aging in Place+Gallivant at
 203-585-4094**



Organize and Simplify

Cara M. Brook,
Professional Organizer, www.organizewithsos.com

These days we accumulate items so quickly; whether it is the physical items in our homes or information we collect on the computer. Here are two ways to cut back on the clutter and simplify your surroundings.

TOO MUCH STUFF? ACT LIKE YOU'RE MOVING!

Go through your house one room at a time, one box or bin or drawer at a time and ask yourself some key questions: Do I need this? Do I use this? Do I even like this? If the answer is "No" to any of these questions, there's no point in moving the item to another location. Deal with it now.

You can donate the item, ask your friends and family if they will use it, put it on freecycle.com, or challenge your friends to do the same thing and have a swap party. Start small and take your time.

OVERWHELMED BY EMAIL? GET RID OF IT!

The easiest way to start over is to create a folder called "Old Email". Take the contents of your Inbox and move it to the "Old Email" folder. It's that easy! Going forward, take the time to delete or file emails as they come into your Inbox, as you open them. Once you read that funny joke, delete it. Once you respond to your friend's email request to get together, delete it. When you receive a receipt for an online purchase, file it in a folder called "Online Purchases" or "Receipts" or delete it. Keep moving things out of the inbox. If you start to panic and wonder what happened to that email from last week, just go back to the "Old Email" folder and it will be there. At some point you'll be ready to delete most of the emails in that "Old Email" folder but for now, keep it as your back-up.



Moving Out! Moving Up! Moving On!



Joan Blumenfeld, MS, LPC, Geriatric Care Manager,
www.joanblumenfeld.com

// Moving out! Moving up! Moving on!// were the words printed on my change of address card.//

My kids were grown and gone. My significant other of twenty-six years had died three and

a half years earlier. I was alone and lonely, rattling around in the high maintenance eight room house where my children had grown up. In remarkably short order I moved to a rental apartment half that size and sold the house I had lived in for forty-six years. I know some of my friends felt sorry for me. They thought I "down-sized" with all the gloomy intimations of a lesser life. But actually I "right sized" my living space, renewing and refreshing my quality of life!

Here's how it happened:

For months I had been driving past the huge new apartment complex being built in the next town paying no attention to it. But one day the sign saying Luxury Apartments for Lease leaped into my consciousness. I thought, "What if I sold my mortgage free house, carefully invested the proceeds and rented a smaller space in a maintenance free, ready made community?" The idea startled me and caught my fancy!

The very next day I asked a friend to come with me to look at the apartments. I really expected to find them cramped, expensive and altogether unsuitable. How wrong I was!

The complex was elegantly appointed. The public rooms were decorated with taste; the Olympic size pool sparkled in the sun in the center of a large patio that looked just like a Ritz Carlton Hotel! The brand new apartments were spacious, bright, welcoming and positively magical. It was love at first sight! I could easily imagine myself living there.

Within the week I made up my mind to do it! I put a small deposit on a two bedroom/two bathroom apartment. I put my house on the market and proceeded to get ready to move.

I hired someone to clean out the attic and the basement. I cleaned out forty-six years of accumulated mementoes, outgrown toys and clothes, and broken machines that never got repaired. I shredded dozens of boxes of outdated and useless documents.

Each of my children took what they wanted. I took everything with me that had meaning so my new home had deep connections to my life history. The rest I gave away, sold or sent to the dump. I had the fun of replacing dark old furniture from the 1950's with light young pieces from Crate and Barrel, delightfully combining old and new.

Now I live in a small, diverse community where connections are easily made. I no longer have home maintenance worries. Instead of grooming an acre of land, my garden consists of five pots out on my balcony with a succession of bloom from pansies in April, to begonias in June to mums in September...no woodchucks, deer or moles destroying my landscaping efforts! It was the perfect move for me at the perfect time in my life.

PEARL OF WISDOM: Older adults might want to consider moving to more manageable living space while they are healthy enough to enjoy it rather than waiting until poor health dictates a move.

Brightening "Sunny" Brains

Abstracted by Peter F. Eder from the book, *Rainy Brain, Sunny Brain: How to Retrain Your Brain to Overcome Pessimism and Achieve a More Positive Outlook*, written by Elaine Fox. (Published by Basic Books: New York, 2012)

While much has been written about how we are dealing with dementia and Alzheimer's, much less coverage has been given to uncluttering our brains – what brain related things we can do to ensure a "sunny" brain.



Elaine Fox, a British neuroscientist and psychologist has written a breakthrough new book, "Rainy Brain, Sunny Brain", focusing on dramatic findings about how "sunny" brain functions can be enriched.

She reports on scientists beginning to understand how a combination of genetic structure and an individual's environment can build and strengthen healthy brains. It has become clearer and more scientifically proven that we can indeed condition our brains ... regardless of our age. Ms. Fox suggests some simple ways we can make our brain "sunnier".

BE REALISTIC ABOUT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EVENTS

Realize we all have positive and negative things happening to us. Take a step back when you have a pessimistic viewpoint. Don't let it overwhelm you. Look for positive events and try to balance three positive events with one negative one. As your brain forms a habit

of noticing the positive rather than the negative, the underlying brain circuits will gradually begin to change.

FACE YOUR FEARS HEAD-ON

Whether you are afraid of spiders or uncomfortable in some social situation, putting yourself outside of your comfort zone is a highly effective way to reduce and even eliminate fear, anxiety and negative thoughts. By changing a fearful event and over time updating it with a less fearful one, you can actually change the way your brain remembers things and condition yourself to remember more positive experiences.

PRACTICE MINDFUL MEDITATION

Find some quiet time, ideally a few minutes each day, to just sit and quietly meditate. Allow thoughts and sounds and feelings to pass through your mind. Instead of engaging with distressing thoughts label them as "this is upsetting" and let them pass by. By labeling your worries – treating them as nothing more than objects of attention – you can create a sense of detachment from negative experiences. Not only will this strengthen neural networks, but it will help us respond to emotional events.

PASS ON GOOD FEELINGS – SHARE YOUR LAUGHTER

Laughing and creating a happy spirit is a tonic for yourself and for those around you. Find the humor in life, the joyful moments, the pleasant surprises and positive experiences and share them with others. It becomes a reinforcing mechanism.

BE FULLY INVOLVED IN SOMETHING

Work on getting involved in activities that are meaningful to you. Find a cause, a hobby, a sport, a volunteer activity that you enjoy and schedule it into your daily life. Satisfying experiences strengthen "sunny" brains.

Declutter Your Life at the Darien Senior Activities Center

The need for decluttering exists in both mind and body. At the **Darien Senior Activities Center** we offer all kinds of activities to aid in decluttering your life. Decluttering your mind can seem daunting with all of the stresses and chaos in one's life, however there are many ways to find your "inner Zen!"



One of the worst ways we clutter up our mind is putting off tasks that are "have to do's." They just sit there in your head and niggle away so you can never quite concentrate on another task that you are doing at the time. So, our advice is to just do whatever it is you need to do as soon as possible — this way you can get it out of your mind and focus on the next task. Our "Ask a Lawyer" program does just that. Do you have questions about your will? Setting up Trusts? Perhaps you have questions regarding living wills? Setting up disability plans or IRA guardianships? Michael Nedder of Nedder and Associates in Darien comes once a month for a free 15 minute private consultation. Call the center at **203-656-7455** for dates and available appointment times.

Are you the primary caregiver of a loved one? We offer a monthly **Caregivers Educational Support Group** on the third Tuesday of every month. This group gives caregivers a chance to voice their worries and concerns, in turn allowing attendees to clear their minds and see situations from new perspectives. Another outlet that aids in emotionally decluttering is writing down our worries, our stories, and our experiences. The center offers a **Creative Writing** workshop. Exploration of feelings through writing may allow you to identify things on your mind that you didn't even realize were there. Once thoughts are out and on paper they can be out of your mind as well.

Another way to declutter your brain and clean out all that extra winter padding at the same time is exercise. 30 minutes of aerobic exercise is recommended each day. The center offers a myriad of exercise classes to choose from: **Yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, Wii bowling, Ballet, Pilates, Sittercise, Zumba** and even **Pickleball**...just to name a few!

Please stop by the center for a monthly newsletter, or look online at www.darienct.gov under Parks and Recreation! Membership is free, and there is always something new going on. We look forward to seeing you!

LESS IS MORE

Pinny Randall, *The Settler*, www.thesettlersusa.com

Clutter takes up valuable space both in your home and in your head. "Stuff" carries memories that have emotional baggage—some good and some not so good. Clutter is a crowded or confused mass or collection. It often consists of many gifts you have received, yet neither really wanted nor needed. It often consists of too many framed family photos. It often consists of duplicates of the same items. Looking around your home and seeing all the dust collectors and all the space used up often causes stress and anxiety. Clutter can make a mess, so people feel relieved when clearing it out. Piles of clutter mean you could trip or slip and fall. So it becomes a hazard. Why not make your home safer by not overcrowding it with things you can live without?

Clearing the clutter is not easy because what you want to hold on to is usually weighed down by emotional baggage. To help you declutter, set specific goals, such as sorting a drawer, a cabinet, or a piece of furniture every few days. Put an empty carton or grocery bag plus a black garbage bag in the room you are working on. Now be tough! Put the items that have no physical, mental or emotional life left for you or anybody else in the black garbage bag. Then put items that others could enjoy and use in the box or grocery bag for donation. Arrange to have these items dropped off at the thrift shop or a charity of your choice. Donating will make you feel good and another thankful.

Remove extra photos from picture frames and keep them in an album, box, or envelope, and then donate these empty frames to charity. Sort through your books and donate some. You no longer need to be the keeper of your children's stuff. Give them a deadline to pick up their things. It is also important to remove excess furniture for safety sake. Either donate it to a charity that picks up or arrange to have it removed.

In summary, keep the memories, but don't keep the "stuff". The real estate agent says "location, location, location." And I, as a move manager, say "less is more, less is more, and less is more." Less gives you more space. Less often makes your home safer. Less space in your brain is devoted to your "stuff".



Darien Social Services and the Darien Emergency Management Team are interested in knowing about people who, in a serious local incident or a severe weather event, may need assistance or a reassurance call. **If you would like to be on this list please call: Darien Social Services, 203-656-7328** or e-mail them at ekilbourn@darienct.gov.

Knowing When to Say Goodbye

Seana Turner, Professional Organizer,
www.theseanamethod.com

One of the toughest aspects of sorting through our possessions is deciding which of our most sentimental items to keep. Clothing of a loved one, photographs of a special memory, knick-knacks from a favorite vacation... these items are especially difficult to part with because of the stories which accompany them. Nonetheless, each item we own requires cleaning, storage, maintenance and/or insurance. Therefore, sorting and culling our sentimental belongings is worthy of the emotional roller coaster it entails. Here are a few questions to help ease the process:

Am I keeping this because I think I should...because I think someone else would be upset if I let it go?

If the primary reason you are keeping an item is guilt, then it is time to let it go. The giver of the item most likely intended it to bring joy, so if it isn't bringing joy, consider giving it away.

Do I have a place to display and enjoy this?

We collect items because we like them (beautiful dishes, coins, linens, etc.), but then we often put them in a box for safekeeping and never look at them. If you have a collection, honor it by finding a way to display it. If you have no place to display or use it, ask yourself if you will in the future. If not, then consider passing it on.

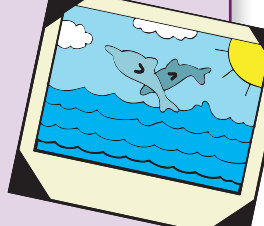
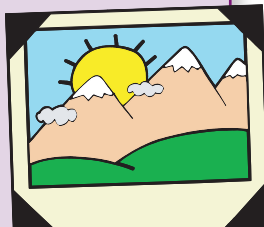
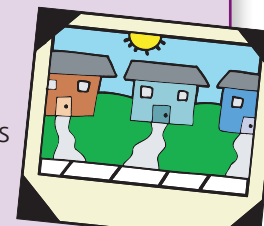
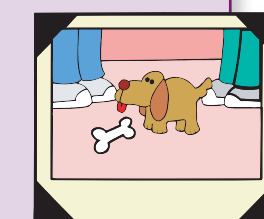
Is this item so out of date that my children or grandchildren won't want it?

Often we hold onto objects with good intentions of passing them on to the next generation, but sometimes we are keeping things which family members don't want. Storing, moving, and carting objects which won't be appreciated is a waste of effort, especially since there may be someone else who has great need of the object today.

Can I capture the memory of this item in an alternate way that better fits my lifestyle?

With high quality photography and scanning widely available, many items may be better preserved through alternate media than in a box. Consider photographing the items (e.g. children's artwork, favorite vintage clothing items, etc.) and making a photo book at a site such as Shutterfly.

Ultimately, sentimental items are only worth keeping if they regularly and consistently add value to our lives. So keep the ones that really count!





Aging in Place+Gallivant provides the following services to all Darien residents age 60+:

- **Transportation within Darien, Stamford, Norwalk and New Canaan, Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**
- Telephone referral, advice and counsel.
- Volunteer services — Friendly Visitors, Shoppers, Helpers and Drivers along with seasonal services such as snow shoveling and leaf raking.
- *Out and About* newsletter.
- Monthly email blasts promoting events and services.
- Social and educational programs throughout the town.
- Referrals to discounted vetted service providers such as:
 - Appliance Repair
 - Computer Services
 - Electricians
 - Hairdressers
 - Handymen
 - Landscapers
 - Plumbers
 - Repairmen
 - Small Chores and more!

Call Aging in Place+Gallivant at 203-585-4094 for free information



When you need a ride within Darien, Stamford, Norwalk and New Canaan, call our friendly Gallivant dispatcher, Drivers Unlimited, directly at 203-655-2227

24-hour advance notice and a voluntary contribution are appreciated

Clearing Clutter for Fall Prevention

Alison Rhodes, PALSBuilt, www.PALSBuilt.com

When it comes to seniors, clutter is a killer – quite literally. Each year, one in every three adults age 65 and older falls. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that falls are the leading cause of injury death among this population.

For many people, years of accumulating treasured keepsakes and other objects have left their homes a minefield for tripping and falling hazards. The phrase “everything in its place” is a mantra to live by in order to prevent dangerous accidents. Below are a few tips on how to clear the clutter and avoid an accident:

- Remove floor vases, throw rugs, waste baskets and any other items that are in your walking path and especially if it is near the top of the stairs.
- Organize linen closets so that items used most often are on the lower shelves in order to eliminate the need for standing on a bench.
- Be sure items that are stored in a garage or basement (where it tends to be darker) are kept in clear storage boxes with large labels on them to make the contents easier to identify.
- Gather computer and printer cords and any other wires into one bundle and secure them to a wall or the leg of a table to reduce the risk of tripping.
- Install a soap dispenser on a shower wall. It’s safer to use than a bar of soap which could fall into the shower and cause a slipping accident. Purchase a shower caddy to eliminate jars and bottles sitting on the edge of the tub which can cause a tripping accident while getting in and out of the tub.
- Keep kitchen counter tops clear of magazines, cook books, dishtowels and other flammable items that could catch fire as you cook.

What to do with Items no longer needed

Janet King, Person-to-Person, www.p2pdarien.org



Sometimes a small thing will have great significance in another person’s life. When you’re uncluttering your home of unwanted clothing, small appliances, linens, and kitchen items please consider donating them to Person-to-Person. Person-to-Person has a Clothing Center which serves people who have little in their lives. We do not sell any items that are donated. The items help families stretch their income so that they may pay for much needed food, rent or utilities. More than twenty volunteers a day sort through, organize and put out donations. And more than 60 families a day use the Clothing Center.

In July, Person-to-Person was fortunate to serve a lovely, elderly woman who was asked to speak at her brother’s fortieth church anniversary. She did not have the means to purchase a special dress but our Clothing Center was able to provide a lovely dress for the occasion. She called to tell us that

after her speech honoring her brother, she received a standing ovation and she felt beautiful in the dress.

Person-to-Person has been in Darien for over 40 years and is a volunteer driven, community supported agency which, through the sharing of goods and talents, responds to individuals and families who lack the basic necessities or resources to improve their lives.

Please consider helping those in need in your community. Person-to-Person serves individuals in Darien, New Canaan, and Stamford. Your clutter will help those who have little.

Person-to-Person is located at 1864 Post Road in Darien. We are open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Donations are accepted any time that we are open. For more information, contact us at 203-655-0048.

Thanks for your Support!

Aging in Place+Gallivant is supported by Dick and Robin Woods and by hundreds of other people from all over the town of Darien this year. Are you one of them? We depend on your support to continue to serve Darien’s senior citizens. We are a private, tax-exempt, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Please send a generous gift today to Aging in Place+Gallivant, P.O. Box 1242, Darien, CT. 06820. Thank you.



At Home in Darien

“We’re committed to helping Seniors stay in our community.”

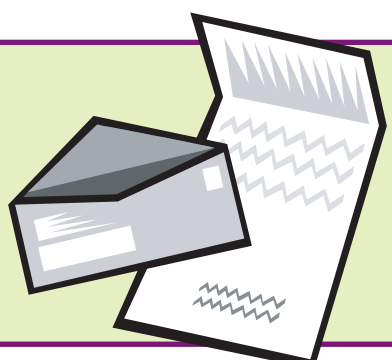
Dick and Robin Woods, Donors to Aging in Place+Gallivant



Darien needs the wisdom and contributions of our Seniors. By providing transportation and other resources, we ensure our town’s future.

Call Gina Blum at 203.585.4094 director@aginginplacegallivant.org

Aging in Place+Gallivant is nonprofit, tax-exempt, and supported by generous donations.



We want your opinion!

If we have given you names of vetted service providers over the past few months, please look for a feedback survey from us by mail.

We want to hear about your experience with the service providers we referred to you. Your opinions will improve the services we provide.