

2 Renshaw Road • Darien, CT 06820 • 203.655.2227 • [www.AtHomeInDarien.org](http://www.AtHomeInDarien.org)

*our mission:*  
*“Helping Darien seniors  
live independently,  
comfortably and with  
dignity in their own  
homes and the community  
as long as possible”*

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Dear Friends –

Strong social connections are fundamental to our physical and mental well-being. Keeping seniors connected to the community is at the core of what we do. **At Home In Darien** recognizes the health benefits that being socially engaged can have, and knows that it contributes to healthy aging. In order to provide helpful information on this topic, this issue of our newsletter focuses on understanding the causes and risk factors for senior isolation in order to help us prevent it, and the many programs and services that exist in Town to build connections.

Please join me in attending our Annual Luncheon on Tuesday, October 24th which is free for all Darien seniors (see information to the right). If you are uncertain about attending because you don't want to go alone, let me know and I'll save you a special seat. I also hope you will join me at our Annual Meeting on Wednesday, December 13th (see information below). We are excited to celebrate another great year of connecting seniors to community!



Gina Z. Blum  
Executive Director of  
At Home In Darien



[Gina@AtHomeInDarien.org](mailto:Gina@AtHomeInDarien.org)

Join the  
At Home In Darien  
Board of Directors  
at their Annual  
Meeting

**Wednesday, December 13, 2017  
At 11:00 a.m.**

**Darien Library Community  
Room, 1441 Post Road**

Join us for refreshments and learn  
more about how we meet the needs  
of seniors in Darien.

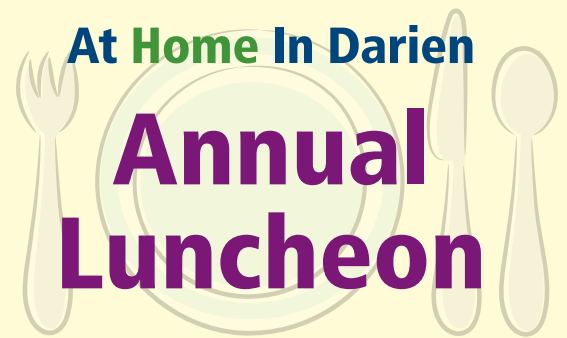
RSVP by December 5th 203.655.2227  
or [Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org](mailto:Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org)



**Featuring Betsy Ritter  
Commissioner of the State  
Department on Aging**

Betsy conscientiously and effectively works to fulfill the Department's mission "to empower older adults to live full independent lives, and provide leadership on aging issues on behalf of older adults, families, caregivers, and advocates". She enjoys the opportunity to speak to, and hear from various groups within the aging network throughout our state.

**At Home In Darien** and  
The Darien Community Association  
invite you to attend the



**Annual  
Luncheon**

**Aging Well**  
**Featuring Dr. Allison Ostroff**  
**Director of Geriatric Medicine at**  
**Stamford Hospital**

Join us for an interesting, informative,  
and uplifting presentation on growing old  
gracefully with tips for preventing and  
managing diseases as you age.

**Tuesday, October 24, 2017  
11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

**Darien Community Association  
274 Middlesex Road**

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

**RSVP by October 12th**  
Space is limited, please respond early to  
ensure a seat at this popular event.

**203.655.2227**

Or

**[Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org](mailto:Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org)**



As a geriatrician, **Dr. Ostroff** strives to provide the most comprehensive care of older adults by managing not only medical issues but the often complex social concerns of her patients. As the Director of the Division of Geriatrics at Stamford Hospital, she has the opportunity to not only treat individual patients but to improve a system by highlighting the need for comprehensive geriatric assessments and improving the quality of hospital care for patients with dementia.



## What Causes Isolation Among the Elderly?

A variety of factors can affect the ability of older adults to engage in the community including:

**Transportation Challenges:** When a senior begins to limit their driving or gives it up entirely, it can cause them to remain at home more than they want.

**Limited Finances:** Tight budgets, especially for those on fixed incomes, may limit dining out, use of car services, entertainment, or attending events on a regular basis.

**Impaired Mobility:** If a senior is unsteady on their feet or uses an assistive device of any kind, they may feel safer in familiar surroundings to avoid potential injuries.

**Loss of Loved Ones:** Older adults often become isolated as their social circle dwindles. Lifelong friends and neighbors may have retired and moved out of town to be closer to their children, and loved ones may have passed away.



## Give a Hug

Research shows that friendly platonic touching from friends and family, like hand holding or hugging, can lower stress and promote feelings of well-being. On the other hand, people deprived of touch can experience decreased well-being. So even if you or your older relatives are not the touchy-feely types, at the very least weave a friendly hug into your greetings and farewells.

AARP is working to end social isolation.

[connect2affect.org](https://connect2affect.org) is a great resource for information, stories, an on-line self assessment and more!

## Thanks for your Support!

At Home In Darien is supported by hundreds of people from all over the town. 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:

**At Home In Darien**  
2 Renshaw Road, Darien, CT 06820

**Remember us in your will or trust!**

## Make sure you know what's going on around town...subscribe to our monthly calendar of events!

Email [Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org](mailto:Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org) or call **203.655.2227** to request to receive it by mail. If we have your email address you will also receive our new BLOG notifications where we share important information on various subjects of interest.



## How to Become More Engaged

Here are a few tips that can help:

**Transportation Solutions:** Call **At Home In Darien**! We offer rides Monday through Friday from 9am to 4pm for Darien residents 60 or better within Darien, Stamford, Norwalk and New Canaan.

**Friendly Visitors:** Try to line up a few friendly faces to pay regular visits to homebound adults.

**At Home In Darien** has friendly volunteers who can also help fill that role. Additionally, home care providers offer companionship services allowing a professional caregiver to be hired to assist with engaging activities.



**Conversation:** Sometimes a face to face visit isn't convenient or even possible. Technology has made it much easier to stay connected to loved ones near and far. A good alternative to a computer or a cell phone is a tablet device to keep in touch with friends and family. They are easy to use and require minimal maintenance. **At Home In Darien** also has a friendly caller telephone program where neighborly volunteers lend an ear and enjoy a good chat.

**Senior Activities:** There are many entertainment options in our community that are either free or charge only a nominal fee. **At Home In Darien's** Monthly Calendar of Events (which is mailed or emailed) includes dozens of interesting opportunities for seniors each month from numerous local organizations. Don't receive it? Call us to be added to our mailing list.



**Take a Class:** The most effective way to combat isolation is to get involved in an educational program. Consider taking a class on whatever is of interest to you - health related topics, current events, art, exercise classes, etc. Our Monthly Calendar of Events will direct you to classes all over town!

**Get Moving:** Group exercise programs reduce isolation and loneliness and have added health benefits to boot. You may also want to consider joining The Darien Steppers, **At Home In Darien's** walking group.

**Have a Purpose:** Seniors with hobbies and interests are more likely to be socially connected. Besides providing a sense of purpose, many hobbies and interests are inherently social in nature. Anything that involves a group, for example, playing bridge, is socially healthy.

**Volunteer:** Another good idea is to stay engaged through volunteer work. Not only is volunteering rewarding, but seniors who volunteer with a local charitable organization experience better physical and emotional well-being.

**At Home In Darien**, or your favorite charity or local community group, would welcome your help. It's a great way to meet people and be socially connected.



**Assess Physical Needs:** Seniors with hearing, vision or mobility problems may avoid social situations because of embarrassment. Have hearing and vision checked and treated, and take advantage of adaptive aids, like walkers.

**Care for a Pet or a Plant:** The act of nurturing can relieve feelings of social isolation. Pet owners remain engaged socially, are happier, feel more secure, and require less medication than non-pet owners. Animal companionship facilitates establishing friends and gives a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Assuming a senior is capable of caring for a pet, nurturing and caring for an animal companion can be quite beneficial. Even tending a garden can satisfy our nurturing drive!

Keep active and engaged, it's the best way to prevent isolation and a vital part of successful aging!



# Your Emotions Can Keep You Well!

by Wyn Lydecker

**M**any of us believe that our emotions can make us weak. But did you know that you can use your emotions to give you power over stress, and in the process, improve your health? This surprising news was unveiled by former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy at a symposium in Philadelphia sponsored by Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics at the University of Pennsylvania. "This is what science tells us," Dr. Murthy said in an interview with Patti Williams, a professor of marketing at the Wharton School.

Positive emotions enable us to perform better and makes us resilient. Chronic stress, on the other hand, is a form of pain that can harm us physically and lead to illness.

When felt over long periods, stress creates high levels of cortisol in the bloodstream, which can increase the risk of heart attacks, cancer, Alzheimer's, and other illnesses. Murthy said that as a nation we need to work on reducing chronic stress so that we can raise the level of wellness.

He cited two practices that can help us reduce stress and become healthier:

1. Practicing gratitude: simply writing down three good things that happen each day can raise the feelings of happiness
2. Feeling socially connected: building social ties in your community.

Murthy noted that we all need to work on social connectedness because loneliness is becoming an epidemic in our country. Since the 1980s, the percentage of people who say they are lonely has doubled from 20 percent to 40 percent.

In fact, an article in *The Washington Post* said that the feeling of isolation has become a worse health hazard than smoking or obesity, putting lonely people at greater risk for illness. Psychologist Steve Cole and his colleagues at the UCLA School of Medicine, along with collaborators at the University of California at Davis and the University of Chicago, have been conducting research to learn why. They've discovered that social isolation changes our health at the cellular level, increasing the activity of genes responsible for inflammation, while dampening the activity of genes that produce antibodies to fight infection.

## Friendly Callers

For people who cannot go out, [At Home In Darien](#) offers other ways to be socially connected: Friendly Visitors, Friendly Shoppers, and a just-launched Friendly Caller program, in which volunteer callers are matched with seniors who would like to receive regular phone calls.



**Peter Sosnow** is one of those callers. He has worked in health care his whole life, and when he was a child, he went on home visits with his grandmother, who was a home health aide. "When I heard about [At Home In Darien](#) and this new program, I knew it was something I could do," said Peter. "It's rare today to have an uninterrupted conversation on the phone. Seniors have so much to offer. They give me a different perspective."

**Debbie Evans**, another Friendly Caller, said, "It's incredible. When I talk with the senior I'm paired with, I'm connected to another world. It works the same way for her. She has a very quiet life, and she says she enjoys hearing about my life and my family. The more you learn about someone, the more you can share."

Debbie said it's not hard to imagine what it would be like to be by yourself. And a phone call can make a very big difference for someone who has limited ability to get out. "It's two-way. Both the volunteer and the senior benefit."



To learn how you can get involved with the Friendly Caller Program or to find out about other community programs, call [At Home In Darien](#) at 203.655.2227 or visit the website at [www.AtHomeInDarien.org](http://www.AtHomeInDarien.org).



## How to Get Out and Get Connected

We're fortunate in Darien to have many organizations that provide easy and fun ways to meet people and socialize. A quick look at the [At Home In Darien](#) monthly calendar of events shows dozens of group activities – from walking at Selleck's Wood to lectures about World War II at the Mather Community Center. The Darien Community Association also offers interest groups and luncheons, as well as providing a home for the Darien Men's Association with its own weekly lectures and other special interest activities. Houses of worship, nonprofits, and the local YMCA and YWCA provide countless ways to join a community, attend activities, do volunteer work, and get exercise in social settings.

The Darien Library hosts 1,400 programs each year including armchair yoga, free film screenings, a short story discussion group, a Senior Moments monthly coffee and conversation group, lectures, and hands-on workshops. Mallory Arents, Director of Adult Programming said, "Over and over again we hear from our seniors that they're looking for two different things when attending an event at the Library: 1. To massage their intellectual curiosity, and 2. To feel connected to the community."

If you cannot drive, [At Home In Darien](#) can provide transportation to any local activity or event in our town car or accessible minivan. Volunteer drivers are also available after-hours.





**At Home In Darien**  
provides the following  
free services to all  
Darien residents age 60+:



**Transportation within Darien, Stamford, Norwalk and New Canaan, Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**



**Telephone referral, advice and counsel.**



**Communication and Programs —  
Out & About newsletter.**

**Monthly calendar of events.**

**Membership Cards that provide discounts with local businesses.**

**Home safety evaluations.**

**Social and educational programs.**



**Handy Services —**

**Volunteers including Friendly Visitors, Shoppers, Helpers, Callers, and Drivers along with seasonal services such as snow shoveling of public sidewalks and leaf raking.**

**Referrals to discounted vetted property and home maintenance services.**

## A Healthier YOU: Staying connected and active!

By Beth Paris - Director Senior Programs at Mather Center



People who feel connected to others have lower levels of anxiety and depression, and they also have higher self-esteem, greater empathy for others, and are more trusting and cooperative. As a result, others are more trusting and cooperative in return and this generates a positive feedback loop according to Dr. Emma Seppala author of *"The Happiness Track"*.

Many studies highlight the physical benefits of socialization such as better management of diabetes, high blood pressure and autoimmune disorders and overall better heart health. Darien Senior Programs has been designed to foster informal socialization as well as increased connections through classes, entertainments and creative pursuits. As a multi-purposed activity center, seniors have many opportunities to connect with one another and the community. All seniors are welcome and can tour the Center and learn all about the programs offered. The staff looks forward to meeting new members, showing them around, and introducing them to other members.

Please call the Senior Center at 203.656.7490 for more information and to connect!



## Avoiding Loneliness

By Ali Ramsteck, LCSW -  
Director of Darien Human Services

Loneliness in the elderly population is a growing health concern among families and physicians. Loneliness can be a result of living alone, lack of close family or friend relationships, and age related losses. Loneliness can have startling effects on seniors including:

- Increase in mortality
- Negative affect on both physical and mental health (high blood pressure, depression)
- Poor cognitive functioning and quicker decline
- Increased vulnerability of elder abuse
- More likely to need long term care

Fortunately, the Town of Darien has a variety of resources to help seniors. Darien Senior Programs at The Mather Center has a full schedule of activities and serves lunch daily. **At Home In Darien** is a wonderful resource to help seniors attend the activities of their choice, as well as friendly visitors, callers and shoppers to help reduce social isolation. The Darien Library and The Darien YMCA have extensive programs for Darien seniors as well. Of course, we also have beautiful parks and beaches to visit. Additional suggestions on preventing loneliness:

- Daily exercise can decrease depression
- Interpersonal contact daily, even a 5 minute phone conversation can help improve a senior's mood
- Learn how to Skype or FaceTime family and friends
- Find a new hobby
- Adopt a pet. Pet ownership can reduce feelings of isolation
- Volunteer! It is very rewarding

Please feel free to contact Darien Human Services if you or someone you know of is in need of help at 203.656.7328 or stop by Town Hall room 109.

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

**Please call  
At Home In Darien  
at 203.655.2227  
for an application.**



## Catch the Wave!

**The Darien High School Football Team  
invites YOU to become a Blue Wave Football Fan!**

Please join the parents & fans as they cheer the team on during the 2017 football season. Admission is free to those age 65 and over.

**We hope to see you at the games!**  
**2017 DHS Football Captains & Team**

### Home Game Schedule:

Friday 9/15 @ 6:00pm vs. Brien McMahon  
Saturday 9/23 @ 1:30pm vs. St. Joseph  
Saturday 10/21 @ 1:30pm vs. Fairfield Warde  
Friday 11/3 @ 6:00pm vs. Wilton  
Thursday 11/23 @ 10:30am vs. New Canaan

## Dine with Others

The act of eating with others is inherently social and is an occasion for sharing. Encourage seniors to share a meal with others whenever possible, whether it's with a church group, at a friendly diner (your **At Home In Darien** membership card provides discounts at participating restaurants!), or the Senior Center (a delicious deal at only \$5). Dining with others is also likely to help promote better nutrition which is important for older adults.

