

**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

WINTER 2014

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1



Top, At Home In Darien newly elected Board members, Lisa Hughes, Carolyn Anderson, Peter Carnes, Anne Burleigh, Patrice Malvisi and Holly Hawes. Bottom, outgoing Board members, Barbara Adams, Karen Armour, Nancy Cammann, Diana Kalman, Dorothy Baker and Kate Larson. Not pictured, Jean Baker.

Lifelong Learning



Dear Friends –

Learning is an ongoing process. The more you learn, the more you realize, there's even more to learn. The satisfaction around lifelong learning is that we can pursue areas that truly spark our interest. Plus, it keeps us sharp and provides us with opportunities to keep socially engaged. I encourage you to look for new ways to enhance your knowledge. Hopefully, this issue of our newsletter will provide you with some inspiration.

This fall **At Home In Darien**, in collaboration with the Darien Community Association, hosted our Annual Luncheon with a focus on the benefits of laughter. We learned to make time each day for a good laugh. We've included a few jokes in this newsletter to produce a smile and some giggles — enjoy!

At our Annual Meeting we welcomed new members to our Board of Directors — also thanked outgoing board members

for all they have done to make our organization a valuable resource for the Darien community.

We ask that you keep **At Home In Darien** in mind. The free services that we provide — whether it be transportation, referral to a vetted service provider or a friendly volunteer — help seniors remain living independently and comfortably in their homes in Darien. We are here for you — give us a call!

Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and enlightened 2014!

All the best,

Gina

Gina Z. Blum, Executive Director, **At Home In Darien**

WE HAVE A NEW NAME!
Aging in Place+Gallivant is now **At Home In Darien**



**AT HOME
IN DARIEN**
CONNECTING SENIORS TO COMMUNITY



**"I am thankful
for all the
services
At Home
In Darien
provides for
us Seniors."**

Pearl Falcioni
Longtime Darien Resident

Call Gina Blum at **203.655.2227**
Gina@AtHomeInDarien.org

At Home In Darien is nonprofit, tax-exempt, and supported by generous donations.

Older and Wiser

By Beth Paris, Darien Senior Activities Center Coordinator



“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.”
— Henry Ford

Education is a lifelong process. The more you know the more you grow and the more empowered you feel. There are so many learning opportunities at the **Darien Senior Activities Center**: Foreign Languages, Writing, History, Art Classes and much more.

But perhaps most important to one’s quality of life are the Health and Wellness offerings. Through our current collaborations with **Stamford and Norwalk Hospitals, Fairfield University** and **Norwalk Community College**, local home health agencies, **CT Pharmacy** and **Walgreens**, we have been able to facilitate an array of lectures that cover a person’s health from head to toe, inside and out. The benefits of having knowledge about chronic conditions, or how to prevent illness, is crucial.

Going to the Doctor’s office with information and insight can be very beneficial in this time of fast paced visits and ever-expanding technology. Medical advances are being made every day— new medications become available, as well as new treatment modalities. As the medical world advances, keeping up with the changes can be challenging.

Refer to the **Darien Senior Activities Center** monthly newsletter to assist you in furthering your education and obtaining information. We are happy to take suggestions to schedule health lectures on specific topics that you might be interested in, so please give us a call at **203.656.7490**.

OF INTEREST

Most people will spend up to 1/3 of their life in retirement, depending on the age at which they choose to stop working full-time. Research has shown that staying engaged in retirement can result in better health and a prolonged life. Some of the ways satisfied retirees stay engaged after retirement are through education, part time work, and volunteering.

Seniors Doing the Teaching *by Peter F. Eder*

There are two dimensions to Education: learning and teaching. The current focus seems to be on having seniors learn, and not necessarily on the value seniors can offer as teachers. I’d like to offer some suggestions on how we can provide valuable teaching to those around us ... some thoughts on sharing our heritage and the values that have underlain them.



Handicrafts:
If you have skills in sewing, knitting, crocheting, or embroidery, teaching others will not only pass on the creation of future heirlooms, practical garb or decorations, but also the precision, patience and perseverance it takes to produce them. The same holds true for those skilled in woodworking or whittling. Cooking can also be included — family recipes are a combination of preciseness, history and tradition.

The Arts:
Playing harmonicas and tin whistles — and even whistling — are probably far from what most folks hear these days. Teaching others these simple pleasures can expand imaginations and enrich the senses. The same is true for those skilled with a paint brush, charcoal or a set of colored pencils. Even those of us who might have spent too much time doodling can introduce and intrigue others to the creativity and delight in an art form lost on most computer users.



Games:
If you enjoy playing games, solitary or with others, you can teach others the fun and challenge of them, while introducing forgotten forms of fun. They are great for face-to-face interaction, brain stimulation and ideation and sometimes, even simple physical activities. I have taught others my Manhattan street games, using simple and inexpensive supplies — chalk, Popsicle sticks, bottle caps and a rubber ball.

Literary Skills:
Reading to youngsters and adults of every age, and listening to their reading can open new windows of creativity and the love of words. Your own reflections and recollections can help others remember their own adventures and inspire new explorations. Journaling and encouraging others to capture their own thoughts and experiences can enrich lives and perhaps even improve keyboarding or cursive writing skills.



It’s not Quackery !!!

Not so long ago, humor as a form of medicine was viewed by many as Quackery. As Dr. Stephen Jones so aptly demonstrated at our recent **At Home In Darien** Annual Luncheon, humor today, in regular doses, is an accepted and encouraged medical practice.

As to Quackery ...

Q: What do ducks get after they eat?
A: A bill!

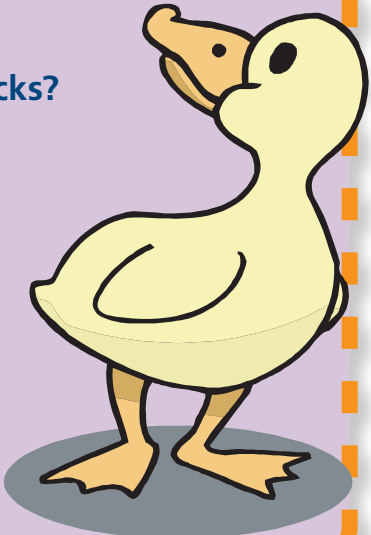
Q: What’s another name for a clever duck?
A: A wise quacker.

Q: What do you get if you cross a duck with fireworks?
A: A firequacker!

Q: What do you call it when it rains chickens and ducks?
A: Foul (fowl) weather.

Q: Where did the duck go when he was sick?
A: To the Ductor.

Q: Why did the duck fly south for the winter?
A: Because it was too far to walk.



The Importance of Your Own Medical Education

By Melody Matheny-Orpen, RN BSN, Visting Nurse & Hospice of Fairfield County

Knowing what medication you are taking, when you are taking it, why you are taking it and how to take it is important for you to get the best effect from them.

In 2009 according to the **US Department of Health and Human Services** there were over 4.6 million drug related visits to the nation’s emergency rooms. You can decrease your risk for hospitalization and extra doctor visits by understanding your medications.



You are at risk for medication errors if you:

- ✓ have vision problems, fine hand tremors or memory issues.
- ✓ live alone.
- ✓ take three or more medications (prescription, nonprescription, over-the-counter, dietary or herbal supplements).
- ✓ get prescriptions from more than one doctor.
- ✓ use more than one pharmacy (community, mail order or online).
- ✓ have old medicines around the house or transfer pills from one bottle to another.
- ✓ are taking certain medications including: blood thinners, insulin, blood pressure or narcotics for pain /sleeping.

Here are some simple, important things you can do:

- ✓ Keep your medication list updated with all the pills you take, when and why. Show it to all of your doctors.
- ✓ Ask your doctor the name of the medication, it’s purpose, how much, how often and when to take it and any possible side effects.
- ✓ Use only one pharmacy to fill your prescriptions.
- ✓ Pre-arrange your medication in a weekly med planner.
- ✓ Get help from your spouse, friend, family member or contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Visiting Nurse and Hospice of Fairfield County will be offering monthly “Know Your Meds” sessions at our office at 761 Main Avenue, Norwalk and at other local venues. A nurse will be available to review your meds, provide you with a typed list and a medication planner. Please call **203.762.8958** for further details.

An Online Site to Check Out

Your computer can help keep your brain as fit as your body. Try this free website for brain exercise.

Log on to www.games.aarp.org for a variety of interactive games to help flex your gray matter.

If you have any favorite ways you exercise your brain, or suggestions to share, please e-mail them to us at Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org or call **203.655.2227**.

Class of Now: Reasons to Go Back to School

Reprinted from Seniorresource.com



Many of us think of our school days fondly, often for reasons that have little to do with our classroom experience. We think of football games, band concerts, drama productions, dances, or parties. However, these events and occasions have something in common with the mere classroom time we seem to forget: they all brought us together with our fellow students.

These memories of people coming together can remind us of a good reason to return to our education. Often, the process of growing older can isolate us from each other. As our friends pursue their own destinies, we can lose touch and find ourselves ultimately lacking the human contact we need to survive. Taking classes, particularly at local community colleges, can remedy that problem, bringing us into respectful interaction with all sorts of interesting people. In this way, going back to school—the sheer act of going—can invigorate a life by coming together with like-minded others.

Did you know that taking a class in just about any subject can improve your cognitive abilities, rejuvenate your memory, and have fun all at the same time? Recent scientific studies clearly show that senior citizens who stay mentally active enjoy all of these rewards.

Challenging our brains to grow new cells can take place at any age. For that matter, we can build new connections which help our problem-solving abilities as well as memory. The more it’s used the better the brain grows and does.



Looking For Ways to Keep Your Brain Fit?

By Beth Howard, Reprinted from the AARP 2014 Day Planner

Here are 10 new ways you can boost your brain health now.

- 1. Get Moving.** Exercise regularly to work your hippocampus and help memory retention.
- 2. Pump Some Iron.** Participate in weight training.
- 3. Seek Out New Skills.** Learning new skills will enhance the connections between neurons in the brain.
- 4. Say “Omm.”** It may sound silly, but try meditating. It has the potential to significantly increase the amount of gray matter in your hippocampus over time.
- 5. Eat Like a Greek.** Eat a diet full of fish, vegetables, fruit, nuts, and beans. This includes what you drink, such as fruit or vegetable juice!
- 6. Spice It Up.** Use herbs and spices such as black pepper, cinnamon, oregano, basil, parsley, ginger, and vanilla. These spices are high in antioxidants, which may help build brainpower.
- 7. Find Your Purpose.** Having a mission in life is beneficial to your brain power and staying focused.
- 8. Get a (Social) Life.** An active social life may protect against dementia by providing emotional and mental stimulation.
- 9. Reduce Your Risks.** Specifically, of chronic conditions, such as diabetes and obesity.
- 10. Check Vitamin Deficiencies.** Vitamin B-12, for example, is critical to thinking, reasoning, and memory.



At Home In Darien provides the following services for free 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 and About newsletter.

Monthly email blasts promoting events and services.

Social and educational programs throughout the town.



Handy Services —

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

Referrals to discounted vetted service providers such as:

Appliance Repair
Computer Services
Electricians
Hairdressers
Handymen
Landscapers
Plumbers
Repairmen
Small Chores
and more!

COME LEARN - "Without Tests or Stress"

This winter **Lifetime Learners Institute**, located at nearby **Norwalk Community College**, will once again be offering their members FREE unique one-day classes on a variety of interesting subjects. These classes are available for five weeks, from January 27 to February 28, 2014. The classes are scheduled as follows:

MONDAYS 2pm – 4pm: I Love to Read Books

TUESDAYS 2pm – 4pm: A Variety of History Subjects

WEDNESDAYS 2pm – 4pm: Movie Clips and Interviews

THURSDAYS 2pm – 4pm: Current Events Discussed

FRIDAYS 10am – 12pm: All the Arts Reviewed

Members are not required to register for these FREE winter classes. Simply come to any of the designated classes that interest you and show your membership card at the door. In addition, on Fridays at noon there is a reception with light refreshments followed by a FREE one-hour guest presentation at 1pm.

12-month memberships continue to be available for those over fifty years of age for \$50.00. To request a class catalog and schedule, and/or a membership application, phone **203.857.3330** or see www.lifetimelearners.org.

Did you know that Seniors, age 65 or over, can apply to audit a regular NCC class free if space is available? To sign up, attend senior registration day for the spring 2014 semester on Tuesday, January 28th, from 9am to noon in the East Campus Lobby on Richards Avenue.

Coming Soon to Darien

Project Lifesaver is a new program for Darien. It provides timely response to save lives and reduce potential injury for people who wander due to medical conditions or disorders, including Alzheimer's or dementia. The program relies on proven radio

technology, specially trained search teams, and those enrolled to wear a small transmitter. If you know of a Darien resident that would benefit from Project Lifesaver, please have them contact **Sgt. John Lawlor, Project Lifesaver Coordinator/Darien**, or **Dennis Hanlon, Project Lifesaver Registrar/Darien** at projectlifesaver@ctdarien.gov.



No matter how skilled we may be with tasks around the house, there occasionally seems to be a situation where an "expert" is needed to solve a pressing or nagging problem. A carpenter, chimney sweeper, wildlife control expert, carpet cleaner, mover, homecare professional, pet sitter, roofer, among a host of other specialists ... knowing a reputable resource can be a great aid. **At Home In Darien** has a service provider data base that we have refined and continually update.

To make sure the persons we offer as possible providers are people you can trust to be in your home and do a good job at a fair price, we have an involved vetting process. The process includes:

- ✓ An identified provider completes an application.
- ✓ Certificates of liability insurance and any State required licenses are reviewed.
- ✓ The State Judicial Branch is checked for any small claims history.
- ✓ License and complaint history are checked with the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection.
- ✓ References are contacted and the service provider is interviewed.

Often we have also negotiated a senior discount that you can take advantage of by mentioning that we referred them to you. The only thing we ask of you is that if you decide to use one, you give us your assessment of their work ... so that we continue to enhance our referral base. In effect, you become a qualified helping hand for us.

When You Need A Ride, Call At Home In Darien

**Call 203.655.2227
Monday—Friday
between
9 a.m. and 2 p.m.**

Please have the following information ready:

1. Day and Date you need the ride
2. Time of your Appointment (if you have one)
3. Time you would like to be picked up
4. Exact address you are to be picked up from
5. Exact address of your destination
6. Whether you need the wheelchair accessible van, if you use a walker or a wheelchair, or if you have an aide or companion accompanying you
7. Return trip information, if needed

If you get our voicemail, please leave the same information listed above. We will call you back to confirm the ride.

24-hour advance notice and voluntary contributions are appreciated.