



Dear Friends,

2020 was a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all of us, and the need to assist senior citizens has never been more important.

During these challenging times, **At Home In Darien** has continued to fulfill its mission to help Darien's senior citizens. We have been providing key services to meet the needs of those most at risk

during the pandemic, and remain a vital source of assistance for seniors and their loved ones. We provide transportation, grocery shopping, pick up and delivery of prescriptions, telephone contact, advice, referrals, and customized assistance as needed. These services have never been more indispensable, more essential, and more critical. We serve as a lifeline to many seniors who count on our support.

In the months ahead, we will continue to encourage and reinforce measures for safety. We intend to continue providing important services to meet the needs of Darien's senior citizens. Rest assured, we take precautions to keep our staff and the community as safe as possible while delivering necessary assistance.

Inside this issue of *Out & About* you will read about the presentation, *Where Anger, Anxiety and Ageism Intersect with the Pandemic*, given at the **At Home In Darien** Annual Meeting on December 10, 2020

by guest speaker Marie Allen, Executive Director of the Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging. I encourage you to watch the presentation and the meeting. To do so, visit our website and find the video under the tab "events" and then choose "special events" under the dropdown menu.

At the Annual Meeting, we welcomed new Board members—**William Carney, M.S. Koly**, and **Michael Nedder**. We appreciate their willingness to serve on our Board and to help **At Home In Darien** continue to thrive. We are also grateful to our outgoing board members **Bill Ball, Diane Barston**, and **Annie McGuire**, for all they have accomplished to help us fulfill our mission and to make our organization a valuable resource for the Darien community.

As always, we are here to help. Give us a call at 203.655.2227.

All the best,

Gina Z. Blum

Executive Director of **At Home In Darien**

Gina@AtHomeInDarien.org

Like us on Facebook 



our mission:

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

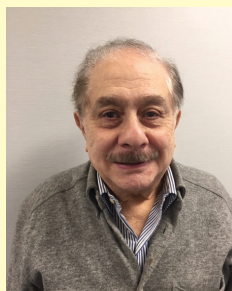
2021 Board of Directors

Susan Bhirud, *President*
Amy Harned, *Vice President*
John Hess, *Vice President*
Tamsin Sickinger, *Vice President*
Peter Sosnow, *Vice President*
Alison Wright, *Secretary*
James Metzger, *Treasurer*

John Bartlett
Bob Baylis
Mark Bergen
Monica Billeter
Peter Carnes
William Carney
John Keating
M.S. Koly

Michael Nedder
Diane Schlinkert
Robin Woods

Elisabeth Marrocolla, *Ex officio*
Beth Paris, *Ex officio*
Ali Ramsteck, *Ex officio*
Gina Z. Blum, *Executive Director*



*Newly elected **At Home In Darien** Board members
William Carney, M.S. Koly,
and Michael Nedder.*



Jane Matthews, At Home In Darien driver, received the **2020 Employee of the Year** award from the Darien Chamber of Commerce. Jane was recognized for the assistance she has provided senior citizens during the pandemic, offering safe and reliable transportation, helping with shopping and delivering of groceries, prescriptions, and assistive items, and other helpful tasks in order to keep seniors safe at home.

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

Stay connected this winter and make sure you know what's being offered virtually around town...subscribe to our monthly calendar of events! Call **203.655.2227** to request to receive it by mail or email. You will also receive our BLOG notifications where we share important information on various subjects of interest.



Where Anger, Anxiety and Ageism

Excerpts from the **At Home In Darien** Annual Meeting presentation by guest speaker Marie Allen,

Stages of Response to the Pandemic

Remember hearing the early reports in the beginning of 2020 regarding COVID-19? Many of us thought the same thing...

This can't be happening

Not here in the United States

It won't last long

It won't affect everyone

That **DISBELIEF** stayed with us until we heard the daily reports and press conferences coming from New York and saw the first cases cross the border from New York into Fairfield County. Not soon after that, we became angry.

There was **ANGER** at people telling us what to do, and anger at the disruption of our livelihood, social experiences and access to care. A generalized feeling of anger as everything from finding toilet paper to getting accurate assessments of the disease spiraled out of control. The anger quickly gave way to anxiety.

ANXIETY brought a fear for our own health and safety and tremendous fear for our loved ones. Who will get sick, what if the hospital does not have capacity, will our children maintain their jobs, will their children learn remotely?

And although none of these stages has left us in its entirety, we look to 2021 with **HOPE** and faith in people and science. We believe that a vaccination will eradicate the worst elements of the Coronavirus and we will resume some modicum of normalcy.

“Young and Old are useful words with specific meanings. The first means having lived for a short time while the latter means having lived for a long time. The words don't mean attractive versus ugly or trendy versus out of touch or foolish versus wise; they are not binary. When we are steeped in age denial we don't know that such equations are flawed.”

- Ashton Applewhite



“We all aspire to live to be old, and consequently we all must work to create a society where old age is respected, if not honored, and where persons who have reached old age are not marginalized.”

- Dr. Robert Butler,
International Longevity Council
President

Origins of Ageism

There are many different theories on the origins of ageism.

There is a strong perception that different age groups compete for diminishing resources in a zero-sum gain situation. In other words, one person's gain must result in another person's loss. Benefits programs, including Social Security, lead some young people to resent the funding of retirement for older adults because they believe it will result in their own loss.

It is important to differentiate between the age of the body and the value of any person. Older people who feel they are a burden perceive their lives to be less valuable, putting them at risk of depression and social isolation. Recently published research shows that older people who hold negative views about their own aging, do not recover as well from disability and live on average 7.5 years less than people with positive attitudes.

The proliferation of communities for older adults has been very successful in some parts of the country. However, there is a body of research to suggest that when the younger and older generations do not socially engage, ageism is likely to flourish.



“Aging is an extraordinary process where you become the person you always should have been.”

- David Bowie

Where Anger, Anxiety and Ageism Intersect with the Pandemic

Executive Director of the Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging, given December 10, 2020.

Intersection of Ageism and the Pandemic

So knowing that all people — young and old, black or white, male or female — experience similar emotions as they navigate COVID-19, how does ageism relate to the pandemic and the perception of older adults?

Whenever older people (aged 65 years or older) are mentioned in relation to COVID-19, it is nearly always as a risk group. The frequent portrayal of older people as vulnerable during the pandemic is, at the very least, an abridged version of the truth. Older chronological age is indeed a risk factor for COVID infection, disease severity, and mortality. However, older people are not just a homogenous group of defenseless people in need of protection.

The question is not how old we feel but instead, how we feel about “old” or about just not being young anymore.

During the pandemic some countries went so far as to mandate curfews for older adults while allowing younger cohorts a higher level of independence. Age limits applied to policies such as retirement age for example, do not recognize the range of capacities of the older person—and assume that all older persons are the same. This deeply entrenched institutionalized ageism may be used to discriminate against older adults when allocating health resources

or when collecting data that influence health policies. What would the early days of the pandemic look like if we had asked the 79-year-old Dr. Anthony Fauci to step down due to an ageist and stereotypical ideal about retirement age?

Let’s remember what Todd Nelson said about aging, “Ageism is the only prejudice that we commit against our own future selves.” Along with race and gender, people commonly use age to categorize—and form stereotypes about—others. Of the three categories, age is the only one in which the members of the in-group (the young) will eventually join the out-group (the old). Although ageism is found cross-culturally, it is especially prevalent in the United States, where most people regard growing older with depression, fear, and anxiety.

Ageism is a reality in western societies and current views of older people are too often tinged with false beliefs and prejudices. Public authorities often consider older adults to be a burden rather than an integral segment of the population with a subset of members who must be supported. The media has a considerable role in the propagation of ageist stereotypes and negative attitudes towards older adults, particularly in times of crisis when age is not a relevant factor. The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the exclusion of and prejudice against older adults. The current crisis highlights a disturbing public discourse about ageing that questions the value of older adults’ lives and disregards their valuable contributions to society.

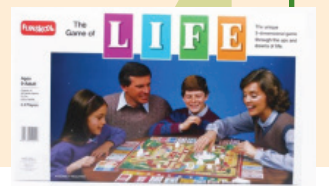
**Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.**

- Dylan Thomas

Can We Change Ageist Thinking?

Social Scientist Ashton Applewhite says, “In our society, there is this endless drumbeat of youth. We need to challenge the underlying message that age decreases your value.” Medicine is improving, and life expectancy is increasing. Technology is allowing older adults to stay more independent and engaged. The potential period to be productive after retirement (maybe a second or even a third career?) has been extended a good 20 years or more. Meanwhile, baby boomers are aging and demanding different (better) ways of “doing” old. As there is more intergenerational interaction—whether in formal or informal programs, cohousing, or other intentional communities—children, parents, and others will better realize the contributions of elders. At the same time, older people will gain a greater sense of purpose and self.

The game of life was created in 1860. The original game board starts at infancy and the goal is to work your way around the board until you reach “happy old age”. In 1860, happy old age was 50! Today, the language has changed so you win by reaching the “retire in style” square and there is no age associated!



To view this presentation, *Where Anger, Anxiety and Ageism Intersect with the Pandemic*, in its entirety, watch the video of the **At Home In Darien Annual Meeting**. <https://athomeindarien.org/special-events/> or visit find it on our website under the tab “events” and then use the dropdown menu to go to the “special events” page.



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



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

Half-Price Taxi Voucher Program



Telephone referral, advice and
counsel.



Communication and Programs —
Out & About newsletter.

Monthly calendar of events.

Monthly blog.

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.



We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to **The St. Thomas More Youth Group of Darien, The Church of Latter Day Saints Youth Darien Ward, The Neighborly Missions group from the Darien United Methodist Church**, students in the **Community Fund of Darien's Thriving Youth Task Force**, the **Hopper, Pastore, Stupak, Wheeler, Ventker**, and **Vicente** families, and **Anders Hansen, Delaney Nollman** and **Alex Vogt**, for spending over 300 combined hours raking, bagging and hauling numerous piles of leaves from the homes of 18 Darien seniors.



At Home In Darien Board Members Monica Billeter and Robin Woods prepare to deliver gift bags to residents of The Royle.

This fall we welcomed residents to **The Royle at Darien**, an independent living housing complex that accommodates adults 55 years of age and older. **At Home In Darien** partnered with **"Neighborly Missions" of the Darien United Methodist Church** to prepare gift bags for each household. The gift bags included information on services available to Darien seniors, hand sanitizer and facemasks to keep residents safe during the pandemic, activity books, intergenerational greetings from the Church's preschool students, and other fun and useful items.



Thanks for your Support!

At Home In Darien is supported by hundreds of people. Are you one of our generous donors? We depend on your charitable contributions to serve Darien's senior citizens. We are a private, tax-exempt, non-profit 501(c) 3 organization.

Please send your gift today to:

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

THANK YOU!

Please remember **At Home In Darien**
in your will or trust!



We also partnered again with **"Neighborly Missions" of the Darien United Methodist Church** and with **Ox Ridge Girl Scouts, Daisy Troop 50470 and Brownie Troop 50214**, to spread holiday cheer to senior citizens living in Darien. The groups created gift bags that included holiday ornaments made by the Girl Scouts, holiday cards from the Church's preschool students, activity books, hand sanitizer and facemasks to keep seniors safe during the pandemic, and other holiday gifts.