

Dear Friends,

The summer months have proven to be anything but quiet for **At Home In Darien**—and we wouldn't have it any other way! In our spring issue we wrote that we were "Poised for Growth" and our prediction couldn't have been more on target. From January through the end of July this year, rides given to Darien seniors for medical appointments, shopping, and social activities have nearly doubled vs. the same time period last year. We fully expect this demand to continue, and feel blessed to be able to offer valuable services in a community that is so supportive of senior needs.

In this issue of **Out & About** we are highlighting Darien's Human Services department, led by Director Ali Ramsteck. Ali and her amazing team continually advocate for all residents, but prove particularly valuable helping seniors navigate a variety of challenges. We are fortunate to work closely with Ali and her team and are proud to share some insights regarding their efforts.

As we head into fall, we look forward to a few events including our third Sip 'n Shop with J. McLaughlin's Darien store, on Thursday, September 28th. This is an important event as fifteen percent of all purchases made that day are donated to **At Home In Darien**. We will also be co-sponsoring a 2-part educational program with the Senior Programs at Mather Center dealing with chronic brain illness. The first part, **Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia**, will be held on

Wednesday October 11th, with the second part **Managing Money: A Caregiver's Guide to Finances** being held on Wednesday October 18th. And finally, we will hold our annual fall luncheon in conjunction with the DCA on Thursday, October 26th (at the DCA). This event remains free to all Darien seniors and will include lunch and a talk by our special guest, author Jennifer Sukalo, who will discuss her book **"Claim Your Swagger"** and how seniors can pivot when confronted with life changing events.

The continued kindness and generosity of Darien residents that sustains our organization remains greatly appreciated. We are here to help Darien seniors. Please give us a call at (203) 655-2227.

All the best,



William Carney
Co-President of the
Board of Directors
At Home In Darien

W. Carney



Peter Sosnow
Co-President of the
Board of Directors
At Home In Darien

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Chris Jones
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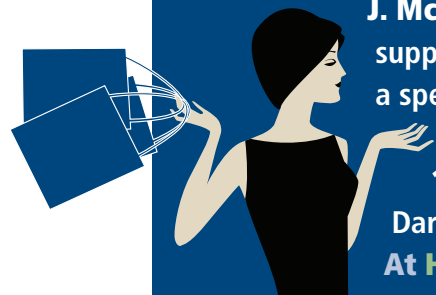
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Sip & Shop to Benefit Darien Seniors



J. McLaughlin is once again supporting Darien seniors through a special shopping event. On **Thursday, September 28th**, **15% of all purchases** made at the Darien store will go directly towards **At Home In Darien** and the services provided for its members. If purchasing merchandise from the store before September 28th, simply mention at check-out that you are shopping to support **At Home In Darien**.

our mission:

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



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.

2023 Board of Directors

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Darien Human Services — Q&A with Director Ali Ramsteck, LCSW

Darien remains a unique and special town for a variety of reasons. In addition to boasting one of the top school systems in the country the town continues to offer a depth of social, cultural, and historical resources for its residents. Darien also maintains a special focus on supporting all citizens through a range of special programs, events, and organizations. One of the noteworthy organizations that continues to distinguish Darien is the town’s Department of Human Services. Led by Director Ali Ramsteck and located in the town hall, this group works tirelessly to advocate on behalf of all residents. This is particularly true with their ongoing efforts on behalf of Darien seniors. At Home In Darien partners with Ali and the Department of Human Services in different ways, and caught up with Ali to get her thoughts on some of the critical work done by her and her team:



Darien Human Services Team, L to R: Amy Warnock, Michelle Varrone, Ali Ramsteck, Cynthia Hall, Alison Keena

AHID: *We are fortunate to work closely with you and your team and are able to see first-hand how you provide such critical support for Darien seniors. Could you highlight a few of the key services that you provide?*

Ali: Our goal with seniors is to keep them safe and thriving while living as long as possible within the community. We have a variety of programs that we manage such as the Energy Assistance Program, which provides financial assistance for qualifying seniors for home heating expenses. We also provide home goods to eligible Darien families on a monthly basis which includes things like paper goods, cleaning supplies, and personal hygiene supplies. Another popular program is the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, where eligible seniors receive vouchers for use at local farmers markets.

AHID: *Tell us about the Loan Closet.*

Ali: This is popular, not only for seniors but for other residents and we have seen an uptick in requests. People in the community donate medical equipment to us such as wheelchairs, transport chairs, walkers, crutches, and canes among other things, and we make these available to any Darien resident for free. People borrow things for a week or even longer for themselves or if a parent or grandparent is visiting from out of town, and we see new people donate or borrow every week.

AHID: *The Energy Assistance and Emergency Contact List are also important services. How do these programs work?*

Ali: High energy costs have impacted everyone, particularly seniors. With the Energy Assistance program, we are able to identify and potentially access different state and federal programs for eligible Darien residents and their families. The Emergency Contact List includes over 100 seniors and individuals with disabilities, and we make personal calls to everyone on this list to connect with them prior to a storm. If there are power outages we will contact them during the storm to make sure they are OK.

AHID: *Can you tell us about some of the other partners or organizations that you work with to support seniors?*

Ali: We work with a variety of local nonprofit agencies to provide support to seniors. One of the important groups is Protective

Services for the elderly through the state Department of Social Services, and we work with them in a few different ways. For example, we go on calls with them in-town if there are particular concerns with the health or safety of an individual. They are a great resource that helps seniors who are at a high risk or in dangerous situations.

AHID: *Where do you see some of the greatest needs with seniors?*

Ali: Seniors have been hit hard financially and often need a lot of special care and handholding, especially ones without family or ones who don’t have any local family who can provide ongoing help and support. The cost of living has increased for everyone and this is particularly difficult for anyone on a fixed income. They are feeling it. Being able to help with groceries, or with energy bills, or with other daily concerns is so important. We may not always be able to help financially but we can help provide some direction and can help connect them to various available state programs.

AHID: *What do you like most about your job?*

Ali: Sometimes people are just so overwhelmed. Helping them do something like decipher a medical bill can make a big difference for someone. Things that might seem minor to us or to other people can be so important to seniors. Our clients are all so appreciative and find it really comforting to know that we are helping. I feel like every day is rewarding and I actually look forward to coming into work!

AHID: *We’ve seen how much you care about your work, but you’re not alone. Tell us about your team.*

Ali: I am proud to say we have a fabulous team of compassionate individuals providing services to Darien residents. I began working here as a part time case manager in 2012 and was eventually promoted to Director in 2017. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. My team members include:

- Cynthia Hall, Assistant Director, LMSW**, who joined the department in 2017. She is a Licensed Masters Social Worker.

Michelle Varrone, Office Administrator, who we share with the Health Department, began working for the town in 2011 and transferred to Human Services/Health Departments in 2018.

Alison Keena, Program Assistant, who joined the department in 2021 during the height of COVID, when we were assisting scheduling residents aged 65 and over for vaccines with the Health Department.

Amy Warnock, Program Assistant, is the most recent member of the team, who just began working with us in September 2023.

It should be noted that in addition to the Loan Closet, Energy Assistance Program and Emergency Contact List referenced above, the Human Services Department provides an extensive list of other services and support for eligible Darien residents. Examples include a Renter’s Rebate Program for Darien seniors and individuals with disabilities, Back to School Program where school children receive gift cards for school supplies, Thanksgiving Program and Holiday Adopt a Senior/Adopt a Family Program that provide residents with food baskets or gift cards to local grocery stores or that match families with anonymous donors who provide holiday gifts. These are only a few of the ways that the Human Services group actively supports the community. For additional information and details regarding the Department of Human Services and the valuable services they provide, please call (203) 656-7328 or visit <https://www.darienct.gov/> and go to the Human Services link.

Rockin' Sock Hop with the Elderly Brothers



The Elderly Brothers entertaining guests with one of many great hits from the past

At Home In Darien and Darien Senior Programs co-sponsored a 1950's and 1960's themed event, held at the Mather Center in May, titled Rockin' Sock Hop with the Elderly Brothers. The event featured a special 1950's diner-themed lunch prepared by Chef Judi and served by At Home In Darien's Board of Directors. There was plenty of dancing and laughter and guests are already looking forward to next years' event!

At Home In Darien Fall Luncheon

Darien Seniors: Join At Home In Darien for Lunch at the DCA!

Tired of feeling stuck, or that your best years are behind you? Are you ready to take your life to the next level?

At Home In Darien is happy to announce that our annual luncheon will be held on **Thursday, October 26th**. The event, co-sponsored by the DCA,

will feature guest speaker **Jennifer Mrozek Sukalo**, the award-winning author of **"Claim Your SWAGGER"**. Ms. Sukalo knows exactly what it takes to thrive regardless of what life throws at you, and will show you that it's time to stop surviving and start thriving. Ms. Sukalo will help you tap into and use what you already have to move from rock bottom up to living your best life!

Make yourself a priority and take your first step!

Register today and join us on this journey. The lunch is open to all Darien seniors free-of-charge and reservations are required as space is limited. **Sign-in begins at 11:00 a.m. Call today and secure your spot — (203) 655-2227.**



Dealing with Cognitive Issues



At Home In Darien and the Senior Programs at the Mather Center are partnering on a 2-part program focused on thought processing illnesses such as Alzheimer's and Dementia. The programs are free and will provide important information for anyone dealing with family members or friends faced with cognitive issues. The program schedule:

October 11th 4:00pm – 5:30pm - Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia — Carolyn DeRocco, VP of Programs and Education; Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter

October 18th 4:00pm – 5:30pm — Managing Money: A Caregivers Guide to Finances and Community Resources — Katie Reagan, SWCAA Community Services Director

Refreshments will be provided before and during the presentations. Please call At Home In Darien at (203) 655-2227 or Senior Programs at (203) 656-7490 to register.



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2 Renshaw Road
Darien, CT 06820

Stay Active and Engaged

Your free At Home In Darien membership card makes it very easy to get out and take advantage of discounts at local restaurants, shops, and services in town. Whether it's an afternoon shopping, or a meal out, bring your membership card with you to receive special promotions. Check out our website to see a complete list of participating businesses or call us at **203.655.2227**.

If you are 60 or over and have not received your free membership card, please contact us to receive it.



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; Friday 9 a.m. to 1 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.

Thank You!

At Home In Darien remains extremely grateful to all of our donors, and is proud to be supported by some great local businesses. We met recently with our partners *First County Bank* and the *Rotary Club of Darien* to thank them for their recent donations and for their ongoing support of our organization and the work we do on behalf of Darien seniors.



Left to Right: Willard Miley, First County Bank President and Chief Operating Officer, M.S. Koly, previous **At Home In Darien** Board Member, Aitza Cabrera, AVP, Branch Manager First County Bank, William Carney, Co-President **At Home In Darien**, and Chris Jones, Executive Director **At Home In Darien**



Jeremy Ginsberg, President of the Rotary Club of Darien, with Chris Jones, Executive Director of **At Home In Darien**



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!

TAXI ANYONE?

At Home In Darien transportation services are safe and trustworthy, but are available only on weekdays. Our Half-Price Taxi Voucher Program allows you to arrange transportation for yourself on-demand, around the clock, 365 days a year! Taxi rides are 50% off the regular price for Darien seniors 60+ and residents with disabilities. For example, a booklet of taxi vouchers worth \$25 is available for purchase for only \$12.50. Simply pay the taxi driver with your vouchers.

More than 75 Darien residents currently take advantage of this program!

To purchase vouchers, residents must bring proof of age or disability. Please call **At Home In Darien** at **203.655.2227**, or stop by the office at 2 Renshaw Road, for more information.

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

Stay connected this fall and make sure you know what's being offered 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.

