

IN THIS ISSUE

NAH President Bliss Steps Down	1
NAH Fifth Annual Meeting	1
Letter from our Executive Director	2
Member Spotlight	3
Volunteer Spotlight	3
Newton North's Tiger Loft Lunch	4
Meet NAH's New Program Coordinator	5
Colonial Craftsmen	5

NAH President Bliss Steps Down



Tamara Bliss has stepped down as President of Newton at Home. When she first took office in late 2008, NAH consisted of only 60 volunteers forming 8 committees. When she left office in October 2015, NAH had 190 members, over 100 trained volunteers, and a staff of 5. Those

who know her are not surprised. She brought a wealth of experience to NAH: community organizing, knowl-

edge of the city of Newton and its politics, and leaders in the senior services community.

Her leadership style was straight forward: enlist dedicated talented people, encourage them to do their thing, keep your eye on the prize, and pay attention to details. Renata Selig, a founding Director of NAH, says, "Tamara devoted herself completely to the new organization. She spent endless hours and extraordinary energy to make NAH a reality." New co-President Stephen Logowitz calls her "irrepressible."

Co-President Deborah Weiss notes that in addition to her extensive community organizing experience and leadership skills, she became a relentless fundraiser.

NAH Director Maureen Grannan cites as an illustration of Tamara's tenacity, "She was impossible to say 'no' to when she made a request for assistance for a project near and dear to her heart. Her commitment to the success and development of Newton at Home was palpable to all of those around her." Although she has stepped down as President, Tamara says she intends to continue her relentless fundraising for Newton at Home.



Photo from NAH 2015 Annual Meeting by Rich Snider. From left: Brenda Roberts, Gerry Hartman, Lou Hartman and Hanni Myers.

NEWTON AT HOME HOLDS FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING

By Dorothy Anger

Newton at Home held its fifth annual meeting at The Scandinavian Living Center's Nordic Hall on October 4, 2015. More than 80 members and friends gathered for updates on Newton at Home's progress during the past fiscal year and reviewed the organization's 2015

Annual Report. Newton at Home Vice President Dave Chosiad chaired the meeting that highlighted NAH's many community collaborations.

Following Treasurer Bob Larner's report on NAH's financial position, Dave announced the appointments of NAH's new co-presidents Deborah Jackson

(Continued on page 6)

OFFICERS

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Deborah Jackson Weiss

Vice-President

Dave Chosiad

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Partnerships and Volunteers*
Julie Plaut Mahoney

Member Services Coordinators
Barbara Butterworth
Hannah Goldberg

Program Coordinator
Aileen Murphy

Editor: John Adkins
Designer: Garrow Throop

Newton at Home has been organized to enable Newton residents to age at home comfortably, independently, and with peace of mind through a membership-based organization that offers access to comprehensive practical services and fosters social support and a sense of community.

For more information call
617-795-2560 or go to
<http://newtonathome.org>

Letter from our Executive Director

Greetings,

Welcome back to *Connections!* We are so pleased to once again be publishing under the new leadership of editor John Adkins who, in addition to his Board of Directors responsibilities, has agreed to take on this very important work.

Much has been happening here at Newton at Home since our last *Connections* issue, but today I want to focus on a very significant turning point for the organization.

As many of you know, our reputation within the Newton community has grown enormously in recent years, and I am very pleased to say that we have become a significant player in the senior affairs of our city. So much so, that, in his state of the city address on February 1 2016, Newton's Mayor Setti Warren said, "Newton at Home has been a fantastic resource for Newton's seniors." In addition, he has invited us to be members of his Economic Growth for all Coalition chaired by Newton's Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Deborah Youngblood.

The Coalition includes hand-picked leaders of various Newton businesses and nonprofits as well as academic and health care organizations. These stakeholders are exploring ways that the city and various agencies can work together in areas of housing, transportation and education/workforce development to produce better results for



the citizens of Newton.

Julie Plaut Mahoney and I are pleased to be members of this Coalition representing Newton at Home and focusing on issues concerning Newton seniors. In the months ahead we look forward to keeping you informed of our progress as we start planning for the future of Newton's growing older adult population.

NAH is now nearly 200 members strong and growing every day. With your interest and support we will continue to meet the needs of Newton's senior residents and make a lasting contribution to the future of our city in 2016 and beyond.

All best wishes to you and yours for a healthy and happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Maureen Grannan
Executive Director

Member Spotlight

Elsa and Stanley Robbins



Stanley Robbins takes pride in being independent. He fills the room with his command presence. Blind for several years from severe glaucoma, he entered

the living room with gusto, worked his way to the couch, and did not slow down for the next hour. “Now, Elsa, this young man is here to interview us. I’ll answer the questions - try not to interrupt!” Elsa nods, “I’ll answer the questions he asks me,” she replies. Fifteen minutes later I asked my first question.

Elsa and Stanley have been married 59 years. Both were born and bred in Boston. Carrying on his family tradition of working in the garment industry, Stanley spent 30 years in the sweat shirt business, the last 9 years as sales representative throughout New England for Basset Walker, then the largest sweatshirt manufacturer in the United States. Elsa did his paperwork and kept records. They raised two sons, one a salesman in T.V. systems, the other Executive Director of Engineering for Novartis Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge. Rollo, a Shih Tzu, has been with them 4 years.

They joined NAH 2 ½ years ago to get help with the driving. (Ironically, Stanley was a driving instructor for Garber’s Auto and Driving School in Brookline for several years.) “Without NAH, I would be lost,” says Elsa. “I get freed up to do things.” They both praise the NAH volunteers and staff for their friendliness and willingness to help out with any problem that comes up, often going way beyond what they had signed up to do.

When a cabinet door fell off, a handyman volunteer immediately came by and spent the afternoon fixing the cabinet. They use the Winter Buddy System; someone always returns their calls immediately. Stanley is driven to the gym twice a week; the drivers wait for him to take him home after his workout. Once they had an appointment at Beth Israel Hospital. The weather was terrible. They told the driver they would get a cab home because they did not know how long they would be. The driver told them to call him on his cell phone and went to the museum while he waited for them.

(Continued on page 4)

Volunteer Spotlight

Jane and Stephen Baier



Jane and Stephen Baier are multi-talented volunteers. They met in graduate school, married in 1969, and have an adult daughter who is a public health re-

searcher in Providence. Both started out as academics; Jane taught French literature at Wellesley College for 10 years, and Stephen taught African history at Boston University.

Stephen switched careers to information technology in 1981. After working for a start-up and some small companies, he settled in at Fidelity Investments for 20 years, helping keep their operations up-to-date with the evolving technology. He kept telling Jane how interesting I.T. was, so she also switched to it.

The Baiers are also bibliophiles, operating a Little Free Library on their front lawn. Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization that supports the worldwide movement to offer free books housed in small containers, usually located on the front lawn, to members of the local community. The containers are also referred to as community book exchanges, neighborhood book exchanges, book trading posts, pop-up libraries, and micro-libraries, and have been likened to human bird feeders. People can remove or add books as they wish. Although they live on a dead-end street, the library is well used. General reading and children’s books are popular. Jane finds books she likes to read; Stephen’s tastes run more to specialized history and physics, not hot items at the LFL.

Jane has been retired for about 10 years, Steve for 1 ½ years. When NAH Board member David Chosiad - also a techie - suggested they look into NAH, they both signed up as volunteers. Stephen is a member of a crew of I.T. volunteers supporting NAH operations with sophisticated user-friendly technology. He also volunteers as a handyman, doing everything from replacing lights bulbs, to helping with computers and peripherals, giving computer tutorials, and making and installing handrails.

(Continued on page 6)

Newton North High School's Tiger's Loft Bistro Senior Lunch



NNHS student serving some of the 60 guests at Senior Lunch last December. From left, Charles Dauwalter, Iolanda Low and Liz Simons. Photo by Aileen Murphy

One of the best kept secrets of the Newton restaurant scene is the Tiger's Loft Bistro at Newton North High School, open Tuesday through Friday for lunch when school is in session. Students in Culinary Arts, one of the school's eight Career/Technical Education programs, learn the whole restaurant business by running one. In addition to taking standard education courses, they work each day at the Bistro, planning the menus, dealing with vendors to buy supplies, pricing each item, preparing the meals in a fully equipped commercial kitchen, serving the meals to about 125 customers each day in a spacious restaurant with two walls of floor-to-ceiling windows, cleaning up, and doing the paperwork. They are certified by the American Culinary Foundation and the ServSAFE food safety program. Ninety percent go on to post-secondary schools. Johnson & Wales, Culinary Institute of America, Cornell, and U. Mass. are popular for those pursuing culinary or hospitality programs, but many pursue traditional academic disciplines and cook as an avocation.

Lisa McKinney, herself a 1981 NNHS Culinary Arts graduate, heads the program, assisted by culinary teacher Heather Irber and teaching assistant Lisa Marzilli. The three of them see themselves as coaches, with the students doing the work. Diane Robbins, Director of Career/Technical Education, emphasizes the real-life application of the programs. "In addition to learning everything about how to cook and

run a restaurant, they learn the soft skills: teamwork, customer service, supervising, and communicating. These are skills they will use whatever they do." When NAH proposed a partnership to bring NAH members to senior lunches at the Bistro, they enthusiastically agreed, setting a flat \$5.00 fee for lunches that would command many times that amount elsewhere. "We're not doing this to make money," says Lisa. "We want to give back to the community and we want people to see what a great facility and program their tax dollars are supporting."

The Senior Lunch has expanded to include people from the Newton Senior Center and the Newton Parks and Recreation Over 55 Club. Sixty people attend each lunch. Four lunches were scheduled for the 2015-2016 school year, in October, December, February and April. Parking is available in the Lowell Street parking lot, with a free shuttle service to take passengers to the Bistro.

NAH member Phyllis Beneke, whose three granddaughters were in the Culinary Arts program, attended her first Tiger's Loft Senior Lunch in December. The diners were served a delicious meal with individual fresh green salads, homemade rolls and cheese flatbread, cream of broccoli soup, a choice of beef tenderloin or stuffed jumbo shrimp, vegetables, iced tea and lemonade, coffee, a cannoli filling dessert, and a bag of homemade cookies to take home. Entertainment was provided by the NNHS Jubilee Singers. Phyllis said her granddaughters loved the program and she loved her meal. It's a great place to take a friend for lunch or to meet other NAH members.

Member Spotlight

(Continued from page 3)

Last winter, they had extensive damage from ice dams and had to replace the living room carpeting. When a volunteer driver came by and saw Elsa surrounded by the mess and everything that had to be reshelfed or put away, she spent an hour helping Elsa clean up.

They enthusiastically recommend NAH to their friends. "It's good to know you're not alone, that you have a real support system."

Meet NAH Program Coordinator Aileen Murphy



Aileen Murphy became NAH's Program Coordinator last October. Growing up in Minnesota, she played the piano and clarinet and developed a love of art, theater, and good meals. After earning a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Marketing and Speech Communication, she joined Lotus Development Corporation and later, IBM, working with Fortune 500 companies in sales and marketing strategies world-wide. She also did stints with Oldies 103 Radio and various start-up companies.

In 2002 she took a break to care for her first child, Myles, which extended for 13 years and two more children, Joseph and Sophia, living in Jamaica Plain and moving to Newton in 2007. In Jamaica Plain, she formed a Moms Group, taking the children to a museum every month. When she re-entered the workforce last year, she wanted to work with a non-profit with ties to the community, doing work that would allow her to pursue her interests in cultural events. After a brief stint as Marketing Manager for the Newton Cultural Alliance, she came to NAH.

As NAH's Program Coordinator, Aileen is fashioning her own job description as a work-in-progress. She has immersed herself in NAH activities, meeting as many members and volunteers as she can, asking them what they want to do and how NAH can help them do it. "A big part of my job is to figure out how to remove obstacles so people can pursue their interests," she says, citing the example of her 86 year-old mother who lives alone. "I've been impressed by the variety of people at NAH, their positive outlook, their individual stories, and their sense of community. Many of the members I have met are also volunteers. NAH really is an organization of neighbors helping each other."

Aileen is looking for new activities to supplement those already in place. For example, she and Carole Noveck have started Sharing-a-Supper, small-group pot-luck dinners from 5:00 to 7:30 at someone's home (transportation provided), which they hope will become a monthly event.

Aileen would very much like to hear from anyone with ideas for activities at NAH. She can be reached at programcoord@newtonathome.org or 617 795 2560.

Colonial Craftsmen

Newton at Home maintains a list of trusted vendors who offer discounts to our members. This Spotlight is on Colonial Craftsmen, www.colonial-craftsmen.com, which does roofing and carpentry, copper and metalwork, cedar siding, masonry and brickwork, specializing in slate and copper work. The principal and owner is Joe Cooper.

Growing up in Lowell, Joe spent a lot of time at the Boys' Club. One summer he attended an Upward Bound program at the Groton School, which resulted in a scholarship to Groton for high school. He loves being outside, and after graduating from Groton some 30 years ago, he started Colonial Craftsmen. He has been assisted from the beginning by an old friend, and, more recently, by his son, Joe Jr., who is also a fireman in Lowell.

Joe is proud to have two Nobel Peace Prize laureates among his customers. He has been doing work for NAH members for three years, finds them to be very friendly, and enjoys working for them. He views his work as a personal bond between himself and his customers. "When I sell a job, I do the work." He wants his work to go as smoothly as possible, and to feel good when he leaves a job. "I don't want to have to go back to a job a second time I want to get it right the first time.... I do as much as I can for whatever I get on the job." He tells his crew, "People can't see what we're doing on the roof, but they know what the yard looks like when we leave." Sometimes he gets called for something that turns out to be very minor, in which case he'll try to fix it on the spot; he travels in a fully equipped van the size of a UPS truck.

Last winter was a busy time; one day he had 160 calls. Not only were the ice dams bad, the snow often blocked access. One time, he had to carry his ladders through the house in order to get to the roof. The cold was so severe that the ice dams often reformed in a matter of days. Joe emphasizes that it is important to clear the roof of all the snow in order to prevent this as much as possible. He strongly discourages steaming ice dams. "That's just adding water to water."

Volunteer Spotlight

(Continued from page 3)

In addition, the two have teamed up to help people in transition make and implement the myriad of decisions required in downsizing or moving. They have helped in sorting out a vast home library (bookcases from floor to ceiling), finding users for a wide array of medical equipment, getting it delivered, moving an artist's studio; and arranging to move heavy machinery. In the process, they have become experts on Craig's List, curb-side pick-up, users of medical equipment, second-hand markets, and the Rumford Avenue dump.

Jane and Stephen enjoy the variety of issues presented to them, but principally they enjoy meeting the NAH members and volunteers. "It makes you feel good... You achieve small accomplishments that make a difference to people.... You feel like you are part of the community."

Colonial Craftsmen

(Continued from page 5)

While he believes in being proactive to head off problems, Joe says it's too late for roof work this winter. If you haven't done any preventative maintenance work after having ice dam problems last winter, the best thing to do is to arrange for someone to clean your roof after an appreciable snow fall, especially if the forecast is for freezing weather. Get the snow off the roof as quickly as possible. Treat it the same way as arranging ahead of time to have your driveway plowed.

NEWTON AT HOME HOLDS FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING

(Continued from page 1)

Weiss and Stephen Logowitz who later addressed the group. He introduced Anna Lemieux, the new secretary, and two new additions to the Board, Paul Davis and Emily Meyer. Dave also paid tribute to the tremendous efforts of three outgoing Newton at Home Board members: Tamara Bliss, Board president since NAH's inception, and Liz Simons and Verne Vance who just completed their terms of service.

NAH Executive Director Maureen Grannan then introduced guest speaker Dr. Dori Zaleznik, Newton's Chief Administrative Officer, working in the mayor's office. Dr. Zaleznik provided an overview of a recent Brookings Institute study that focused on current Newton demographic and economic benchmarks and, based on current trends, their implications for the future. She stated that the city would be using this data to work on an array of social and economic concerns including planning for more affordable housing and greater access to public transportation. (See "A Message our Executive Director" on page 2 for more information on NAH involvement with the city on these issues.)

Following her remarks, NAH Coordinator of Community Partnerships and Volunteers Julie Plaut Mahoney highlighted some of the community partnerships Newton at Home enjoys, Particularly those with Whole Foods Market, who donated 5% of their one-day sales to NAH during their 5% Day fundraising event; Newton-Wellesley Hospital; The Scandinavian Living Center; and Newton North High School.



For more information call 617-795-2560 or email info@newtonathome.org or visit www.newtonathome.org