

THE SAVVY SENIOR

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GREENWICH COMMISSION ON AGING
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From the
Commission

By Betty Hauptman, Chairman

One of the major concerns that many seniors have is that at some point in their lives, they will begin to lose the ability to maintain their independence. Some believe that leaving home and entering long term care in a nursing home is an inevitable part of aging.

The good news is that most physicians, social workers, health care planners, service providers and politicians agree that keeping seniors at home is preferable to institutionalization. In pursuit of this belief, they are working to provide the alternatives that make remaining at home a greater possibility than ever before.

Seniors experiencing problems with maintaining their independence often delay seeking assistance that could help them remain at home. Whatever the reason...unfamiliarity with seeking community services, lack of information about the services available or resistance to asking for help, the result can be an increased threat to a senior's independence.

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Home Care Services

Independence is Important

By Mary Bausch and Mary Ellen LeBien
Co-Chairs, United Way Senior Task Force

CALL US
at 625-6577 (local)
or 1-866-309-1966 (toll free).

That is the message from **Greenwich Senior Services**, an outreach project of the **United Way of Greenwich** in cooperation with the **Commission on Aging** and **Community Answers**. The local and toll-free numbers are intended for the swinging savvy senior who wants to be informed for planning purposes; other seniors, homebound or looking for social connections and services; family caregivers; and professionals who serve seniors and their families.

Greenwich is blessed with a wealth of senior services that include the Senior Center, tax counseling for the elderly, transportation services, a wide variety of services at Greenwich Hospital's Center for Healthy Aging, and access to Town flu shot clinics. The Greenwich Library's bookmobile serves many seniors and offers books in large print. Greenwich Adult Day Care provides individualized programs of daytime healthcare and social activities.

The Library's Health Information Center has many books, periodicals, and databases that one may search in privacy or with the assistance of a reference librarian who can help a person research a particular disease or treatment. Clinical services such as geriatric assessments, geriatric psychiatry, pharmacology consultation, and home safety evaluations are available at the Greenwich Hospital's Center for Healthy Aging.

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From the Commission...

Fortunately, Greenwich has a broad range of services that can assist a senior to continue to live at home. In addition, we also have experienced, sensitive health and social service options to choose from for the help needed.

In this issue of The Savvy Senior you will find information about all levels of in-home nursing and supportive services and where to go for help in making decisions about which services to choose.

The Commission is Interested in hearing from you about subjects you would like to know more about for future issues of The Savvy Senior. Please complete and return the coupon on the back page. We'll do our best to provide the information.

For free information about

**Greenwich
Senior
Services**

CALL US

625-6577

1-866-309-1966

(TOLL FREE)

A service of Community Answers

Independence is Important...

Mary Bausch, co-chair of the United Way's Senior Task Force, notes "We wanted to provide answers to the question we heard repeated again and again: What does the out-of-town family caregiver do when he or she receives a call that mom or dad has fallen, is in the hospital for surgery, and will be homebound for an indefinite period when discharged?" Mary Ellen LeBien, co-chair, said "We determined to set up a toll-free information service. That's how **CALL US** at **1-866-309-1966** began. We wanted out-of-town relatives to be able to learn about services like Meals-on-Wheels, Friendly Connections, and the Jewish Family Services' program 'Supermarketing for Seniors.' "

United Way of Greenwich board chairman Linda Porter added "The United Way's **Assessment of Human Services 2002** and its companion, "**The State of Greenwich: A Statistical Portrait of the Community**, illustrated very clearly the growing number of seniors in Greenwich and the fact that of the senior population, those eighty-five and older were the fastest growing segment. Supporting programs for seniors became one of United Way's priorities." Notes Sam Deibler, Director of the Commission on Aging, "Meeting the needs of this growing population is a priority for all of us. Fortunately, Greenwich has a multitude of services for seniors. The United Way has provided a valuable service through its outreach program to make these services known to seniors and caregivers."

Community Answers was the logical choice to host the new outreach effort. Its volunteers are available every day to take calls, and after five o'clock or on weekends, when the office is closed, calls "bounce" to the Greenwich Library reference desk. Depending upon the question, the caller is given information about one or many of the services described in the sixty-two page **Directory of Services for Senior Adults** published by the Commission on Aging. Separate lines and phones were installed for the CALL US numbers. Notes Patty Cassidy Burke, Executive Director of Community Answers and a member of the task force, "Our volunteers have been trained and are looking forward to this new outreach program. We also want seniors and caregivers to know that a comprehensive list of senior services is also available by accessing our website (www.communityanswers.org) and going to the Senior Services link."

Brochures are available at **United Way**, 1 Lafayette Court (869-2221), **Community Answers** at Greenwich Library (622-7979), the **Commission on Aging** at the **Senior Center** (622-3992), and at all local **libraries**, and will be available at the **Senior Health Fair** at the Old Greenwich Civic Center on **October 19th**.

What should the savvy senior do? Inform yourself of Greenwich's many senior services. Send the CALL US numbers to your family in case services are ever needed for you. Tell your doctor, dentist, pharmacist, podiatrist, hairdresser, and barber about the CALL US numbers. Look for the Greenwich Senior Services brochures that United Way is distributing. **And CALL US at 625-6577 (local) or 1-866-309-1966 (toll free).**

Home Nursing Services

By Nan Wachen, RNC, MSN

Staff Education, Greenwich Hospital Home Care

Changes in our healthcare system have resulted in increasing numbers of patients and families managing patient care situations in the home. Caring for an individual at home often requires the professional skilled services of a **Registered Nurse (RN)** or **Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)** who provide a level of care support that cannot be performed effectively by nonprofessional personnel. These services may include education in management of disease treatment and prevention, wound care, medication management or assessment and evaluation of changes in patient condition. The nurse provides oversight and supervision of the care plan which is especially important when there are multiple caregivers and services involved.

Professional nursing service in the home may be provided by various types of **home care organizations** including private duty agencies and home health agencies. Medicare certified agencies are surveyed and certified by a state agency as complying with federal standards for provision of patient care and case management. Because of strict regulatory requirements nursing services provided by Medicare certified agencies are highly supervised.

Medicare, Medicaid and many private insurers pay for home nursing services. **Payment** depends on whether the care is medically necessary, under the care of an MD and meets individual coverage criteria. In many situations the home care agency will bill the payer source directly. Often if nursing services are provided by a private registry, the patient may have to pay the provider directly and then file for reimbursement from the insurer later.

Referrals for home nursing services can be made from various sources including patients, families, agencies, physicians, hospitals, or skilled nursing facilities. Generally during an inpatient facility stay, a **discharge plan** is being developed soon after admission to the facility. The discharge planner will interview the patient and family to determine the patient care needs after discharge.



Upon **discharge**, once a referral has been made to the agency, a nurse visits the patient in the home and develops, with the patient and family, a care plan and identifies patient and caregiver goals. During the early stage of the home care nursing plan there is self care instruction for patient and caregiver. As the patient and caregivers acquire skill and confidence, they may begin to perform this care themselves, reinforced and guided by the home care nurse. The nurse, patient and caregivers work together as a team to meet patient needs and reach the goals of successful self-management in the home.

When choosing a provider of home care nursing services, you may want to inquire if the organization is **licensed** by the state and what are the procedures for **billing and payment**. You should be assured that the patient and family are included in development of the care plan are kept informed of changes in the plan. It is important to know how **home emergencies** are handled 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

Health care provided in the home is now an essential component of the successful continuum of nursing services available. Professional nursing care in the home is based on standards of practice developed by professionals with licenses, certifications and often very specific qualifications. Caring for an individual in the home can be complex but certainly successful with the help and support of professional nursing services.

How to Get the Help You Need

By Carol Cherry, MSW

Human Services Supervisor, Greenwich Department of Social Services

You may be one of many seniors who think about what types of help for personal, financial or medical concerns are available to you at home. Sometimes it's difficult to figure out if you need help and we all know that it's hard to obtain help when you don't know what you need!

There are excellent no-cost information and referral services that service senior citizens in Greenwich. Community Answers' **Greenwich Senior Services** line (625-6577) and **Infoline (211)** are two services available over the phone. You can also call or stop in to the **Greenwich Department of Social Services (622-3800)** in Town Hall. The Social Services Department also has an office at the **Senior Center**. An additional resource is the **Commission on Aging Directory of Senior Services**, a written guide to services for seniors in Greenwich. It is available through the Commission and the Department of Social Services. These are all good places to start gathering information about the array of benefits and services

When you contact any agency that appears to have a service you think could be helpful to you **ask** about their services for older citizens. The agency will tell you if they provide the services you want. If they don't, ask if they know of other agencies that do. Request a brochure that includes information about their fees. **Fees** are often an important aspect in determining which agency you may decide to use. Some agencies do not charge or charge nominal rates for their services. There are agencies that base their fees on the ability of the individual to pay as well as those who charge a higher flat rate.



Should you want a focus and direction to the thoughts and concerns you have about yourself, your limitations, or your future, consider having an **assessment** performed by a qualified professional with experience in working with the elderly. An assessment occurs when you or a family member arrange for a visit with a professional for the purpose of understanding and evaluating you and your unique situation. Assessments can be done during a home visit where you can be observed interacting with your daily environment. Ask a family member to be present for at least some portion of the assessment. Another pair of eyes and ears is so helpful with important matters and may also reduce the discomfort or tension around the visit.

You and your doctor may decide that you should have a geriatric evaluation at Greenwich Hospital's **Center for Healthy Aging**. Take a family member with you, if at all possible. Important events in your life deserve the time and attention of a family member who cares and has concern for your welfare. The center will provide a thorough examination by a team of medical experts. A written report is developed and shared with your personal or clinic physician. If you want to receive it too, just tell the staff you want to have a copy.

Seniors in Greenwich will find that there are numerous experts and agencies that can assist in finding out what type of help is available and guiding you through the maze of programs and services. These experts are known by different names and work in various settings. Mostly they are Social Workers or Case Managers.

Licensed Social Workers and Case Managers are trained to provide a professional assessment in the home. Only those who have received Social Work training at accredited schools should refer to themselves as Social Workers. Other qualified professionals are **Gerontologists, Counselors, Care Managers and Geriatric Case Management**. Agencies and individuals should be more than willing to share information about their credentials and experience with you when you ask. If you can afford to hire a private care manager you will find that it is money well spent. Whatever professional you choose, make sure that the person has experience with the elderly population. Like Social Workers, a Geriatric Care Manager should be licensed and a member of the **Association of Geriatric Care Managers**.

After the assessment the Social Worker or Care Manager will discuss the findings of the assessment with you. Availability of resources that could meet your needs, potential costs, and financial guidelines are also discussed. There will be no pressure for you to do anything as a result of the assessment. Sometimes it's good to let all of the information settle and give you a chance to discuss it further with your family member or by calling the care manager at a later time. If you want to begin a service, that's fine. Just know that you are free to decide not to do anything different in your life or circumstances even with your new knowledge.



Now it's time to take a step back. I haven't said anything about the person who doesn't want to make a call to anyone- perhaps still trying to figure out what is needed or not sure if you want to take the next step. For those individuals I have a suggestion to help you get started. It is a **personal assessment**. You can start with paper and pencil.

On one side of the paper list all the things you **like** to do or are **able to do**. On the other side of the paper write those things that you have **difficulty doing** or wish you had someone to **help**.

Focus on these areas in your personal assessment:

- ◆ personal care and bathing,
- ◆ dressing,
- ◆ toileting,
- ◆ walking and climbing stairs,
- ◆ household management tasks like vacuuming, shopping, cooking, managing finances, paying bills;
- ◆ medical and psychological concerns of managing medications,
- ◆ recreational pursuits such as playing cards, reading, or going to the Senior Center,
- ◆ Interested as well as unavailable family members.

Since you are the only person who will see this, be really honest with yourself and realize that nothing is too small or too outlandish to put down. This personal assessment can be very useful in helping you determine the types of help to suit you.

Whether you never enjoyed making a list, are greatly aware of your needs, or would just like to prepare for the future, reward yourself with the gift of information that Town resources have for you just for the asking. You'll feel better for it.

Greenwich has a variety of services available to help senior adults and their caregivers.

- ◆ Health/Social Services
- ◆ Mental Health Services
- ◆ Financial Help
- ◆ Employment Assistance
- ◆ Legal Services
- ◆ Food Assistance
- ◆ Home Care
- ◆ Chore Services
- ◆ Long Term Care
- ◆ Heat & Utilities Help
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Adult Day Care
- ◆ Socialization & Recreation
- ◆ Support Groups
- ◆ Counseling
- ◆ Hospice Care
- ◆ Caregiver Respite
- ◆ Nutrition Services

For free information & referral

CALL US at

625-6577 (local)

1-866-309-1966

(toll free)

Or visit

www.communityanswers.org

There are many state and federal programs that provide funding for senior adults. These programs include:

- ◆ Social Security
- ◆ Supplementary Security Income
- ◆ Prescription Drug Programs
- ◆ Energy Assistance
- ◆ Medicaid
- ◆ Medicare
- ◆ Veterans Benefits

It is important to find out about financial assistance programs for which an older individual may be eligible.

You can check your eligibility online through the:

Southwestern Connecticut Agency
on Aging
at

www.SWCAA.org

Click on ***benefitscheckup***

This listing is compiled by:

Greenwich Senior Services

an outreach project sponsored by

The United Way of Greenwich

in cooperation with

The Commission on Aging

&

Community Answers

Know Your Neighbor

by Ron Klingner



Walter Kirkman smiles when he hears people say, “I don’t have anything to do now that I’m retired.” Walt doesn’t have that problem—he’s busier than he ever was!

Walt and his wife, Andy, a former Greenwich schoolteacher, have been residents of Greenwich for 44 years. He received his BA from Columbia and his MBA from Harvard and enjoyed an active business life in the financial marketing consulting area, holding positions at Ernst and Young and as Director of Marketing at Chase Bank.

Walter always enjoyed the outdoors as his hobbies of hunting and fishing will attest. So it seems only natural that his love of freshwater fly fishing led to his joining the Board of **Trout Unlimited**, Mianus Chapter—which includes all the freshwater fishing areas from Greenwich to Wilton, and saltwater fishing in Long Island Sound.

Trout Unlimited is an environment-friendly organization dedicated to protect riparian rights, access to waters, river maintenance, stream-flow-controlling oxygenation, waterfalls, rapids, eddies, reducing erosion, protecting river banks and eliminating dams. All this is accomplished through membership dues, fund raisers, local and State Government, the U.S. Forest Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. All members practice the “catch and release” fishing method. Trout Unlimited is trying to keep streams clean, productive and environmentally sound.

In addition, Walter works with the Greenwich State Fish Hatcheries to obtain trout eggs, working closely with Greenwich and Wilton High School students as the eggs develop into inch-long “fry” then four- to five-inch “smolts.” These are released into local rivers to maintain a healthy, active trout presence. This is one of those “win/win/win” situations—the students and faculty see the eggs develop into fry and smolts, and then enthusiastically release them into rivers, Trout Unlimited benefits because they have introduced students to environmental and biological development, and the rivers and streams benefit by the addition of more healthy spawning fish.

Walter also enjoys Trout Unlimited’s involvement with the Special Olympics, where all the kids who come out to fish get a fishing pole, a special T-shirt, have the fun of fishing, win a prize, have a picnic, and have a ball. There is no way to measure the rewards of this experience for all concerned.

Mr. Kirkman feels he is contributing to the community and doing something useful with his time. “It is great to see something grow through your efforts and, although there is always too much to do,

Whether it’s good food, good friends or good fun, you can find it all at

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I would like to see information about: _____

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Greenwich, CT 06830

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10:00 AM – 2:00 P M

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