

Engage at Every Age...with Minuteman Senior Services



By Kelly Magee Wright

The month of May marks "Older Americans Month", when the US Administration for Community Living (ACL) recognizes the contributions of persons aged 65 and older, both past and present. This year's theme, Engage at Every Age, encourages participation in activities that foster physical, mental, and emotional health. According to ACL's just-released 2017 Profile of Older Americans, one in seven Americans are 65 or older, and just two years from now, this fast-growing segment of the population will number more than 56 million people. Research suggests that seniors who are socially engaged are healthier, mentally and physically. Engagement is a core value at Minuteman Senior Services, both for the individuals and families we serve, as well as for our volunteers and staff.

For over 40 years, Minuteman Senior Services has been committed to helping seniors and people with disabilities live in the setting of their choice by engaging community resources and supporting caregivers in Lexington and 15 other towns north and west of Boston. A non-profit organization, we are designated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as an Aging Service Access Point and Area Agency on Aging to administer programs that support the health and well-being of older adults and persons with disabilities to successfully "age in place."

What can Minuteman Senior Services do to help?

We specialize in assessing and addressing the non-medical factors (referred to as "social determinants of health"), that impact a person's health, functioning, and overall quality of life. This includes access to resources that address basic needs, such as food and housing; transportation; access to medical care; and social and recreational supports. To support these varying and complex needs, Minuteman offers over 20 programs and services, including Case

Management, Meals on Wheels, Caregiver Support, and Medicare Health Insurance Counseling (SHINE). Given the breadth of services we offer, and our knowledge of other available community supports, we are able to develop a personalized service plan to address each individual's unique needs.

Last year, Lexington residents accounted for nearly 10% of the 30,000 people we serve throughout the area. This includes families like Mary and John. Married for nearly 50 years, they moved to Lexington to raise their three children, who now all reside out-of-state. John is a former teacher; Mary was employed as a Registered Nurse. Seven years ago, John was diagnosed with dementia, and Mary became his caregiver. As his disease has progressed, John's cognition has declined, and he has short-term memory impairments requiring Mary's constant supervision. He has also become increasingly frail, requiring assistance with bathing and at times, getting dressed. Late last year, John was hospitalized for pneumonia for several days. Mary was referred to Minuteman by the hospital social worker, who recognized Mary's increased stress in her role as caregiver and suggested she and John might benefit from additional assistance.

After speaking with an Information and Referral Specialist about eligibility and service options, John and Mary received a visit from a Care Manager. Based on John's needs and their identified goals, their Care Manager helped to arrange for a home care aide to assist Mary with bathing John twice per week, as well as assisting with light household management tasks. John was actively involved in the development of his personalized service plan. Mary, too, was empowered by their Care Manager to explore her needs as a caregiver, and enrolled in our Savvy Caregiver workshop, an educational support group for caregivers of people with dementia. John received



Minuteman Senior Services Executive Director Kelly Magee Wright



Know Us Before You Need Us!

a visit from Minuteman's Registered Dietitian, who helped Mary understand John's nutritional needs given his history of swallowing difficulties and weight loss since his hospitalization. Since receiving services, John has not had any further hospitalizations, which is a significant relief for Mary. This family's story reflects an interactive relationship with Minuteman that was experienced by more than 3000 individuals and families in Lexington, who were supported through our array of services in the past year.

A True Partnership

Our relationship with the Lexington community is a true partnership, and we appreciate the support of both Lexington residents and community agencies. Our collaboration with the Lexington Human Services Department has made it possible to offer easily accessible programming at the Lexington Community Center, including Senior Dining, Meals on Wheels, SHINE health insurance counseling, and evidence-based Healthy Living programs. To support the needs of caregivers, we offer the 6 week Powerful Tools for Caregivers or Savvy Caregiver workshops, and recently began co-facilitating a support group to create a forum for caregivers to receive peer support and coaching.

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Pictured left to right: Minuteman volunteers Judy Schuler and Barbara Mahoney; Gwen Wong who coordinated the blanket making with almost 280 volunteers at the Town of Lexington MLK, Jr. Day of Service; Minuteman Dining Coordinator Despina Maradianos.

Our ability to respond to the growing need in Lexington is further aided by the individuals, businesses and foundations who offer their time, skill, and financial support. We have nearly 100 volunteers helping us meet our mission every day, just in Lexington. Without this level of civic engagement, from individuals across all walks of life, we could not support the number of people we assist each day. These volunteers help serve and deliver meals, assist with bill-paying, lead evidence-based classes, and conduct weekly visits to skilled nursing facilities to support the needs of residents. Lexington residents support the agency's governance by serving on our Board of Directors and Advisory Council. During the Martin Luther King Day of Service this past January, residents participated in a fleece-making activity that resulted in the distribution of lovely lap blankets to many of our Meals on Wheels recipients. For nearly 25 years, Crafty Yankee has hosted The Giving Tree as a way

to collect gift cards for seniors we serve who have experienced financial stress or who are isolated with no family nearby. Our major fundraising event – the Holiday Online Auction – is supported by item donations from a long list of Lexington businesses, and Lexington donors make cash donations in support of our agency every year. And at a time when our State and Federal funding are at risk, and need continues to increase year-over-year, financial support from the Dana Home Foundation has helped us to ensure we do not have wait lists for services for residents of Lexington.

As we reflect on the theme of engagement, we look forward to opportunities to further enhance our relationship as a true community partner to promote a healthier community for residents. We invite you to contact us should you or someone you know need our services, or if you are interested in learning more about ways in which you can contribute to carrying out our mission.

Hours are 9-5 Monday through Friday | Phone: (781) 272-7177
 Email: elderinfo@minutemansenior.org
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 Hayden Lower Field

PARTY with friends!
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