



Pictures by Ivy Ashe

ANN WALLACE SERVES WOODSIDE VILLAGE COMMUNITY DINNER.



HANK SJOSTROM AND MARY HAIGAZIAN ENJOY.

Housing and a Whole Lot More: Elderly Venture Proves Success

By WENDY ARNELL BROPHY

For 30 years it has been the Island's best-kept secret.

And today Island Elderly Housing (IEH) also remains one of the Island's best success stories, thanks in part to the original founders, Margaret Love, Marguerite Bergstrom and Carol Lashnits, who had a strong and far-sighted vision of what was needed for not only the elder citizens of the Vineyard, but for its disabled population as well.

They understood people wanted to continue living near their friends and family, to continue contributing to their community, just as they had done for all the years past. For 30 years the subsequent boards of IEH quietly built 12 projects containing 18 buildings that provide 165 housing units. Each independent living space is approximately 650 square feet.

A multigenerational and diverse group, many of the people who live in Island Elderly Housing today are the same people who have shaped the Island through the years.

Thanks to funding from the federal Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD), Island Elderly Housing has never had to fundraise for bricks and mortar — but times are changing.

"HUD is changing its funding for building new projects," said IEH executive director Ann Wallace in a recent interview. "Our last one [building project] was completed in 2006 — this change in funding is very important to watch as there is always a need for more housing

assistance," she said. Currently there are some 50 people on the waiting list for elderly housing on the Island, and about 70 on the waiting list for housing the disabled.

Many elderly people on the Island face a potentially difficult situation as they become less able to care for a large house or have diminished financial circumstances. Where do these people go? They are not ill — they can take care of themselves — plus they are social and active in the community. Many choose to move into elderly housing, an option that allows them to stay on the Island near family and friends.

Currently there are four different sites: Hillside Village and the Margaret C. Love House in Vineyard Haven, and Woodside Village and Aidylberg Village in Oak Bluffs.

Rent is based on individual annual income (which must be under \$28,650). Thirty per cent of a person's annual income goes toward rent, which includes heat and electricity, snow removal and building maintenance. Residents must pay for their own landline telephone, in case of emergencies, and cable service.

Two programs that are not funded by HUD but rely on continued donations for support are also the critical human component of life at IEH: a once-weekly community meal program and the Blueberry Van service that operates four times a week.

Every week residents of the two Oak Bluffs and two Vineyard Haven



LUCY COSTA IS JOINED BY HER GRANDSON, CURTIS FISHER.



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residencies come together at the largest community room, in Woodside Village, for an evening meal, camaraderie and sharing.

The most recent evening was on June 25; at that meal Ms. Wallace collected some feedback from the residents for this story.

"I met a lot of new friends, we have conversations and I learn new things. You come out from your apartment and mix with others. You hear the sadness and the joyful things. It is about participation. The dinners make us feel together," said Rosemary Brown, a two-year resident. "These dinners are

lifesavers. I don't cook, it's a life with friends," said Hank Sjostrom, a three-year resident. "It is nice to be with friends and have a good meal and not have to cook," agreed Lucy Costa, a 16-year resident. "You don't have to eat alone," said Suzanne Walker, a 16-year resident. "There is great community spirit and good food. We all watch out for each other," said B. Jean Silva, a six-year resident.

This past winter Martha's Vineyard Public Charter School students prepared, delivered and served several meals for the residents. Ms. Wallace said it was truly a bright spot in the gray

winter months, where they enjoyed entertainment, sang and even danced.

In the spring Martha's Vineyard Regional High School students come to help tend the gardens. Many of the people who live at Woodside Village help out too and enjoy watching their mascot cat Buddy chasing butterflies in the garden.

The interaction between teens and seniors often works to the benefit of both. One parent asked if her daughter could visit residents to have the connection with an older generation since she did not have grandparents.

The Blueberry Van takes residents to appointments, grocery shopping and the food bank, or perhaps for a trip into town where they can stroll the main and side streets, peruse shops and restaurants and meet friends. Each elderly housing site also has access to Vineyard Transit Authority buses. The van driven by Kevin McFarland will appear in the Fourth of July parade.

Marguerite Bergstrom died in 2003, about three years after Margaret Love. Carol Lashnits retired a few years ago. The current board consists of John Early, president, Bill Stafursky, Marcia Mulford Cini, Diane Wilson, Marie Allen, Simone DeSorcy, Rick Presbrey, Al Hopp and Eleanore Tompkins.

Community meals and the Blueberry Van need contributions to help keep them going. Meanwhile, Ms. Wallace hopes that HUD will continue to provide funding for bricks and mortar for this housing program that is so vital to the needs of the Island community. Currently the Vineyard has no seniors out in the cold, and many people are working to make sure it stays that way.

Tax-deductible contributions may be sent to Island Elderly Housing Inc., 60B Village Road, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568, or visit their Web site at iehm.org.

Alma West's Day: Read, Ride, Red Sox

What follows is a day in the life of Alma West, a resident at Island Elderly Housing, in her own words.

I get up early — I am a morning person and have a routine. I do most of all my own housework and everything. I cook a little less now, but still make my own meals. I try to walk a mile three days a week, going out to the Edgartown Road and back.

If I take the IEH van [Blueberry Van] in the morning to an appointment, I am always early so I don't keep Kevin waiting. The van is a godsend. I drove my own car until last year. Never had an accident or got a ticket. I really don't miss my car, but sometimes I look out in the parking lot expecting to see it in its space.

In the afternoons, if there isn't a Red Sox game, sometimes I take the VTA bus into town. If I have to wait for a bus

change, I never mind because I get to meet so many interesting people.

Most important — I won't miss a Red Sox game! Many of my neighbors and I watch in the community room here. Some of them have their favorite seats that they always use to watch the game. We have a great time and know the game well. I love my neighbors and friends.

I am starting to read more again, since I have had my eyes done. I love to read. I used to be a librarian. Also I go to the Boston Symphony Fall Series with a group from the Vineyard.

On Thursdays, I go to the community dinner to be with my friends. And on nice summer evenings some of us sit outside on the porch. We also like to watch our neighbors' cats sneak through all the flower gardens.

Two things have always helped me: feeling forever young and a good sense of humor.

Business, Ethics Prof. Taylor to Speak at Union Chapel

Richard L. Taylor, professor of business, law and ethics at Suffolk University in Boston, will be speaking at Union Chapel on Sunday, July 4 at 10 a.m. The title of his talk is The Declaration of Independence: A 21st Century Perspective.

He brings to this subject a broad range of public and private sector experiences. He has served as Secretary of Transportation of Massachusetts, and on the board of directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and the Board of Higher Education. He is a former member of the Martha's Vineyard Commission. As an entrepreneur and senior executive in health insurance and real estate, he has managed large organizations.

He has earned degrees from Boston University, Oxford University (Rhodes Scholar), Harvard Law School and Harvard Business School, and honor-

ary degrees from Bridgewater State College and from Wentworth Institute of Technology.

The Taylors have been summer residents of Oak Bluffs for over 30 years.

The interdenominational Union Chapel is at the intersection of Circuit, Kennebec and Narragansett avenues. Organ precludes by Garrett Brown commence at 9:40 a.m. Informal summer attire is acceptable, and there is a new handicap access ramp at the Kennebec avenue entrance.

Mason Fischer

Mason F. Fischer of West Tisbury received a bachelor of science in computer science during the University of Vermont's commencement ceremonies on May 23.

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