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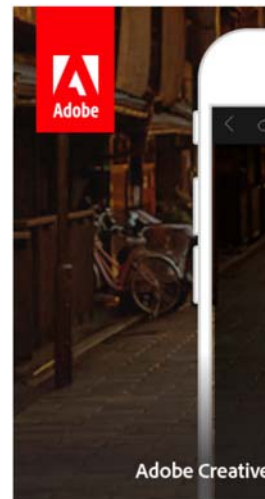
Posted: Friday, January 13, 2017 12:00 pm

The phrase “it takes a village” is generally used in the context of raising children. But a growing movement is applying the same concept at the opposite end of the spectrum — keeping seniors in their homes and involved in the community.

The Village to Village concept, which debuted in Boston in 2002, has grown to encompass 205 groups, with about 150 more in the works. It works to provide the necessary connections — and help — to allow seniors to stay in their homes longer as they age. It also helps keep them involved in the community and active, which studies have shown to be beneficial.



Members pay an annual fee to belong, which allows them access to resources such as rides to appointments and stores, cleaning and routine home services, while also connecting them to other services in the region and providing vetted recommendations for necessary services, such as plumbers, carpenters, snow plowing or assistance with technology. They can even arrange to receive regular check-in calls to make sure they're OK.





For many aging adults, such help can mean the difference between continuing to live at home or having to move into an assisted-care facility. And that's the point.

There's already on such "village" in this area, Monadnock at Home, which serves people in Dublin, Fitzwilliam, Hancock, Harrisville, Jaffrey, Marlborough, New Ipswich, Peterborough, Rindge and Sharon. It started in 2010 with 49 members and two part-time

staffers, backed by N.H. Catholic Charities. Now about six years old, it has 87 memberships covering 118 seniors.

The Cheshire Village at Home program is beginning with aid from the Keene Senior Center — in fact, its \$400 annual fee includes a Senior Center membership. When it launches — the goal now is June 1 — the village will need to have enough members to make it financially viable, even given its low-maintenance structure.

Organizers say they have an algorithm for how many memberships are needed to get started and stay afloat. But those numbers will fluctuate, as they have for Monadnock at Home. Chances are, additional contributions will be needed to keep things going. That will require a dedicated development effort in a region where many other worthy programs are also seeking aid.

The hope is for the program to cover as many as 16 area communities. The effort now underway is to raise awareness and support in all those towns, because while a central phone number and staff will provide the skeleton of the organization, its muscle — including its heart — will be volunteers in each community.

At a meeting in Westmoreland this week, about 15 people expressed interest, liking the concept, but having questions about how it will function. They also had suggestions for garnering support, financial and otherwise. If the same reception is repeated throughout the area, the effort may well succeed.

And it should. There are already many programs and organizations in the area aiming to help keep people living autonomously as they age. It's more cost-effective for the senior and the community. And remaining connected and active in the community has been proven to keep people sharper and healthier longer.

As insurance policies go, it seems a good bet.

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