

Coastal Neighbors Network schedules information sessions

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DARTMOUTH — The Coastal Neighbors Network (CNN) is scheduled to be out in the community, starting Friday, to tell those 50 and older what it can offer them and how others can volunteer to help.

“It’s dedicated to helping people stay in their homes, stay safe and stay in the community,” said Kate Fentress, CNN’s founder.

CNN is a non-profit organization based in Dartmouth and is part of a nationwide network of over 200 “virtual villages.” It has a mission to help members 50 and older stay at home and stay connected through services by volunteers and approved vendors.

“We’re recruiting both volunteers and members,” Fentress said.

CNN board members are set to be at the Padanaram Farmer’s Market on July 21 from 1 to 6 p.m.; at Padanaram Day on July 29 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and are also holding an informational meeting at Smith Mills Congregational Church at 11 Anderson Way on July 27 at 7 p.m.

According to Fentress, the launch of the organization started this summer with about 20 members who’ve helped to test out software to schedule volunteer services. She said the organization plans to have an official opening in the fall and welcome more members.

The network offers three different memberships starting at \$350 annually for a “social membership” for a household.

“Transportation is one of the main services that we’re going to offer,” Fentress said.

After CNN made a survey available to Dartmouth residents last summer and got responses from 220 people, transportation and household tasks were among the needs identified.

Members have access to transportation for appointments, help at the grocery store, small maintenance jobs done in the home by willing volunteers, home visits, company on walks and can be connected to vendors.

“We want to connect our members to all of the resources that exist in our community,” which could be for a health need, social opportunity, learning possibility or cultural activity, Fentress said.

“We have an aging population,” she said, adding most people don’t want to leave their homes and some people can’t afford assisted living.

The CNN board is currently made up of nine people and most of them live in Dartmouth, Fentress said. Executive Director Andrew Pollock, a Dartmouth resident and Dartmouth High School graduate, began work last month with the organization and is set to be at the upcoming events, along with other board members with information about joining and volunteering.

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