



# QUARTERLY

Volume Thirteen

Winter, 2011

Number One

## “Villages” help the elderly stay at home

According to research done by the AARP, more than 89 percent of people want to stay in their homes as they grow old.

Because boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1964, are now — this year — beginning to hit age 65, experts are saying that traditional “nursing homes” will not be able to keep pace with demand, and that, even so, many Boomers do not want to spend their final years in such a facility.

One new approach that is catching fire is the so-called “village” movement, the creation of neighborhoods in which people live in their own homes and volunteers in the “neighborhood” help them with some basic services.

Seniors who live in these neighborhoods pay a membership fee that could be \$25 or it could be \$600 or more a year — depending on the range of services a person requires. For example, one lady who lives in Washington, D.C., gets around okay, but she needs help with such basic things as opening jars and reaching things and doing minor repairs. No problem. She lives in the Capitol Hill Village, so all she needs to do is make a call to the village office, and they send over someone who will open the jar, bring her

groceries or take her to the post office.

More than 50 of these “neighbors-helping-neighbors” kinds of villages have sprung up across the United States including California, Colorado and Massachusetts. It’s a strategy that’s not only appealing to seniors but to bureaucrats who understand that, while the percentage of the graying population will increase from 13 percent today to 19 percent in 2050, the people paying for all of this, i.e., adults aged

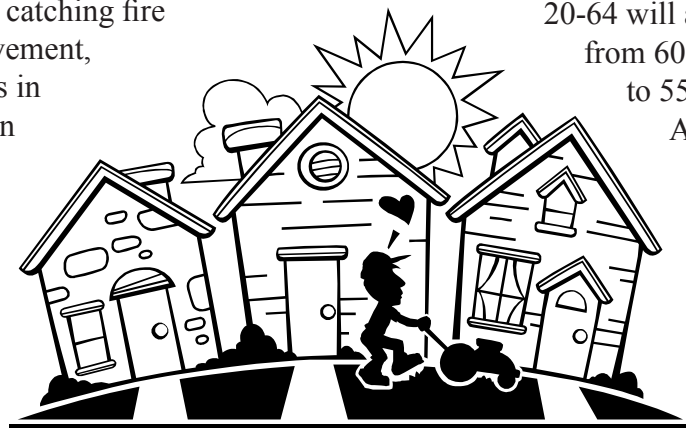
20-64 will at the same time decrease from 60 percent of the population to 55 percent. The number of

Americans aged 65 or over is expected to be 89 million in 2050.

The village concept is welcomed not only by the seniors who live in these villages, but also by their children. For them, the reward is peace of mind. And some children, who face the nagging guilt of putting their parents in a

“nursing home,” opt for this approach and love it.

Is it the answer? One AARP official said “No,” it is not the answer because, for the challenge of providing long-term care for the nation’s elderly, there is no ONE answer. But it is one answer in a string of answers.



### Help a Neighbor

In any case, the program appeals to Ed and Margaret Missiaen. According to *USA Today*, they are both retired and in their late 60s, and also live in Washington, D.C., in the Capitol Hill Village and work there as volunteers. Margaret has cleaned gardens and Ed has fixed windows, among other things. But they know that someday they may not be able to provide services for others, and they are hoping that when that day comes, others will then be able to help them.

### How can the church assist with this model?

Churches which have a homebound ministry no doubt already perform many of the functions of the village movement. Some churches schedule spring and fall cleaning days. An assessment is made of the needs

of those who are still living in their homes, assignments are given and then on one or two weekends in the spring or fall teams go out to these homes to fix fences, clean gutters, paint, wash windows and so on.

Perhaps this approach could be

strengthened by establishing a system of volunteers who could provide services with a quicker response time. The elderly may have an immediate crisis and need help. As your present ministry is constituted, could that person call a number and get help? Perhaps a weekly call could be made to inquire what help or service could be rendered for the following week, so that a schedule could be created and assignments made.

Clearly, whatever the church can do to extend the time the elderly can stay in their homes is a service welcomed by all. Ed Missiaen says, "We like our neighborhood, and we want to be able to stay here as long as we can."

That's no doubt true of many of us.

**Source:** "Villages' let elderly grow old at home," *USA Today*, July 26, 2010, 3A.



## Are you considering a nursing home for your loved one? Look at this checklist before making a decision.

### BASIC INFORMATION

- ✓The nursing home is Medicare-certified.
- ✓The nursing home is Medicaid-certified.
- ✓The nursing home has the level of care you need (e.g., skilled, custodial), and a bed is available.
- ✓The nursing home has special services if needed in a separate unit (e.g., dementia, ventilator or rehabilitation), and a bed is available.
- ✓The nursing home is located close enough for friends and family to visit.

### NURSING HOME LIVING SPACES

- ✓The nursing home is free from overwhelming unpleasant odors.
- ✓The nursing home appears clean and well kept.
- ✓The temperature in the nursing home is comfortable for residents.
- ✓The nursing home has good lighting.
- ✓Noise levels in the dining room and other common areas are comfortable.
- ✓Smoking isn't allowed or may be restricted to certain areas of the nursing home.
- ✓Furnishings are sturdy, yet comfortable and attractive.

### STAFF

- ✓The relationship between the staff and the residents appears to be warm, polite and respectful.
- ✓All staff wear name tags.
- ✓Staff knock on the door before entering a resident's room and refer to residents by name.
- ✓The nursing home offers a training and continuing education program for all staff.
- ✓The nursing home does background checks on all staff.
- ✓The guide on your tour knows the residents by name and is recognized by them.

For the full checklist and more information, visit Nursing Home Compare at [www.medicare.gov/NHCompare](http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare).

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