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## Senior Living

## Volunteering Gives Seniors a Sense of Fulfillment

Shepherd Center network provides opportunities for seniors to help seniors.

By Donna Manz
The Connection

athy Tugendhat chairs the Adventures in Learning organizing committee at Shepherd's Center of Oakton-Vienna (SCOV). She teaches conversational ESL at Patrick Henry Library, one-on-one. On Wednesdays in the summer months, Tugendhat tells stories and leads songs for youngsters on the grounds of the Little Library. She sings with the Vienna Choral Society because she loves it. "It keeps me young," said Tugendhat.

She's also 80 years old.

"I like people," said Tugendhat, who taught at a bilingual school in Venezuela for 35 years before returning to the U.S. and Vienna in 1998, joining the Vienna Choral Society that same year. She came to Vienna because her son and her grandchildren live here. She's been active ever since.

"I can't imagine not being busy," Tugendhat said, manning the Vienna Choral Society booth at ViVa! Vienna! on Memorial Day.

On the airwaves and in print, you hear that 60 is the new 40.

The problem with that analogy is that most 40-year-olds do not have the breadth of experiences the 60-year-old does. Nor does the 60-year-old have the breadth of experiences an 80-year-old has. It isn't that you get smarter as you get older. It's that you have had a longer history of experiences.

Many seniors are aware of the wealth of knowledge they bring to the table. They share their experiences — work and life — with family and with others, younger and older, as well. They are friends in-need, and help when help is necessary.

## **ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE SHEPHERD'S CENTER** build on a lifetime of experiences and skills.

"[Retired] people have more time to give, and they have experience caring for aging parents or relatives," said Barry Wickersham of Fairfax City. Wickersham, who did intelligence work for the Department of Defense and the CIA for 38 years, serves as vice-chair of the Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke (SCBF). He's been doing volunteer work for SCBF for more than 6 years now.

"Volunteering gives you a sense of accomplishment, a sense of contributing," Wickersham said. "And you get to experience gratitude from those you are serving. Volunteering is an efficient use of your time."

Wickersham said he has two primary





Barry Wickersham of Fairfax City serves as vice-chair of the Board of Directors of Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke. He turned a 38-year career in intelligence work into a volunteer commitment.

motivations for his work with SCBF, one altruistic, the other more selfish. The first, Wickersham said, is to provide services and assistance to seniors. The second motivation is more personal. "Some day, I may need these services for myself."

Some SCOV volunteers, such as Casey Tarr of McLean, say they have volunteered throughout their lives in some manner. Tarr uses her background in nursing in her role of SCOV's volunteer health advocate. She gives talks to seniors in the community, mostly to church groups, and women's and

civic clubs. She provides practical tips and tools on how to get better health care and how to reduce the chances of medical errors in their health care. She schedules health and wellness classes for the Shepherd's Center Adventures in Learning curriculum. What she tries to do, she said, is to improve a person's quality of life.

"I try to give back to the community," said Tarr. "I feel really good and worthy doing this. I don't need an award; I do it for the response."

The Shepherd's Center empowers seniors to give back to the community as volunteers and use their knowledge and skills, Tarr

If there is a common thread among the seniors who do volunteer work, it is the sense of fulfillment and reward they get from their contributions to the well-being of other seniors.

"Volunteer service provides us with a sense of value to the community," said Jean Bastien of Oakton, who retired as a Department of the Navy systems analyst.

Bastien translates her skills to tasks at SCOV. For 13 years, Bastien has been a Jack-of-all-trades in the SCOV office, maintaining computerized mailing lists, creating fliers and posters. "That's what I like best about SCOV," Bastien said. "They match your volunteer opportunities to your talents."

Bastien said she volunteers because it makes her feel good to help others, and it's also a social outlet.

"Age is just a number," said Bastien. "No matter how old you are, you can always help the community."

THE FAITH-BASED Shepherd's Center

Casey Tarr, Kathy Tugendhat and Jean Bastien, volunteers at the Shepherd Center of Oakton-Vienna, man the SCOV tent at ViVa! Vienna! over Memorial Day weekend.

nationwide network of more than 50 senior resource centers offers learning experiences taught by seniors for seniors, social luncheons anchored by a prominent speaker, caregiver retreats, and most significantly, the opportunity for seniors to lend a hand to seniors not as mobile or independent, from handyman services to a drive to doctors' appointments. Its motto is its mission: living a life that matters.

SCOV says its primary purpose is to "provide ser-

vices to assist older adults to continue to live independently in their own homes and to offer programs which supply opportunities for enrichment, learning and socialization"

SCOV vice-chair Bill Kirby, a former career diplomat with the Foreign Service, feels Shepherd's Center fulfills its commitment. "That's what the Shepherd's Center is all about, utilizing the experiences and skills of senior citizens for the good of the community."

Go to www.SCOV.org or call 703-281-0538 to learn more about volunteer opportunities and resources and programs at SCOV. You can also email them at office@scov.org.

To learn more about the services and activities of the Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke, go to www.scfbva.org/ or call 703-323-4788.



## Senior Living

# Rogers' Retirement Dream

### Aging-in-place remodel required a generator, much to relief of their neighbors.

Rogers, a former Navy pilot, had lived in 18 houses all over the world before settling in a circa 1960s ranch in Vienna with his wife and children in the early 1980s. The traditional brick rambler had previously been owned by a local farmer whose family had worked a nearby spread for generations.

structed. Still, as Rogers and his wife, Wanda, settled into their 70s they recognized several aspects of the home that wouldn't be ideal in retirement

"We were looking for long term comfort and security," said Rogers. "That meant the usual wish-list — upgraded kitchen, larger master bedroom suite."

Then, too, the master shower would be a "rollin" design, suitable for a wheelchair if needed.

Doors and hallways would be wider, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act specifications. There would be convenient grab

BY JOHN BYRD bars near the tub.

"But I also insisted on a way to keep our sysed Rogers, 73, recently completed a tems operating in the event of a power failure," senior-friendly makeover to his said Rogers. "We're a bit off the main road and home, with the help of a master have been through long outages. You want to builder to meet his often challenging avoid this kind of thing as you get older."

Complicating matters were several technical

For instance: what was the appropriate size and performance capability of a home generator adequate for powering the substantially enlarged home the Rogers now envisioned?

"The more I looked into it, the more I realized that there are a lot of issues with home genera-The house was conventional, but solidly contors that have to be worked out between the contractor and the gas company," Rogers recalled.

> "I was aware of plans like mine that hadn't worked well for the homeowner. I wanted enough power to keep the house running for days at a time, but the technology is still evolving and relatively few contractors have mastered it."

It was at this juncture that Rogers met David Foster, president of Foster Remodeling Solutions **THE STARTING POINT:** a 2,553 square-foot, in home generator solutions.



Wanda and Ted Rogers in front of their remodeled home.

walking through the house together, I could see for powering everything for days a time without that he understood my vision.'

"His love of building impressed me. As we started ond floor studio and a home generator adequate have become apparent to everyone."

need for refueling

"The call for a generator in a retirement dream home struck a chord with me" said Foster. "We

In Rogers' case, Foster specified a state-of-the-art unit, one powerful enough to run all of his client's electrical needs for about a week without changing

And the timing couldn't have been more perfect. Shortly after the project's completion in spring 2012, the now-infamous derecho in early July blacked-out large sections of Fairfax County for five

memorably hot and humid days.

"We were actually out of town when the power failed," said Rogers. "But when I walked through my front door two days into the outage, my generator was on, the house was cool, and all the electrical systems were working just fine."

The rest of the neighborhood was another story. "My neighbor's basement flooded when his sump pump stopped," said Rogers. "People were dealing with spoiled food, no lights, no phone — and no air conditioning during some of the hottest temperatures

Ever the good neighbor, Rogers organized a relief effort at once, supplying power support where needed, even clearing refrigerator space so nearby friends could preserve their frozen foods.

"We'd invite neighbors to sit in the air conditioning, and watch the news or check their emails. We were like a local community center," he said.

The larger satisfaction to Rogers, though, is that in Lorton, a veteran builder with a track record three-bedroom ranch on two acres, and a conhave a sizable seniors clientele, so I've been his computer, internet and security systems continversation regarding the best options for accom- steadily servicing the growing demand for this ued to perform as usual. "It's a relief to know that "David came highly recommended, but it was modating a master bedroom suite, a spacious type of application — absorbing the learning you're connected to the outside world — especially meeting him that proved decisive," said Rogers. gourmet kitchen, a two-car garage with a sec- curve just as the problems with the power grid in an area-wide emergency. Five days is a long time

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## Happiness and Fulfillment in Golden Years

### Mental health experts share factors that contribute to contentment.

playing Scrabble or a game of other. There isn't a week that goes bridge. A retired nurse who reloby that we don't get together." cated to Virginia from Pennsylvania 11 years ago, Brown makes it her well-preserved mental and a point to walk at least one mile physical fitness to genetics, she each day and takes two Zumba or says her lifestyle and attitude also do things that they have done over ture generations," she said. low-impact aerobics classes each play a role. "You have to keep busy their lifetime that have brought week. She attends services reguand active and you have to persethem joy and strength," said Ioana person has lost their spouse and ers, and says her wide circle of walk without any help." friends and close-knit family are Mental health professionals say

n most evenings, 96- so important to me. We have so change that brings a sense of meanyear-old Dorothy "Dot" much fun together and now we all Brown can be found live within a half-hour of each

her greatest sources of strength. the keys to happiness as one gets **STRONG FAMILIAL RELA-** might not experience it in the way value system and beliefs?" "I moved here to be closer to my older include involvement in social **TIONSHIPS** such as Brown's are a person who is 25 would. We Discovering new outlets for self-seniors extend a sense of their cre-beach," she said. "I know we're

In fact, experts say many of Brown's daily activities are common among seniors who report possible, Boie says that even famout of your routine."

work of friends and regular exer- with family members can bring sue." cise. Lisa Jackson-Cherry, Ph.D., a happiness," said Boie. "That's also professor of psychology and chair sometimes tricky because it can of the department of counseling at bring up unresolved issues in the BY MARILYN CAMPBELL 68 and 71," said Brown, who also Marymount University in Arling-family. Long-lasting tension in the THE CONNECTION has five grandchildren and nine ton, suggests "taking up a new family can lead to sadness in the great-grandchildren. "My family is hobby or seeking out a career sense of premature loss. Try and work out unresolved tensions and issues with family members."

> When frequent and meaningful contact with family members is not While Brown partly attributes contentment with their lives. "Ev- ily memorabilia can offer inspiraerybody is unique, but overall haption. "Create an album of memopiness comes if people continue to ries and insights to share with fu-

Intimacy is also important, "If a

gious groups, maintaining a net- sense of well-being. "Reconnecting sion around talking about this is-

In addition to human social connections, relationships with furry friends can also provide gratification. "Pets can bring a lot of joy," said Boie. "It is a very rewarding relationship. I know people that are connected to a parrot or cat or dog. Animals can be warm, reassuring parts of an elderly person's

FINDING A DEEPER MEANING in life and having a sense of purpose can also affect one's outlook. "Seniors are dealing with multiple issues like their own spirituality and what that might be," said larly at St. Matthews United Meth-vere," she said. "There are days Boie, Ph.D., an assistant professor sex was part of their life, that is a Frederic Bemak, Ed.D, a professor

daughters in Annandale, who are activities or community and reli- another factor in one's overall should alleviate some of the ten- expression can lead to a sense of ative selves that they might not going to have a great time."



Dot Brown, 96, holds two of her great-grandchildren, Harper and Eamon. Mental health experts say that strong familial relationships contribute to one's overall sense of

odist Church in Annandale, volun- when I don't feel like getting out, of counseling at Marymount Uni- big part of who they are and will of counseling and development at accomplishment and satisfaction have had time to do in their teers her time for projects like but I have to push myself. I am glad versity. "Find out what brings you impact happiness," said Boie. "Just George Mason University in as well. "What someone does with younger years." cooking and serving meals for oth- to be 96 years old and still able to joy and happiness and takes you because a person is older doesn't Fairfax. "One might ask: "Who am their own creativity can be rich Meanwhile, Brown is making mean that they don't need to ex- I at this moment?' Have I done and fulfilling," said Bemak who plans for a weeklong summer vaperience intimacy, although they things that are in-line with my own lives in Fairfax Station. "Through cation with her family. "There will

physical activity and creative arts, be 22 of us in one house at the

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## 'Age in Place' to Satisfy Evolving Needs

By Josh Baker Founder, BOWA Builders

our family may be approaching a trantime home ownership. Perhaps the kids have already moved out, or your "nest" is nearly empty as your last child contemplates go-



ing off to college. Or maybe you're craving a living space that is more comfortable and convenient as it becomes more difficult to move around. There are many reasons couples choose to "age in place," or modify their home to meet changing needs rather than purchase a new property.

lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

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### WHERE THE HEART IS

Many people have spent years making memories in their home and have grown to be deeply connected to their neighbors and the property's ideal location. So instead of uprooting and leaving their home's rich history for a new property, couples are seizing the opportunity to transform their beloved home into a space that fits their specific short- and long-term needs.

ing existing space or incorporating a userfriendly residential elevator into the home. In many cases couples opt to add groundlevel space in a way that complements the

# Sometimes this decision involves revamp-

### A 'SUITE' ADDITION

The most common "aging in place" transition involves adding a more accessible second master suite to the first floor. This convenient change allows a couple to go about their day-to-day lifestyle without navigating stairs, yet still have ample space

This type of remodeling project is ideal

upstairs for visiting children and guests.

because it is often unobtrusive, allowing homeowners to remain living in their home during construction with minimal disturbance.

### **DETAILS THAT MATTER**

When making renovation plans, especially for a person using a wheelchair or walker, ensure there is enough space. Wider doorways and hallways, as well as large curb-less showers with grab bars and handheld shower heads are common features even for families without a disabled mem-

Other popular requests with noted value include appliances with lever doors, varied countertop heights, and minimal steps through passageways. Creating a five-foot turning radius can greatly improve maneuverability for someone with limitations, but also feels a bit more spacious for the active

It's a reality that many people will endure some kind of temporary mobility challenge in their life, perhaps from surgery rehabilitation or an accident, so it makes sense to design your home in a practical, universal way to accommodate such unpredictable circumstances. If needed, first-floor laundry facilities and outdoor ramps also add convenience to the new space. With all of these changes, it is important to maintain the current look and feel of your home as much as possible, so consider choosing materials and colors that match the style of the rest of your home.

### **OVERCOMING BARRIERS**

In instances when a small lot or zoning restrictions hamper the ability to add on square footage for a master suite or other area, there are alternative options to help a family stay in their home. There may be seldom-used space on the first floor that can be reconfigured into a cozy master suite with the expert eye of a design-build

Regardless of emotional attachment to the family home, homeowners being involved in the remodeling process allows them to create a space that best mirrors their individual needs to age gracefully and with less stress. Transforming a home to accommodate the later years in life creates a place that is easier to manage without giving up the opportunity to reminisce, or surrendering the cherished role of hosting distant family and friends.





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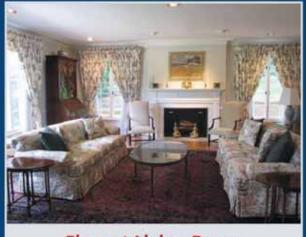


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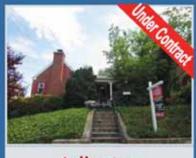
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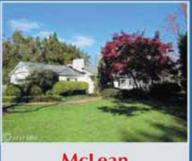
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