


# The Power of Connection

**YEAR IN REVIEW**  
JULY 2021-JUNE 2022



Northampton  
Neighbors





One thing that unites all of us at Northampton Neighbors is that we are all trying to dismantle an oppression that affects anyone who ends up living long enough: ageism. It's been a really fabulous group for me to be a part of. I'm in a position now where I can help other people who are older, more disabled, more infirm, or don't have access to as many resources as I do. As I get older, I will be the one who needs help from others. What I like about Northampton Neighbors is it's an interdependent organization. We work together to help each other out.

—JANE FLEISHMAN

## CONNECTION THROUGH ACTIVISM

# A Message from Rainey Millman

ELLEN AUGARTEN



NORTHAMPTON NEIGHBORS IS CELEBRATING THE MANY wonderful achievements of its first five years. We have grown so much in a short period of time; our membership now exceeds 1,200. Our committees and Interest Groups continue to expand. All this in the midst of an ongoing pandemic limiting our service delivery and social contacts, and the untimely and sad loss of our president, Ken Dym, whose leadership and legacy helped keep the organization strong through it all.

It comes back to connection. NN continues to find new ways to engage not only with our own members, but also with the community at large. This year, we were pleased to introduce Community Forums. Our first featured Northampton's new Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra answering NN members' questions. After a successful experience with the UMass storytelling project, we launched our own monthly Sandwiches and Stories event, bringing people together over shared experiences and lunch. Other popular programs include our new Monthly Insights meetings, which provide information on relevant community resources, and the Pioneer Valley Memory Care Initiative, which adds trained volunteers who socialize and support members and their caregivers living with dementia.

One of NN's main goals continues to be increasing access to programs and people in order to create ease as we age. To this end, our tech team created a program to rejuvenate gently used laptops and give them to older adults who can use them, along with technical assistance if needed. With Ken's guidance and vision, we developed a book to help members consolidate and organize their affairs in case of disease, dementia, or death. Many of you contributed to a fund in Ken's memory, which will be used to publish this book and make it available for free to any members who want it.

So as you can see, in spite of some challenges and losses, there is much to celebrate. We hope you enjoyed our festive birthday party at the annual Look Park picnic, and the exciting inaugural DoozyDo Parade. We look forward to maintaining services and to expanding volunteers and committees as well as Interest Groups and Neighborhood Circles. We're finding new and joyful ways to be together (even on Zoom!) and staying involved in our wonderful community.

Rainey Millman  
President

## Highlights: July 2021– June 2022

### **Education**

*Preparing for the Future: A Practical Guide* was created by and for Northampton Neighbors as a repository of information and organizational resources for aging. With sections on finances, legal matters, healthcare, home maintenance, and more, it offers guidance for consolidating life's many details in one easy-to-access place. The guide is intended as a working document, with a loose-leaf notebook format in which information can easily be updated over time. The publication will be available later this year. It is dedicated to the memory of NN president Ken Dym, who conceived of and led the project even as he faced his own death in April 2022. NN also launched Monthly Insights: News You Can Use, a series to educate and empower members with information on accessing local resources related to aging (home-care services and free medical equipment programs, for example).

### **Partnership**

We continue engaging actively with local organizations to inform members about a wide range of community events and activities, offer a growing array of volunteer opportunities, broaden our social ties, and spread the word about NN. We have joined with All Out Adventures, Forbes Library, Historic Northampton, Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, and the YMCA, among others, sharing information related to classes, outings, book drop-offs, exercise programs, technology, intergenerational connections, and other topics relevant to older adults.

## Connection

Northampton Neighbors partnered with UMass Professor Gloria DiFulvio on a project focused on building relationships between NN members and students enrolled in the upper-level undergraduate class, *The Epidemic of Loneliness: On Connection, Belonging, and Public Health*. Throughout the course, students explored different aspects of connection, including storytelling. NN participants were paired with students for interviews culminating in a StoryCorps-style recording and shared celebration. In addition, we launched a Laptop Program, refurbishing donated laptops and providing them free of charge (along with basic instructions and tech support to get started) to members who need them. We also introduced a monthly Sandwiches and Stories program for members to share their experiences on topics of interest.

## Consistency

With safety top of mind and guided by public health policy, Northampton Neighbors reintroduced in-person services in March 2022. We maintained our community offerings and presence with NN's popular Speaker Series, Neighborhood Circles, and Interest Groups, and continued to publish our bimonthly newsletter and monthly column in the Senior Center's *Conz Street Chronicle*.

## Visibility

Building on the organization's new graphic design that brought additional clarity to our communications, we launched a more user-friendly website in August 2021. In addition, planning continued for NN's inaugural DoozyDo Parade, an intergenerational celebration of community taking place in September 2022. With a wide range of participants including local businesses, nonprofit groups, and individuals, the goal is a fun, feel-good event that will bring attention to the work of NN and to the wonderful community and people we serve.

## Volunteering

At the heart of all we do are those who volunteer in a variety of ways to help our members continue to lead rich, engaged lives. Our most visible volunteers are those who provide direct services such as tech support, small home repairs and chores, a ride to the doctor, or a helping hand with groceries. We believe that connecting those who are able to help with those who need it benefits both, as well as the greater community. Many members note the joy in giving as well as receiving, and participate across the board. In addition, we encourage involvement on committees and helping to plan events such as our Speaker Series and Annual Meeting, as well as leading Neighborhood Circles and Interest Groups. And others may enjoy working with our strategic partners to expand our services. Whatever your interest, skills, and availability, there's a volunteer niche awaiting you at Northampton Neighbors and our community will benefit from your generosity.

For a volunteer application or questions, please contact us at 413-341-0160 or [info@northamptonneighbors.org](mailto:info@northamptonneighbors.org).



## Northampton Neighbors Turns Five!

THE STORY OF HOW NORTHAMPTON NEIGHBORS began has many colorful threads involving dining-room-table discussions, Raging Grannies, book groups, YMCA community meetings, and personal experience with aging parents. Thanks to the vision, leadership, and dedication of the founders, these threads were woven together to create the wonderful fabric of the organization we have come to know and love. As Northampton Neighbors celebrates five years, it's a good time to reflect on our beginnings and rejoice in the many successes we have shared.

Atul Gawande's book *Being Mortal* was the inspiration for Northampton Neighbors—and not just because it focused on the Village-to-Village model (though the book does touch on it). Most importantly, it raised issues and proposed alternatives related to aging and dying, prompting additional local conversations about how members of a community can support one another in the process. A small group led by Leigh Bailey moved from ideas to implementation, and what was first called “Northampton at Home” was born. Leigh's background in corporate communications and board development, including work with AARP, combined with founding member Katharine Baker's expertise as a therapist and organizational consultant, helped get things off the ground. Retired attorney Lewis Popper generously offered to help with paperwork and all things legal. Linda Desmond, director of the Senior Center at the time and an early NN board member, provided Northampton Neighbors with office and meeting space, as well as her perspective as a gerontologist and long-time Northampton resident.

The decision to be fee-free was a bold one that has differentiated NN from most others in the Village-to-Village Network, which charge for membership and services. The hope was that those who can afford to give, will, and that support would take many forms. The desire to keep the organization as financially accessible as possible has served it well, and NN has found alternative funding streams in the form of grants, business support, and generous individual donations large and small.



“If you’ve seen one village, you’ve seen one village,” is the Network adage, and with good reason. Northampton Neighbors, while inspired by other models, is specific to the community we serve. Though the reminiscences of NN’s early days may be varied, they share a common theme: aging adults need and deserve support and connection. Five years (and one pandemic) later, Northampton Neighbors continues to stay true to its founding mission of creating a better quality of life for older people in our city.

Much like the aging process itself, Northampton Neighbors has had to adapt to changing circumstances and has experienced some challenges—specifically, COVID’s effects on service delivery and the untimely death of beloved board president Ken Dym. But with a dedicated community and a shared desire to age differently and with dignity, the organization has survived and thrived.

As we move from this milestone birthday to the next, we look forward to finding new and improved ways to engage our membership, reach new audiences, create and fortify community partnerships, and raise awareness and appreciation about the aging process. Northampton Neighbors is here to ease and enhance that journey.

An early NN leadership gathering. Left to right: Naomi Gerstel, Sara Lennox, Gerard Paquin, Katharine Baker, Rainey Millman, Celia Jeffries, Anne Benedict, Leigh Bailey

## Financials

THIS PAST YEAR, NORTHAMPTON NEIGHBORS SAW a 26% increase from the year before in the amount of donations. We are thankful to local businesses, who more than doubled their support, accounting for 13% of our income. Their names are listed on our website. Please thank them by patronizing them when you can. However, as always, the bulk of donations, at 69%, came from you, our members. We are grateful for the support of all who made this possible. Every dollar—and donor—is meaningful and much appreciated.

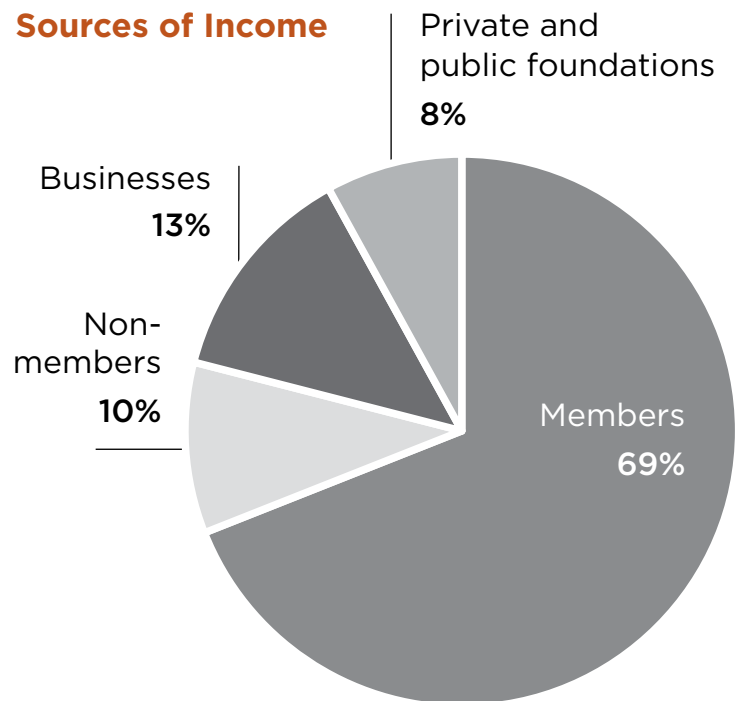
### FY 2022

Revenue:	\$114,887.44
Expenditures:	\$70,604.11
Net:	\$44,283.33

### Become a Sustaining Partner!

Our sustaining partners are individuals and businesses who make monthly or annual pledges that are automatically deducted from their bank accounts. These steady contributions are a wonderful way to support us throughout the year, while also helping NN maintain a stable financial base and plan for the future.

### Sources of Income



**Please Support Your Northampton Neighbors!**

Donate online at [www.northamptonneighbors.org](http://www.northamptonneighbors.org) or send your contribution to Northampton Neighbors, PO Box 231, Northampton MA 01061.





I am very grateful for receiving a refurbished laptop from NN. It has helped me out immensely. Although having one in the community room where I live was nice, having my own laptop in the privacy of my own home opened up avenues that were previously closed to me. Counseling or doctors' appointments are not things you want to do in front of anyone. Having my own computer was also important for doing programs with the UMass Storytelling Project. Also, I can go to church services now. Having ancestry.com, I'm building a family tree, and finding out about my heritage—something I'd always wanted to do. Having a laptop is a good way to re-engage in society; my possibilities are limitless now.

—ELISA DEUTSCHMANN

## **CONNECTION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY**



## **CONNECTION THROUGH OUTDOOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL**

When it comes to connections, one naturally leads to another. Leslie Stein went kayaking with NN community partner All Out Adventures, which offers outdoors activities accessible to all. And when AOA Executive Director Karen Foster was part of NN's speaker series, she said AOA was seeking board members. "Since I had worked in disabilities all my life, this was definitely up my alley," Leslie says. "Both AOA and Northampton Neighbors serve seniors and people with disabilities," says the former special ed teacher and administrator. Karen also sees the organizations' missions as overlapping. "Both build connections," she says. "The activity is what brings people together, but that's not the main purpose. Building friendships, enjoying each other's company, community building—those are a major purpose, and that's very powerful."

— KAREN FOSTER AND LESLIE STEIN

# Partners in the Community

IN ORDER TO GIVE our members the most comprehensive and highest quality offerings, we collaborate and partner with local service agencies and other community non-profits, healthcare and government organizations, and the business community, including:

10,000 Villages  
All Out Adventures  
Alzheimer's Association  
Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary  
City of Northampton  
Cooley Dickinson Health Care  
Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice  
Daily Hampshire Gazette  
Dementia Friends  
Downtown Northampton Association  
Forbes Library  
Friends of Northampton Trails  
Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce  
Hampshire Regional YMCA  
Highland Valley Elder Services  
Historic Northampton  
LifePath  
Northampton Bicycle  
Northampton Health Department  
Northampton Housing Authority  
Northampton Open Media  
Northampton Senior Center  
Paradise Copies  
Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School  
Spoleto

State Street Fruit Store & Cooper's Corner  
Western Mass Emergency Medical Services  
WRSI

## Support

NN IS DEEPLY grateful for the support of our individual and business community donors, grantors, foundations, and the many other organizations and people who have contributed to our mission of enabling seniors to remain independent and engaged as we grow older.

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Mark Karpel  
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Mike Mahar, 2021–2022  
Jennifer Neiman Gottlieb

### Director

Diane Porcella

### Committees

Our dynamic, get-it-done committees, composed of volunteers and board members alike, are at the heart of our operations. If you have time and talent to give to one of the following NN committees, we'd like to hear from you!

Communications  
Community Partnerships  
Development  
Events  
Finance  
Governance  
Neighborhood Circles  
Speaker Series  
Support  
Volunteer

Para una versión Español, por favor contáctanos por email [info@northamptonneighbors.org](mailto:info@northamptonneighbors.org) or teléfono 413-341-0160 y nos alegramos traducirlo.

If you would like to receive a large-print version of this Year in Review, please contact us at [info@northamptonneighbors.org](mailto:info@northamptonneighbors.org) or 413-341-0160.

We've made every effort to accurately reflect each contributor and gratefully acknowledge anonymous donations too. If you find an error in this list, please accept our sincere apology and contact us at 413-341-0160 so we can correct it.

**Heartfelt thanks to everyone who brought their enthusiasm to and worked so hard on making our celebration of Northampton—the 2022 DoozyDo parade—possible.**

### On the Front Cover



Being older with disabilities is not easy for anyone, but being alone and lonely makes life crushing sometimes. I no longer drive, so finding the Northampton Neighbors' transportation service turned my life around. Once or twice a week, I have a ride to medical appointments and other places from the nicest, most courteous and engaging people. I've come to call them my heroes. I love these wonderful drivers and the freedom that comes with this service. I also have a friend from Northampton Neighbors who checks in on me once a week. It's a wonderful way to spend time with someone who has come to know me.

—SHARON MARTULA WITH NN VOLUNTEER DAVID BLISS





## CONNECTION THROUGH SERVICE

For the last 40 years, I've been doing handyman work full time. Now, I'm 76 years old and semi-retired. I can't wrap my head around being fully retired; staying busy is just part of who I am. I like repairing things, and teaching people how to repair things and to take care of their homes. It is rewarding seeing the grateful smile on people's faces when I've fixed something. The feeling of being part of the community is rewarding. We've drifted away from common-sense things over the years. Growing up, all you had to do was ask a neighbor, friend, or relative for help. There would be somebody there. Now, people are so busy that they don't even think about reaching out to see how somebody else is doing and to see how they could offer assistance. It's an old-fashioned thing that's gotten rejuvenated.

—STAN POLLACK

## CONNECTION THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

I've been involved with Northampton Neighbors since it began—giving people rides, fixing doors, opening stuck windows...basically being neighborly. The pleasure you get from helping people far outweighs the time and effort it requires to volunteer. Whether you're making phone calls, visiting people, or fixing windows, you get the same nice feeling. Volunteering for Northampton Neighbors is very rewarding. As we get older, we learn that life is really about people, not things, so the people opportunities with Northampton Neighbors are the frosting on the cake.

—CHARLIE DEROSE

