

“2011 National Village Gathering” Encourages Long, Healthy Life for Age-in-Place Communities

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Next month's 2011 National Village Gathering in Oakland, California will celebrate the past and anticipate a bright future for the rapidly growing village movement. The October 24-26 conference will be a valuable resource to all involved or interested in age-in-place neighborhoods, or *villages*.

A *village* in this sense is neither a residential development, nor a remote hamlet.

It's a voluntary, dues-paying membership organization of seniors who want to stay in their current home, whether a house, condo, or apartment. The shared goal is to live in a community of neighbors helping neighbors to age in place.

Yes, it *does* take a village – to keep older people living safely and securely at home. Unfortunately, a great number of seniors don't have access to the necessary social capital and organizational resources to make it happen. The New York Times summed it up succinctly in the article: “Aging at Home: For a Lucky Few, a Wish Come True.” This February 2006 article highlighted an exciting innovation in senior living – Boston's Beacon Hill Village, then very new.

Within the past five years, this wish has come true for a lucky *eleven thousand*, all members of one of the 60 or more villages which have popped up around the country. What will it take to keep the village movement on track to grow to a hundred thousand or a million village members in the coming decade?

One answer is for existing villages and professionals from many walks of life to share their collective experience and insights for the benefit of all. And the 2011 National Village Gathering is ideal for this kind of interaction. As with last year's event, it will be a valuable forum for presentations, workshops, demonstrations, and fruitful discussion.

The conference is not just for professionals; anyone interested in creating and sustaining a village in their home town can benefit from the experience and wisdom offered at this conference. Here's a brief overview of the conference agenda, whose theme is “Bridging the Gap: From Start-up to Sustainability.”

The Pre-Conference (Monday October 24), is designed primarily for those in the early planning or pre-opening stage of a village, and for villages that are relatively new. The Pre-Conference agenda covers membership; services and program development; and nuts and bolts of running a village. Leaders from open villages will speak and share their experiences in an interactive format.

Concurrent with the Pre-Conference is an all-day track for Club Express, an information system option for villages. Individual sessions include: setting up your website and database; services and service providers; managing member information; finances and reporting.

The Full Conference takes place Tuesday October 25 and Wednesday October 26. Dr. Walter Bortz is the keynote speaker. An energetic octogenarian, marathoner and eminent physician, Dr. Bortz will deliver a challenge with his talk, “Dare to be 100.”

The agenda for the Full Conference is focused on “sustainability,” i.e., keeping the village running smoothly over the long haul. A healthy, enduring organization; continuous flow of revenues; and expense control are vital requirements. Proper attention to sustainability will keep a village robust and capable of serving its members with excellence and without fail.

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The 2011 National Village Gathering is one of the important ways that its organizer, Village to Village Network, brings an energizing spark to new villages and encourages open villages through “best practices” and innovation. The conference will be valuable to anyone who is, or who wants to be, part of an exciting movement to enrich the lives of older people through vibrant age-in-place communities.

For more information or to register, go to the Village to Village Network website: www.vtvnetwork.org

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