

## WHY SHOULD YOU BECOME A RIDES FOR HEALTH VOLUNTEER?

*Free training in Greenfield to take place on September 25*

Healthcare transportation is a critical need for elders living in our community. In a few hours a month, you could help as a Rides for Health volunteer!

Becoming a volunteer is simple. After completing the application process, you will attend a half-day of training. The next free training takes place on Tuesday, September 25, 2018, from 1 to 5 p.m., at Greenfield Community College's downtown location. Light refreshments will be served.

For more information or to apply, go online to [LifePathMA.org/RidesforHealth](http://LifePathMA.org/RidesforHealth) or contact Trevor Boeding, Rides for Health program director, at [tboeding@LifePathMA.org](mailto:tboeding@LifePathMA.org), 413-773-5555 x2241, or 978-544-2259 x2241.

Volunteer Rides for Health drivers are critical to the health of elders who are home care clients of LifePath in Franklin County and the North Quabbin region. In providing an elder with a ride to a healthcare appointment or the pharmacy, volunteers make a difference in the lives of the elders with whom they're matched.

"Our hope for the Rides for Health program," says Trevor, "is to expand the number of volunteers that we're able to provide and thereby eliminate our waiting list and serve more elders."

Drivers are reimbursed for all mileage associated with their Rides from Health trips (from their home to the client's home, to the appointment and/or pharmacy, and back to their home).



*When Gale Mason, Rides for Health volunteer, brings Regina LoBello to her medical appointments, they both enjoy the opportunity to talk in the car. "I love taking Regina to her appointments," says Gale. "We have a good time. I learn new recipes."*

## WHY DO RIDES FOR HEALTH DRIVERS CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER?

When looking at volunteer positions with LifePath, a local nonprofit that helps elders and people with disabilities maintain their independence, the Rides for Health program resonated with Gale Mason, retired nurse practitioner. "This is such a great program. I mean, I've believed in it from the start, from the minute I heard about it. I'm committed to keeping people in their homes as long as they can stay in their homes. It's what I want; it's what my husband wants. It's what my parents wanted," says Gale. "And I think that's much easier done locally because we don't have families that live all together in one community anymore."

Marvin Kelley is also enjoying being a volunteer in his retirement. "I love to drive, I like to meet new people, I've always enjoyed people of my age or older," says Marvin. "Helping has been kind of a theme in my career and my life."

Steve McKnight is retired from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation and was one of the first Rides for Health volunteers. "We had a half-day training session that was very good," says Steve. "They basically trained us in what we needed to do."

Likewise, Marvin appreciated the training he received with the other volunteers. "I expected to be trained and screened. That adds an element to my confidence in being able to provide this kind of service."

All of the volunteers feel good about being there for others who are in need. "I know people need this help because they don't have family to help them," says Steve. "It makes me feel good that I can kind of help somebody."

## RAINBOW ELDERS LUNCHEON CLUB

*to begin serving monthly meals on September 20*

The Rainbow Elders are excited to announce the opening day of the new Rainbow Elders Luncheon Club! The initial luncheon will be held at 12 p.m. on Thursday, September 20, 2018, at the South County Senior Center at 67 N. Main Street in South Deerfield.

Taking place on the third Thursday of each month, the Rainbow Elders Luncheon Club will provide a hot noontime meal to LGBTIQA people 60 years of age and older, their friends, and any supportive members of the public at large. The meal is offered to elders for a suggested donation. Elders can be joined for lunch by their spouse of any age or an individual with a disability who lives in the same household as the elder. People under 60 are welcome to attend for a fee. The meal is supported by the Older Americans Act.

Reservations for the September meal will open by September 4. Please feel free to visit [lifepathma.org/rainbowelders](http://lifepathma.org/rainbowelders) to save your place or reserve your meal by calling 413-773-5555 x1242 or 978-544-2259 x1242 if you are unable to go online.



*The Rainbow Elders also hold quarterly social events. Seen here is the recent "Summer's Lease" picnic from July. An educational event will take place in the fall.*

Reservations for meals at all dining centers and luncheon clubs are required one serving day in advance. You do not have to live in the community where you dine.

The South County Senior Center also serves meals on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and many other sites are available around Franklin County and the North

Quabbin. A complete listing and schedule of dining centers and luncheon clubs, along with monthly menus, is available online at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org), by calling the Information & Caregiver Resource Center at LifePath at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259, or emailing: [info@lifepathma.org](mailto:info@lifepathma.org).

RainbowElders builds connections among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, asexual, aromatic, and agender elders and their allies. Learn more and sign up to receive emails with Rainbow Elders event invitations and relevant news and information at [LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders](http://LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders).

## Benefits counselors have helped 2,022 elders and people with disabilities access funds – you could be next!

Throughout your life you've paid your utility bills and taxes. Did you know a portion of those payments went to support benefits programs? Now that you're on a fixed income, it only makes sense that since you paid your dues it's time to get some of that money back to help you stretch your dollars and stay in the place you call home for as long as possible. Benefits counselors from LifePath can help you find and access these funds.

The Benefits Counseling program is free and helps homeowners and renters age 60 and older and younger adults with disabilities. Volunteer benefits counselors provide advice on funding sources and help fill out applications for home repair, fuel assistance, weatherization, disability modifications, food stamps, utility discounts, and emergency fuel. They also provide important information on tax rebates and foreclosure prevention. Benefits counselors serve all towns in Franklin County as well as Athol, Petersham, Phillipston, and Royalston in the North Quabbin.

Since the program began in 2010, benefits counselors have helped more and more people each year in many ways. For instance:

1. A woman and her husband (who had lost his job) were having trouble making ends meet. They thought that because they lived in an apartment with heat included in the rent that they did not qualify for fuel assistance. They learned that they not only qualified, but also, as low-income Eversource customers, they could get immediate help getting their electric bill reduced.

2. A man worried that qualifying for a loan rather than a grant would prove too challenging. As it turned out, the USDA low-interest loan he received to pay for a new roof cost him less than \$30.00/month over a period of 7 years, an amount that was completely affordable.

3. A man who qualified for fuel assistance had no idea that he was also eligible for free help insulating his home, getting his furnace



Gretchen Smith (left) and her team of volunteer benefits counselors help elders all across our community like Betty W., who says, "Hey, call this number. Guaranteed, they'll help." Call 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259

repaired, and replacing his outdated and inefficient refrigerator.

4. A woman who had completed a life estate, turning the family home over to her daughter, thought this meant that she would no longer qualify for low-income benefits. She was pleased to learn that, as long as she remains the sole occupant in the home, only her income is considered when making an application for fuel assistance, home repair, food stamps, or any other income-based benefit.

5. A woman who had been receiving \$58/month in food stamps was gratified to learn that submitting receipts for medical care and supplies not reimbursed by insurance would nearly double her award.

Benefits counselors are trained volunteers, up-to-date on available benefits and how to access them. Benefits counselors also have knowledge and skills that make filing and

following up on applications easy. Benefits counselors are NOT part of a reporting agency. They do not release any personal information to anyone except as required by benefits application agencies. The goal of the program and each volunteer is to help you navigate the system and obtain the help you need to improve your financial security and stay safe and warm (or cool!) in your own home.

Anytime is a great time to talk with a benefits counselor. You don't know what kind of support might be available for you unless you ask. To reach Gretchen Smith and connect with a benefits counselor near you, contact the Information & Caregiver Resource Center at LifePath: 413-773-5555, 978-544-2259 or [info@LifePathMA.org](mailto:info@LifePathMA.org) to start the referral process.

Would you like to become a benefits counselor? Trainings are ongoing. Contact Gretchen at the phone numbers or email address above.

## Have you read the Home Repair Guide?

The Benefits Counseling Program at LifePath maintains a Home Repair Guide, featuring up-to-date information about resources that can help you save money on home expenses and improvements!

Homeowners and renters alike can learn of the many ways to improve the condition of their homes, or modify their homes to address the needs of a family member who is aging or disabled. Topics in the Guide include advice on how to find contractors and carpenters, weatherization information, energy efficiency rebates and incentives,

veteran's resources, ramps and chair lifts, utility discount programs, emergency assistance, funds to help pay for it all, and more!

Visit [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org) and select "Home Repair Guide" in the "Resources" tab to download a copy of the new 2018 guide.

Benefits counselors can help you access funds you read about in the Home Repair Guide. Contact the Information & Caregiver Resource Center at LifePath: 413-773-5555, 978-544-2259

or [info@LifePathMA.org](mailto:info@LifePathMA.org) to start the referral process.



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