

## SENIORGRAM: SENDING A MESSAGE ON SENIOR ISSUES

### Self-neglect: balancing rights versus risks

By Barbara Bozin, Executive Director, LifePath, Inc.

According to the National Institute of Health, “self-neglect in older adults is an increasingly prevalent, poorly understood problem.”

Common situations of self-neglect include issues regarding nutrition, health, hygiene, unmet medical and medication needs, excessive use of alcohol or other substances, home safety, clutter and cleanliness concerns. These manifestations happen at all stages of adult life and may be attributed to loss of financial resources or family supports, social isolation, trauma, declining physical or emotional health, or cognitive impairment. Other times, situations of self-neglect are a result of choices made by the individual associated to values such as independence, culture, privacy, and right to refuse care.

As adults with capacity to direct our own lives, we have the right to fail and the right to make poor decisions. We have the right to choose gratification or self-determination over our personal health and safety. Why should elders be entitled to anything less? LifePath honors the right to self-determination and seeks to provide interventions to mitigate health and safety concerns and improve quality of life. Our goal is to work to understand the unique qualities of each person we serve, consider their values and desires, and look to assess the causes of risk in a person’s current life situation. It is essential to engage in

discussion to be sure the elder understands the risk issues at hand and assess the person’s capacity. We need to allow the elder to set the pace for intervention and validate their life decisions.

**“The best interest of the elder must always be taken into consideration when their preference is known or expressed.”**

There are situations where an individual is deemed incapacitated or incompetent and a substitute decision maker, such as a power of attorney, health care proxy or guardian, is needed to intervene. However, the individual’s wishes must remain central in any decisions made on the elder’s behalf. The best interest of the elder must always be taken into consideration when their preference is known or expressed.

Whether it is to the elder, or a substitute decision maker, LifePath provides guidance and assistance to reduce or eliminate health and safety concerns. Change often requires time and incremental steps to work towards alleviating the risks at hand. We work to build respectful and productive relationships in partnership with the elder and their community supports. Success is often

achieved through the provision of available resources and services, and in keeping the goal of wellbeing and independence of the elder front and center.

Call us at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 or email [info@lifepathma.org](mailto:info@lifepathma.org) if you or someone you know would benefit from our services. Read more online at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).

## “SUMMER'S LEASE HATH ALL TOO SHORT A DATE...”

### Enjoy a summer picnic with the Rainbow Elders at “Summer’s Lease”

On Tuesday, July 18, 2018, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., the Rainbow Elders of LifePath will host their annual summer picnic in the daylily gardens at a private residence in Greenfield. Attendees of this afternoon gathering will enjoy a catered meal, meander through the gardens on 15 and a half acres of land, and meet with LGBTIQ friends old and new.

RSVP by July 12 online at [LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders](http://LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders) or contact Lynne Feldman, Director of Community Services at LifePath: [lfeldman@LifePathMA.org](mailto:lfeldman@LifePathMA.org), 413-775-5555 x2215, or 978-544-2259 x2215. You will receive a confirmation with directions. Registrants will receive a call or email should the event be rained out. A rain date is scheduled for Wednesday, July 18. This is a drug-, alcohol-, and fragrance-free event.

A suggested donation of \$10 is appreciated and will be used to cover



Learn more about the seasonal events offered by the Rainbow Elders at [LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders](http://LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders).

expenses for this and future Rainbow Elders events. If you can donate more than \$10, it will help someone else with fewer resources attend. Any donation amount is welcome.

Special thanks to Program Champion Lathrop Communities and sponsoring Advocates: Barton’s Angels Home Health Care, Franklin Community Co-op/Green Fields Market & McCusker’s Market, Rockridge, Victory Home Healthcare, and WestMass ElderCare. Thanks also to Community Partner Franklin County Pride.

Rainbow Elders 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 future Rainbow Elders event invitations and relevant news and information at [LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders](http://LifePathMA.org/RainbowElders).



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—Margarete Couture, Volunteer Benefits Counselor

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## LEGISLATIVE VIEWPOINT

### Standing up for elders and people with disabilities



**By Senator Elizabeth Warren,  
 U.S. Senator for Massachusetts**

One of my top priorities in the U.S. Senate is working to strengthen the economic security of seniors and people with disabilities in Massachusetts. But today, some in Washington are trying to tear apart critical programs that help people live their lives with dignity.

Last year, President Trump and congressional Republicans tried to repeal the Affordable Care Act and gut the Medicaid program that helps millions of seniors stay in their homes and live independently, and also helps pay for nursing home care for loved ones. We fought back tooth and nail and saved those critical programs. We also stopped an effort to slash the budget of the already cash-strapped agency that runs Social Security. Budget cuts have forced the Social Security Administration to cut thousands of jobs and close 64 field offices since 2010 in towns like Greenfield, leading to outrageously long wait times and leaving many older people and Americans with disabilities struggling to get their benefits. We stood up against additional cuts – and in the last budget, I helped get a \$480 million increase for the agency. This was the first increase to the Social Security Administration's operating budget in eight years.

But the fight isn't over. President Trump's new proposed budget is a direct attack on older Americans and people with disabilities. It

**"I will fight to preserve and strengthen programs like Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid. People in Massachusetts deserve a Washington that works for them, and I'm committed to doing my part in the Senate to ensure that all Americans can retire and live with dignity."**

contains deep cuts to the SNAP program, which helps elderly people put food on the table. It would also eliminate the Low Income Home

Energy Assistance Program, which helps low-income people – including the elderly – stay warm during winters in the Commonwealth. It cuts tens of billions from Social Security's disability benefits and guts Medicaid once again, threatening health care for low-income seniors and people with disabilities. Meanwhile, efforts continue in Washington to privatize and cut benefits for millions of seniors who rely on Social Security to survive.

At the same time the president has proposed these cuts, Congress recently voted to award \$1.5 trillion in tax breaks to billionaires and giant corporations. These are exactly the wrong priorities for our country. The federal government should be investing in America's families, and it should make sure we keep the promises we've made to seniors, families, and people with disabilities.

I will fight to preserve and strengthen programs like Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid. People in Massachusetts deserve a Washington that works for them, and I'm committed to doing my part in the Senate to ensure that all Americans can retire and live with dignity.

If you would like to contact me about any issues you're concerned about, or if you need help with a federal agency, please don't hesitate to call my Western Massachusetts office in Springfield at 413-788-2690 or email me by visiting [www.warren.senate.gov/EmailElizabeth](http://www.warren.senate.gov/EmailElizabeth).

## VILLAGE NEIGHBORS OFFERS A COMMUNITY DESIGN FOR AGING IN PLACE



Village Neighbors, a volunteer non-profit community of neighbors in Shutesbury, Wendell, Leverett, and New Salem, will begin offering services by October 2018 to help elders live independently at home. Village Neighbors welcomes new friends to become helpful volunteers, to be members, as well as to join one of the supportive committees.

Volunteers will provide assistance to members with occasional household tasks, yard work, or minor home repair, as well as technical support for electronic devices and simple computer problems. They will also provide transportation to various appointments, visits with friends, social and cultural events, or grocery or other shopping trips. Additionally, Village Neighbors will provide referrals to vendors such as landscapers, house cleaners, repair persons or home health providers. A simple phone call to a central number will allow members to request a service. Subsidized and waived membership will be available where there is a need.

Representatives from Village Neighbors will be available at the following events:

- **Saturday, July 21, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.:** New Salem Old Home Day
- **Saturday, September 29, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.:** Celebrate Shutesbury

Village Neighbors belongs to the national Village to Village Network and works closely with the nonprofit social services agency, LifePath, in Greenfield and local councils on aging.

For additional information, call 413-345-6894, email [generalinformation@villageneighbors.org](mailto:generalinformation@villageneighbors.org) or visit [www.villageneighbors.org](http://www.villageneighbors.org).

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