

Staying inTouch

Winter 2017

We give Donna Simone magical thanks and farewell!

Magic was in the air at *Staying Put's* 9th Birthday Party in January. Illusionist **Ryan Oakes** wowed the crowd of 140 members and friends with his renowned legerdemain.

Adding to the magic was the celebration of Assistant Director **Donna Simone's** nine years of invaluable service, and a big thank you to send her off with hugs and warm wishes as she retires.



"*Staying Put's* success is largely due to Donna's commitment to excellence, her boundless energy, and most of all, her compassion for our members, volunteers and the broader community," says Board President **Judy Bentley**. "Her contributions to improving the lives of seniors in our town are incalculable."

Trained as a Registered Nurse at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, Donna's first assignment was in Pediatrics.

"I started working with babies and ended up working with seniors," she muses.

"Her practical skills, medical knowledge and sensitivity made her the perfect fit for the job," says Judy. "She knows how to get our members just what they need – and she has the biggest heart."

"Donna is like a sister to me and a daughter to my mother who adores her! And she is always first in our hearts!" **Patti Geanakos**

When Donna was asked why she thinks the *Staying Put* model works, she said, "It's all about connections. When your world gets small it doesn't have to stay small. If you build new friendships, forge new relationships, even after losses, you will flourish. Keeping our seniors safe in their homes and out in the community is what keeps them thriving."

Donna credits much of *Staying Put's* success to its volunteers. "They are an incredible resource, sharing their time and talent and just being good listeners."

Donna and her husband Joe moved to New Canaan 30 years ago and raised their three sons here. Her two grandsons are a big reason she's moving on. "I am thrilled to be starting this new chapter in my life," says Donna. "I feel fortunate to have had such a rich experience and to have made so many wonderful friends of all ages."

Thanks, Donna, for a decade of service and for teaching us all that real magic comes from good people and heartfelt service.



Donna assists **Ryan** with the mind-boggling Rubik's cube illusion.



Let's vote! *Staying Put* volunteer drivers got our members to the polls. **Ruth Kelly** gets a ride from **Judy Bentley** from our office.

Let's make a date!

"Americans at Play" at the New Canaan Historical Society

Tues., Jan. 24, 1 pm

A docent-led tour of an exhibit showcasing how Americans spent their leisure time at the turn of the last century. Refreshments. Free. RSVP.

Wintry Tea and Treats at Donna's

Fri., Jan. 27, 2 pm

Come in from the cold and enjoy a cozy, wintry tea with friends. Free. Carpooling. RSVP.

Collections, Cocoa and Cookies in the *Staying Put* Office

Thurs., Feb. 2, 1-4 pm

Stop by and view members' interesting collections or artifacts and enjoy some cocoa and cookies. Free. RSVP.

Men's Coffee in the *Staying Put* Office

**Second Tuesday every month at 9:30 am
Feb. 14 and Mar. 14**

Lunch at Grace Farms

Fri., Feb. 17 and Fri., March 31 at noon

Join your *Staying Put* friends for a casual lunch in this serene setting. RSVP.

Lunch at The Inn at Pound Ridge

Tues., Feb. 21, 12 noon

Dine at this casually elegant restaurant created by Chef Jean-Georges. \$27. Carpooling. RSVP.

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Members' Art Show at The Inn

Fri., Mar. 3, 4-5:30 pm

Come view artwork by our talented members and enjoy some refreshments. Free. RSVP.

Fairfield County's Giving Day

ONLY ONE DAY: Thurs., Mar. 9

Staying Put is once again participating in this powerful 24-hour online fundraising event. Last year, we raised \$10,000 and we hope to do the same again with your support! As a special thank you to

our donors, we are hosting a **Lunch in our office from noon to 2 pm for our Giving Day donors** so please join us. Additionally, we will have some great prizes you could win just for donating! More details to come on our website, www.stayingputnc.org.



Soup's on at Jeanne Gnuse's

Wed., Mar. 15, 12 noon

Enjoy a sampling of savory soups. Free. RSVP.

St. Patrick's Day Party at The Inn

Fri., Mar. 17, 3:30 pm

Enjoy holiday festivities and treats sponsored by girls from the National Charity League. Free. RSVP.

"Marching into Your 90s with a Spring in Your Step" at the Presbyterian Church

Mon., Mar. 27, 5:30 pm

Join us for a Potluck Dinner and a special program honoring our Nonagenarians. Free. RSVP.

"Can't Get out of Dying? Might as Well Plan for It!" Program at the Presbyterian Church

Sun., Apr. 2, 11 am after the Service

Staying Put has been invited to reprise last spring's professional panel discussion of important issues of end-of-life planning. Free and open to the public.

"Donna is awesome at everything she does, and she has a sense of humor! We are so lucky to have had Donna these years." **Lyn Chivvis**

Generous local supporters help keep our doors open!

Staying Put is grateful for the steadfast support of our generous donors. To date, our Appeal Campaign has received 398 gifts totaling over \$144,000, and we are well on our way to reaching our \$150,000 goal. There's still time to make a tax-deductible contribution.

The support of local Foundations is equally important to *Staying Put's* success. Most recently, we received generous grants from **Bankwell**, the **Jeniam Foundation**, the **Stuart-Higley Foundation**, and the **Kite Key Foundation**.



Above from left: **Chris Gruseke**, Chief Executive Officer of Bankwell, **Barb Achenbaum**, **Judy Bentley**, and New Canaan Branch Manager **Peter Olson**.

Welcome 2 new board members

Carol Blauvelt has volunteered for many organizations, especially focusing on seniors' issues. She has served on the Health and Human Services Commission for five years, is chair of the Senior Sub-committee, and recently took over leadership of the Telehealth Project with Mike Allocca. She is especially interested in addressing future transportation needs for our community.

Kelly DeFrancesco has been a *Staying Put* Volunteer for five years, as a driver, as our liaison to the National Charity League, and with Care Connections. She is a local realtor and is active in

the PTA and Filling in the Blanks. She will chair the YMCA's 2017 gala. She has played a key role in recruiting new drivers from among her empty-nester friends and will help recruiting other volunteers.



Lunch and Learn: "What the Doctor Won't Tell You About Aging" drew an inquisitive crowd (above) for a humorous and informative presentation by **Dr. Mark Lachs**, Co-Chief of Geriatrics/Palliative Care at NY Presbyterian Hospital.

Visit our new Larry Brown Room

Former Board Member and office neighbor **Larry Brown** and his wife **Jill** gave *Staying Put* a special holiday gift this year. Thanks to a generous grant, *Staying Put* has annexed the space across the hall, appropriately dubbed the "Larry Brown Room." This extra space is perfect for Volunteer coffees, "Lunch and Learn" programs, monthly Men's Coffee, and committee meetings.

Our members recommend

Pris Thomas recommends J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. A poignant account by a former Marine of growing up poor in Appalachia and a probing look at the struggles of America's white working class to achieve the American dream. Available at the New Canaan Library.



The team that can't be beat. **Cathy Fitzpatrick, Donna, Barb Achenbaum and Kathy Collins** at Woodway Beach picnic.



Hard hat **Donna** touring the construction site of Stamford Hospital's new medical center with **Tom Ferguson, Lyn Chivvis, Judy Bentley, and Judy Johnson.**



To the rescue in 2012! When a member got locked out, **Donna** helped **Steve Orteig** get in through the garage window to open the door.

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Thank you to our dear Donna



"Donna made Staying Put what we are. We listen. We never say no. We understand. We are cheerful. We are patient. We are encouraging. And we CAN DO. All because of Donna." **Tom Ferguson**



Sally Campbell's 2012 holiday luncheon with **Beverly Buonaiuto, Catherine Buonaiuto, Donna, and Anne Kniffin.** Donna and board members **Tom Ferguson, Lyn Chivvis, and Judy Bentley** at a 2012 Volunteer recognition coffee



"Donna is the most empathetic, caring, thoughtful, creative, and knowledgeable person I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with." **Joel Pelzner**



Cowgirls **Donna** and **Janecke Madsen** saddle up for fun!



On a 2011 garden tour with **Pris Thomas**, **Ruth Carroll**, **Antoinette Vardamis**, **Muriel Kilbride**, **Donna**, **Giselle Erhardt**, and **Marion Blose**.



Above and clockwise: **Donna** and **Kathy Collins** fun; at the Rams game with **Kay Reilly**; in 2010 with former Executive Director **Jane Nyce**; **Donna** can always put a smile on your face.



Good sport **Donna**! Super guest Bingo caller at Lapham Center.

*"I don't know how I could have stayed in New Canaan without Staying Put – and especially **Donna**!"*
Demby Radtke



Caring **Donna** is going from seniors to her precious grandsons!

A tribute to Donna Simone

By **Barb Achenbaum**, Executive Director

Today we must bid farewell
To our Donna, who's super and swell
Our doors opened in '08
To see her shining face
Our success that did surely foretell.

But before we can let her go
We feel that she truly must know
How our lives she has touched
And enriched oh so much
We've been moved by her beautiful soul.

It's hard to know where to begin
Her virtue, compassion, discipline?
She's sensational and smart
She's a generous heart
And a conspiratorial grin!

One of Donna's gifts extraordinaire
Is to treat every member with care
With counsel confidential
And caring exponential
She displays both discretion and flair.

Her professional success she ignores
While the members line up at her door
A super diagnostician
A whiz with the system
And a calm manner all do adore.

As a resource on Donna we rely
For tips on how to survive
Knows the right handyman
For that challenge at hand
A solution she always provides.

And of course we must toast what she's done
To make our lives more rich and more fun
Picnics, cruises, coffees
A special Valentine's Tea
It's clear many hearts she has won.

So alas, we must let you retire
And pursue those passions you desire
Learn how to play golf
And how to goof off!
Just promise you won't go too far!

"New Canaan Runs on Donna!" **Sabra Jayne**
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The NCHS Rams football team adopted *Staying Put* as its charity of this year and recognized members at halftime. Among the spectators were Front row: **Dean Stirling**, **Carrie Strasburger**, and **Lila Coleman**. Back row: **Amy Freyre**, **Nancy Helle** and **Sue Scannell**

"Donna's dedication, compassion, empathy and timely humor have significantly contributed to our success – making a difference in the lives of New Canaan seniors." **Barbara Johansen**

Our award winning volunteer



Janecke Madsen (left) received a prestigious New Canaan Community Foundation Volunteer Recognition Award and a standing ovation by the audience in Town Hall for her Hands-On Volunteer work with *Staying Put* and Waveny LifeCare Network.

A member since *Staying Put* opened its doors in 2008, **Janecke** epitomizes our operational premise of "seniors helping seniors." She works a regular weekly shift at the welcome desk, actively participates in *Staying Put* activities, and pops by the office a few times a week to see what might be needed. An 80+ year old who weighs in at less than 100 pounds, she is one of our most reliable drivers. Last year, she gave 130 rides in her zippy Saab, putting in 90 hours and more than 600 miles.

"I will miss her cheerful voice and her gift of always having the right answer to any question. She is a special person." **Kay Reilly**



Boo! Guess who is in spooky masks at the Halloween luncheon hosted by **Lois Sandberg**. (Hint: **Judy Bentley**, **Cynnie Yates**)



Everyone celebrated with delicious holiday fare under the famous frog tree at **Judy Bentley's** Holiday Luncheon. Helpers above are **Jeanne Gnuse**, **Judy**, **Ro Ogden** and **Judy Johnson**. Below, **Pat Brooks** and **Libby Granfield** chat over cookies.



We love a good holiday party!



Members stopped by the new **Larry Brown Room** to hang these mittens, hats and scarves on our holiday tree and to enjoy a pizza lunch. Items were donated to the Vine Cottage's winter clothing drive.



Donna Simone welcomes new Board Member **Carol Blauvelt** and husband **George** at the December Board party at **Barb Achenbaum's** home.



Volunteers were treated at the holiday tea at the home of **Lyn** and **Beecher Chivvis**. Above: **Beecher**, **Karen** and **Tom Ferguson**, **Lyn**, and **Pat Stewart**. Pianist and Volunteer **Jody Davis** created holiday ambiance with festive music.

Staying Put ^{IN} New Canaan

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fullest at home
in New Canaan

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"Donna is a wonderful person and I am dependent upon her. I will miss her terribly. She is a really talented woman who has done a great job making Staying Put what it is." **Margaret Hebard**



An amaryllis delivered by **Carolyn Buttrick** from the **New Canaan Beautification League** brightens the holidays for **Pam Gores**.



Members got a private holiday tour by Mimi Findlay at the Lockwood Mathews Mansion, a restored 19th Century National Historic Landmark. Included were **Jayne Dutil, Ruth Kelley, Mimi, Jill Stevens, Nancy Helle, Nancy Means, Jane Nesbett, and Donna Todd**.

Staying in Touch is published by *Staying Put in New Canaan*, a private, nonprofit corporation to help New Canaan residents live full lives in their own homes as they grow older. Editor Lois Sandberg.

Thanks to contributors for this issue: **Cathy Fitzpatrick, Kathy Collins, Donna Simone, Nancy Helle, Patti Geanakos and Barb Achenbaum**.