



MESSAGE TO VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

We urge you to restore funding for the Villages Exchange pilot program that was zeroed out by Governor amendment 122 to Budget Item 315. This request is endorsed by the Virginia Villages Collective (18 Villages statewide); the Northern Virginia Aging Network (Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties); Aging Together (Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties); the Arlington County Commission on Aging; the Fairfax City Council; and AARP Virginia.

A Village is a volunteer-driven, community-based virtual community that enables older adults to safely live independently at home. Their neighbor helping neighbor approach fosters personal relationships that counter isolation, provides information for managing aging issues, and engages many in meaningful volunteer service. Village members and their families enjoy peace of mind from being part of a caring community and having a trusted source to turn to for information and assistance when needed.

In addition to providing social connection, Villages offer practical peer-to-peer help with everyday tasks. This could be light home maintenance, transportation, tech support, grocery shopping, friendly visits, easing the return home from hospital, caregiver respite, downsizing and organizing, and heavy lifting. A phone call is all that's needed to request assistance. This wrap-around support can prevent premature transition to a group living environment.

The larger community also benefits from having a Village. During the covid epidemic, Villages assisted with scheduling and transportation for vaccinations, distributed personal protective equipment, and helped inform the public of essential information. Rapp at Home Village is currently spearheading development of the Rappahannock Rural Health Network to improve health care access for the region. LOWLINC Village in Orange County supplies drivers and trains others to provide rides for medical appointments using accessible vans supplied by the Area Agency on Aging. Here to Stay in Wintergreen Village helped bring a pharmacy to their town. Cville Village in Charlottesville partners with Meals on Wheels to offer services to their clients. Arlington Neighborhood Village trains volunteers to help older adults understand and navigate the array of programs and services available to help age in their community.

In 2023, Virginia's Villages engaged 5,000+ older adults, volunteers, and family caregivers; delivered more than 2,000 social programs; and logged over 43,800 hours of volunteer service valued at nearly \$1.5 million. **This requested investment of \$400,000 will be repaid many times over through the services rendered to individuals and communities and the avoidance of excess Medicare spending for hospital and nursing facility stays.**