



SUPPORT FOR SUROVELL/KRIZEK BUDGET AMENDMENTS TO EXPAND STATEWIDE VILLAGES NETWORK

1.3.2025

My name is Carol Paquette. I am a founder of Arlington Neighborhood Village, past president of the national Village to Village Network, and currently the convenor of the Virginia Villages Collective. Villages are community-based organizations harnessing the power of volunteers to help older adults age in the homes and communities they love.

I'm here today to seek your support to address a serious public health issue. The Surgeon General reports that the U.S. is experiencing an epidemic of social isolation resulting in serious cognitive and physical health risks, especially among older adults. Community-based programs, such as Villages, are recognized as a key way to address this public health problem.

The Virginia Villages Collective is requesting funding to expand the statewide Village network to help thousands of older Virginians safely age in their homes connected to a caring community.

Here's how an Arlington Neighborhood Village member describes her experience:

"I have been a grateful Village member for many years. They came to my rescue during the pandemic when I developed serious medical problems. At a time when I felt alone and stressed, it was truly comforting to have the company of a Village friend. The Village set up medical rides for me; they even did my grocery shopping! Now the Village has matched me as a pen pal with a 4th grader in the community. I truly look forward to each correspondence from this young girl, which brings such joy."

This is just one of hundreds of examples of how Villages reduce social isolation and empower older Virginians to remain safely and independently in their homes. In 2023, Virginia Villages engaged more than 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. Growing existing Villages and starting new ones in underserved areas will enable more older Virginians to access this support. It will help fill a gap in available services for the growing number of older Virginians and their caregivers with limited financial resources who are not eligible for government services.

On behalf of the Villages in Northern Virginia and the statewide Village community, I urge you to approve the budget amendments sponsored by Senator Surovell and Delegate Krizek to reduce social isolation of older Virginians by expanding access to Villages.