

Kent Island

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NEIGHBORS



**Queen
Anne's at
Home gives
aging new
meaning**

our town. our people.

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Kent Island



Queen Anne's at Home gives aging new Meaning

By Charlotte Zang

If you were born during the baby boom years (between 1946 and 1964), you are part of the largest group in our nation's senior citizen category. Today's seniors have been an eyewitness to a range of experiences and profound changes. Growing up in the idyllic 50s and tumultuous 60s, they witnessed or participated in civil rights reform, the women's liberation movement, and many other causes that helped advance people's rights and make the world a better place. They experienced the birth of the worldwide web and the online explosion of the dot-com era, keeping up with the rapid evolution of technology. Boomers have gone from watching *Leave it to Beaver* and *I Love Lucy* on a black and white television set to viewing Amazon Prime videos on a tablet—not to mention talking with their children and grandchildren on FaceTime. What a huge leap!

According to the Census Bureau, more than 19% of the 50,000+ residents of Queen Anne's County are 65 years old or older. That's approximately 9,500 people. While the Department of Social Services provides a wide range of products for seniors, they don't have adequate resources to meet the growing demand. Fortunately, there is an organization that supplements the county's existing programs and helps to bridge the gap. It's called Queen Anne's at Home, where seniors help each other thrive together and age in their own homes.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Queen Anne's at Home was founded in 2018 by a small group that included current Board member Margan Glover. Together, they looked at the services available for the county's seniors. They knew that resources were stretched thin and had a desire to serve more people. Glover said, "We looked at many options, including the Village movement, which offers best practices for healthy and vibrant aging. We determined that the Village model would work best for us." Through a series of fact-finding missions and meetings, the group introduced the proposed model to the community. During a public information meeting to describe the program and explain how it works, not only did people express excitement about the idea of building a network of like-minded people to help each other in their golden years, but dozens signed up to join that day. "People clearly needed and wanted what we have to offer."

Glover explained that through the group's research and surveys by AARP, they discovered that the three main fears seniors have about aging are:

- What if I can't stay in my home?
- What if I end up alone?
- How can my life have meaning?

"To address these concerns, we knew that we had to create a plan for staying at Home through the retirement years. Living well during this period doesn't happen accidentally. A well thought out plan makes a difference in the quality of life." That's what Queen Anne's at Home provides: a way for seniors to remain at Home but not alone. They become part of a village.

THREE PILLARS

The essence of Queen Anne's at Home (QA@H) is seniors helping each other thrive as they age in their own homes. The three pillars of its mission are Empowerment, Connection, and Purpose. Throw in a dash of fun, and you have the perfect recipe for a happy, healthy community of mature people making a difference in each other's lives.

QA@H is run by volunteers who coordinate an extensive network of people helping each other stay connected so they can live in their own homes as they age. This means that even though a person may live alone, they are no longer isolated. There is a community of people they can reach out to for assistance. Members offer the help they can and ask for the help they need by making it easily accessible. "Sharing skills, abilities, talents, knowledge, and expertise is at the heart of what we have created. Giving to others adds meaning and purpose to life," Glover said. "We're changing the narrative of what aging means. It doesn't



have to mean only loss and deterioration. Our elders have so much to give. With this network, we're turning assumptions upside down while having a huge impact on people and their families."

A GIFT FOR YOUR FUTURE SELF & YOUR LOVED ONES

One of the key benefits of joining QA@H is the Senior Navigation Plan or SNAP for short. "Aging is not a DIY project," Glover said. "The Senior Navigation Plan is a tool we created to help members collect and organize all of their important information. It makes it easier to communicate vital information to family members, partners, and doctors."



Board of Directors President Russ Mail noted, “We found that people want to be in control of their lives and make their own decisions. The Senior Navigation Plan that QA@H offers makes our members the captain of their ship. They get to decide what they want and how they want to live, and we help them put that plan together.”

The process of gathering and organizing could seem overwhelming, but the folks at QA@H simplify it with a detailed binder and assistance in creating the plan. There are ten chapters in the binder, and each one has various forms and checklists so that members can organize all the necessary information.

To help members put their life plan together, QA@H offers SNAP Chapter meetings. These educational sessions provide ideas and tips that help members make informed decisions. Topics include:

- Emergency planning
- Planning for contingencies (what’s your Plan B?)
- Legal considerations
- Medical plans and directives
- End of life options: your preferences, your plans
- Gathering key information (medical, insurance, financial, and legal records)
- Wellness and fitness plans
- Streamlining to make life easier: sorting and getting rid of “stuff.”
- Home safety plans

By completing the entire SNAP Chapter rotation, every aspect of the life plan is documented. Members also review chapters periodically to ensure that their information is complete and current.

STAYING CONNECTED DURING COVID-19

The initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic were frightening and confusing times, especially for senior citizens. When considering how COVID-19 affected the members of QA@H, the first thing one thinks of is the need for transportation such as grocery delivery and picking up prescriptions. While that certainly was part of what members needed, what QA@H provided was even more valuable: a sense of connection during a time when many people were isolated.

When asked about how QA@H helped members during COVID-19, Glover replied, “We experienced a tremendous amount of activity during that time. We were focused on keeping people informed about the situation, giving them reliable, vetted information, and connecting them to resources such as where to get a vaccine. There were many Zoom calls to relay information. Plus, we offered assistance with technology to help people get comfortable using Zoom.

We also wanted to make sure to keep in touch with everyone. Our check-in program and calling tree were essential to our members, helping them to stay connected. They realized that they were not alone and could help others during this very difficult time. In fact, ours was one of the few Village communities that actually grew during the pandemic.”

MEMBER BENEFITS

Seniors who are part of QA@H enjoy many benefits that help them live full, productive, and rewarding lives. Social activities like coffee meet-ups and happy hours are fun ways to get out and expand their circle of friends. Mail said, “These personal connections and relationships are what it’s all about. It makes it easier to ask someone for help. It’s no longer a stranger coming to the house to repair. It’s your friend that you have coffee with every week.”

In addition to social events, there are a variety of seminars offered. Sharing details and tutorials about emerging technology makes it easier for members to stay safe, stay well, stay connected, and stay independent at home. Memory care is another popular topic. Presented by leading experts in the field, participants learn ways to improve their memory. Although many events have gone live and in-person, Zoom sessions will continue to be offered.

The camaraderie of the group extends to many leisure activities and includes finding a fishing buddy or a quilting pal. Members create discussion groups based on their interests, such as theater, current events, book clubs, or memoir writing. The walking and outdoor program is also quite popular, especially since Queen Anne’s County has beautiful walking trails and parks. There is always something to do and many ways to get involved.

“Last year at our virtual holiday party, we read a play. Members had so much fun dressing up for the parts and reading the lines. The performers were fabulous! It was on Zoom so everyone could participate,” Glover said.

OFFER AND GET HELP

The cornerstone of QA@H is helping seniors thrive in their own homes. The network of people who contribute and participate makes this possible. Members help each other by driving to doctor visits or shopping trips. Minor home repairs like replacing hard-to-reach light bulbs are another area where members can lend a hand. When someone is laid up for a few days, they can request assistance such as watering plants or a home-cooked meal. Help with the house is another need and could consist of light gardening or housework or even putting up or taking down holiday decorations.

Members who request help know that QA@H members respond because they want to. There is no obligation, but members often return the favor when they can.

Everyone has something to share, whether it’s giving someone a ride, cooking a meal, providing help with Zoom, Skype, and FaceTime technology, or sewing on a button. Companionship and a game of backgammon are just as valuable and necessary to well-being.

A monthly newsletter covers everything new, exciting, and necessary for members. There are often features on interesting people who are part of QA@H. Getting to know the seniors in the community reveals fascinating stories. People have amazing experiences with a wealth of knowledge and talent to share. “We have a member who has decades of expertise in grant writing and fundraising and another member who is a concert pianist,”

Glover said. “Our community is vibrant with accomplished people. Getting to know each other is a wonderful way to thrive and stay connected, especially if you live alone.”

BECOME A MEMBER

Queen Anne’s at Home is open to Queen Anne’s County residents who are at least 50 years old. And although they think they are not old and don’t need this type of service today, they will most likely need it in the future. To become part of a community and make a life plan takes time, so it’s essential to join now and build relationships for a seamless transition. Glover recommends that people should join as soon as they are eligible and step in when they can be of service to others. That way, when they need assistance, they will have a team of people ready and willing to reciprocate.

QA@H NEEDS YOU

To serve even more seniors in Queen Anne’s County, QA@H is looking for community partners. Glover elaborated by saying, “We welcome working relationships with other service organizations in the county and we serve to bridge the gap for seniors wanting to stay in their own homes. We know there are many more people who can benefit from what we have to offer and want to connect them to our services.”

A Board of Directors governs QA@H. There are spots open for compassionate people with innovative ideas who have a network of connections in the county. Those interested in serving on the Board of Directors are encouraged to call 410-635-4045 or send an email to OurQAH@gmail.com. For more information, visit www.queenannesathome.org.