

# Attraction

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## Queen Anne's at Home Helps Seniors Age in Place

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*This column in **Attraction**, by Amelia Blades Steward, visits the faces of those who have benefited from the generous and tireless work of the nonprofits on the Mid Shore or are one of the organizations giving back in unique ways to better our world. She has been a freelance writer in our community for over 20 years and offers a glimpse into the lives of residents on the Mid Shore whom she has met along the way.*

Seniors in Queen Anne's County have a new option for becoming part of a community helping each other thrive as they age in their own homes. Since 2018, Queen Anne's at Home (QA@H), a 100 percent volunteer-run non-profit, has been helping seniors ages 50 or better stay in their own homes, and enjoy a quality life while staying active in their community.



**QA@H members, including Anne Foss (left), Laura Plosila, Margan Glover, Jinny Guy, and Linda Schuerholz, have hands-on fun learning how to make meringue mushrooms.**

QA@H is based on the national Village model of helping seniors stay well and independent in their own homes as long as possible. The organization's founding principle is for seniors to prepare for and be proactive about their "next chapter." Seniors who have membership in QA@H connect with other seniors who share goals and interests, access support and expert advice for life planning and organizing, participate in social, educational, and cultural events, and help each other over the inevitable "bumps in the road" we all face. Because members also are volunteers for the organization, they also have the opportunity to give back to their community.

“Queen Anne’s at Home is a caring community of seniors who help each other stay safe, healthy connected, and independent at home. Its mission is to help seniors thrive at home which addresses the number one fear that seniors have, ‘What if I can’t stay in my own home?’” explains Cindy Bach, President of QA@H.

Membership means being part of a community or village of people. Members offer help as they can and seek help as they need it. The reciprocity builds on QA@H’s three foundational principles of empowerment, connection, and purpose. Members form connections through communications, personal visits, social events, educational opportunities, senior life planning, transportation, help with simple household chores, and special programs to reduce the sense of isolation that many seniors experience today.

“Of our 109 members today, 79 percent offer some type of volunteer service – completing more than 350 hours of volunteer service in the first quarter of the year,” comments Cindy.

“By seniors volunteering and getting to know our community, they are more likely to trust us and ask for services when they need them. Members assist each other with rides to appointments and household chores. QA@H arranges social activities such as coffee meetups, happy hours, outdoor adventures, trips, and informational seminars. The number one, two, and three services that we provide would be transportation, friendly visits, and assistance with technology.”

What has grown the most in the past year after the pandemic are the organization’s events, including everything from socials, pickleball, bridge, Mah Jongg, creativity through arts and crafts, and a book club. Members have also enjoyed QA@H’s Coffee + Conversation gatherings on a variety of health, wellness, culture, community, and travel topics; QA@H’s Brain Health Interest Group; and a Walking and Outdoor Club.

The organization’s website shares that although individuals may not feel “ready” now for this type of membership, life has a way of happening anyway and things can change on a dime and may catch us unprepared and feeling vulnerable.

“What is special about our membership is that if members become a part of a vibrant, proactive community of their peers before they need it, it’s much easier to ask and give help among friends than among strangers. Think of it as the gift of peace of mind to your future self and your loved ones,” Cindy adds.

Among the things QA@H offers is for members to learn together, help one another and connect with each other. By learning together, members build a sense of empowerment. The organization’s Senior Navigation Action Plan helps seniors plan for the aging process and its Ready or Not Program offers group sessions to help seniors create a plan. These are both helpful to seniors wanting to get organized for the future and go beyond estate planning and insurance.

Through members helping each other, they build a sense of purpose. This includes helping each other with life plans, getting rid of things and sharing tools and equipment, getting help to take care of things around the house we shouldn’t do alone, learning new technology, taking each other shopping, and recommending service providers, and keeping each other connected through meetups, friendly calls, and visits.

By connecting with each other, members build a sense of community. Members have frequent social get-togethers in diverse settings.

“We’re looking to increase our membership so that we can better serve the members who have signed up. Our Ambassador Program helps introduce new applicants to QA@H. Once new members apply for membership or express interest in membership, they get a personal response by either email, phone, or by mail. Members then get a personal visit from the Ambassador. I think this is such a strong piece of our program because people then automatically are connected with somebody face-to-face and they can ask questions. It’s more than just filling out an application. It is taking the time to bring people in and determine their interests and what might be the best activities for them,” Cindy states.

To make all of this happen QA@H needs more volunteers and people to serve on its active board. QA@H is a component fund of the Mid-Shore Community Foundation (MSCF). Recently, the organization received a grant from MSCF for its three R’s program: Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition to help build its membership and board. The organization is also licensing its Ready or Not Program and Senior Navigation Action Plan so that it can sell the material to villages around the country that want to use the materials with their members.

“By actually providing these tools at a reasonable cost, we can help other villages while also providing an income stream to support our village efforts,” Cindy adds. “We are also very grateful for the grant funds shared through MSCF and generous community donations. It is through these gifts that we are able to keep our membership dues low to make it possible to join QA@H for a reasonable membership fee for all seniors”.

*Membership with QA@H is \$75 a year for a multiple-person household and \$50 a year for an individual household. Membership is open to all Queen Anne’s County seniors ages 50 years old and above. Various options are available in the case of financial hardship. In addition to the donation of in-kind goods and services, donations of time and talent are also accepted. Tax-deductible donations help subsidize events and sponsorships. Individuals can also mail tax-deductible contributions to Queen Anne’s at Home, P.O. Box 164 Centreville, Maryland 21617. Checks should be made payable to “MSCF for Benefit of QA@H.”*

For further information about QA@H, email [OurQAH@gmail.com](mailto:OurQAH@gmail.com) or call 410-635-4045.

