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CREATING COMMUNITY



WLLO Village volunteer Sandy Jackson brought apples, chocolate and a Valentine's Day card to village member Becky Crew Saturday, Feb. 12.

PMG PHOTO: HOLLY BARTHOLOMEW

WLLO Village helps residents age in place

By **HOLLY BARTHOLOMEW**
Pamplin Media Group

About 80 residents of West Linn, Lake Oswego and the Stafford Hamlet are helping each other “age in place” by offering one another rides to appointments, social and educational opportunities, support with technology, help around the home and more.

These 80 residents are the members and volunteers of the WLLO Village, a local chapter of the national Village Movement which enables seniors to continue living in their own homes rather than a retirement community.

WLLO began in June 2019 and

“It’s an ability to check in with people, make sure everybody’s doing okay and make sure everybody feels welcome and part of their community.”

— *Ellen Steel, WLLO council member*

is part of a larger group of 11 villages throughout the Portland metro area.

WLLO council member Ellen Steel explained that many of the village’s members, like herself, are also volunteers. This means they help organize or provide transportation, social and educational opportunities and help around the house, but also receive those benefits.

The village emphasizes community and connection.

“Every month or two we have a little outreach, where we deliver a little care package kind of treat to everybody who is either a member or a volunteer. And you know,

in the dead of winter, it can be some fresh mandarin oranges,” Steel said. “It’s an ability to check in with people, make sure everybody’s doing okay and make sure everybody feels welcome and part of their community.”

Steel and another volunteer, Sandy Jackson, went around this past Saturday, Feb. 12, delivering bags of apples, chocolate and hand-made Valentine cards to village members.

One member they delivered packages to was Becky Crew, a WLLO charter member.

According to Crew, the village’s offerings compliment the services of local adult community

centers. The events of the village are a bit smaller and more intimate than the adult community centers, she said. Steel also mentioned that the village provides members the opportunity to connect with people they may never have met. The village hosts weekly Ted talks and discussions, virtual happy hours and get-togethers over coffee.

Members and volunteers are also taking a course from Yale University on happiness, which they discuss once a week.

“(The village events and virtual discussions) have given some

Village

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structure to people and some things to do, when they otherwise would be kind of locked up during a pandemic,” Steel said.

Steel said even providing rides to members is a good opportunity for both the volunteers and members to connect.

“You make friends as you’re driving people around,” Steel said. “I drive a lady to a regular appointment that she has in Oregon City. I go pick her up and while she’s in there at her appointment, then I go run my errands and then I come back and pick her up.”

The weekly rides are a good time to check in with the members to see how they’re doing.

Crew said she’s used the village for its tech support, Ted Talks, book clubs, lectures and social opportunities.

“I’ve made great new friends,” Crew said. “I’ve been so pleased (with the village).”

Steel recalled a time that she felt represented the caring community the village has built. When a woman ended up in the hospital, volunteers and members worked together to take care of her dog.

“Even when she came home, the dog needed exercise so we would go over there and walk her dog and take her some meals,” Steel said.

Residents of West Linn, Lake Oswego and Stafford Hamlet who are interested in the WLLO Village can learn more on their website www.wllovillage.org/.

Steel also noted that the village offers financial assistance for those who can’t cover the membership dues.

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