

GETTING IN GEAR

Neighbors Driving Neighbors is back in the driver's seat and ready to spring forward!

Greetings!

I'm honored to be the new president of Neighbors Driving Neighbors, taking the wheel from founder and past president, Dan Onion, alongside new and continuing members of the Board of Directors and our new Executive Directors, Misty and Joe.

NDN has been navigating the rough terrain of the pandemic for over two years now. Our medical committee of retired doctors and health care professionals has met monthly to assess the impact of Covid on our communities and to create best practices for safe transportation.

This April, they gave us the green light to reopen. While we continue to monitor the prevalence of the virus, we have reopened our rides to all destinations for fully immunized riders.

We are thankful for the generous support of so many in our community—to those who have donated during our annual appeal, community breakfast and online auction.

If you or a loved one needs transportation in our five-town area, please reach out to register with us. If you would like to volunteer as a driver, please call or email. There will be an orientation for new volunteer drivers in early summer. We could not do this work without our neighbors.



And we couldn't be happier than to be driving our neighbors again!

Harald Bredesen

In the Beginning

As we enter our seventh year of service, we look back on how Neighbors Driving Neighbors came into being when one neighbor joined forces with another.



In 2013, Sandy Wright, president of the Mt. Vernon Community Partnership Corporation (CPC), attended an event for seniors at Maranacook school in Readfield. She realized many seniors were concerned with not being able

to “age in place” as they lost their ability to drive. Many bemoaned the departure of Betty White, director of the Mt. Vernon food bank, when she moved to a home in Augusta after becoming unable to drive.

Dan Onion, director of the Maine-Dartmouth Family Medicine training program, moved towards semiretirement in 2010 and began consulting on the care of geriatric patients. He became interested in helping elders and physicians make evidence-based decisions about driving. He then served as geriatrician and chair of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles medical advisory committee.

Sandy invited Dan, a trusted friend, to discuss the senior driving issues. They formed a planning committee which arranged public forums to elicit input from Mt. Vernon, Vienna, and Fayette residents. Additionally, they set up health screening clinics including testing driver response times. The CPC acted as the fiscal sponsor and applied for two planning grants totaling \$10,000 from the Maine Community Foundation in 2014.

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NEED A RIDE? If you are a resident of Belgrade, Fayette, Mount Vernon, Rome, or Vienna, please call **207-860-0677** or visit neighborsdrivingneighbors.org to register with the group.



“When I first met Shelly Fitzgerald at the forum we held in Vienna, she talked about how they would like to start a transportation program in Belgrade/Rome. I asked her why she wanted ‘to reinvent the wheel’ when a perfectly fine transportation was starting up, and we’d love to have Rome/Belgrade join in. She smiled, and the rest is ‘history.’ She’s been an asset ever since!”

—Sandy Wright, founding member, on the beginnings of NDN



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After receiving the grants, they hired two consultants who were running volunteer transport programs around Ellsworth and Mt. Desert in order to learn best practices. Their help and grants from the Bingham Program and Betterment Fund led to the implementation and support of what became Neighbors Driving Neighbors (NDN).

In 2015, Irene Goff came on board as the first coordinator and planning leader at NDN. After becoming a 501(c)3 non-profit, a board of directors was formed that went on to recruit drivers and reach riders, resulting in their first successful rides in November, 2015. With the help of graphic artist, Jo Tibby, who created the now iconic NDN logo (the “NDN Car.”), Neighbors Driving Neighbors was officially launched.

A Look Ahead



July: Annual Auction Online. Check out BiddingOwl.com after July 1 for items!

August 6: Community breakfast, 9-11 am, at the Mt. Vernon Community Center.

Honored to Serve

NDN is proud to announce that we have been presented with the *Maine 2021 Spirit of America Foundation Award* for our “commitment to providing neighborly transportation to seniors...especially during a global pandemic.” For more than 30 years, the award has recognized individuals, organizations and projects for commendable community service. We share this honor with our many volunteers and donors who help to make our mission possible. To learn more about this foundation, visit spirame.org.



Help aging in place become a little easier for our neighbors. Please consider making a donation to NDN.

