Stay at Home in Wilton founder and Chairman, Phil Richards, left, and President Peter Dodds.

Stay at Home looking for central office

By Stephanie Kim – Wilton Villager - SKim@hearstmediact.com

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WILTON - Stay at Home in Wilton, a nonprofit organization that helps many seniors live at home and in their community, is looking for a home of its own. The staff have worked remotely for many years and are now searching for an office to centralize their operations, said Phil Richards, chairman and one of the founders of Stay at Home in Wilton. "We've been running now for almost seven years and we have no place that people can go to that we can call home. We're looking for a pro bono offering." Richards said he reached out to the town

for a possible space, but found no luck. He hopes the community can help fulfill his request: a small space with a desk, several chairs and filing cabinet the nonprofit can access during normal business hours throughout the week.

"It's the sort of thing that gives us another layer of credibility to have a location that people can come to and get information," Richards said. "Also a place to meet to partner with our members, as well as to conduct business for the activities," said Peter Dodds, president of Stay at Home in Wilton. "We have a lot of activities for the members, and it takes a lot of calling to get rides for them." Stay at Home in Wilton provides various services and programs for its members, including home repairs, household assistance, transportation services to and from appointments, educational seminars, social activities and special events.

The nonprofit has 90 members, and Richards wants that number to grow.
"We're always looking for new members and we're willing to talk to anybody that's interested in that," he said. "We're also looking for volunteers. Either one of those can go to our website and pick up an application." Stay at Home in Wilton took off in March 2010, after receiving 501(c)(3) tax status from the IRS. Since then, the organization has joined the nationwide Village Movement, which started with Beacon Hill Village in Boston, to help seniors age in a place of their choosing.

The National Council on Aging found 75 percent of Americans 60 and older intend to live in their homes for the rest of their lives, and 62 percent want services that would help with home modifications and repairs, according to the council's most recent survey on aging in the U.S. from 2015. "It was clear that this was a needed service for people in our community and all other communities — to find a way to help them stay in their homes and support them with everything except medical," Richards said. "Once we founded it, we saw that there was a need for socialization."

Richards and Dodds have noticed the financial constraints associated with aging in Wilton. "Once the kids graduate from the school system, there has been a tendency for some people to say, "Well, the taxes are too high to really make sense to stay in Wilton,'" Dodds said. "On the other hand, going to a nursing home or into an assisted-living facility is very expensive and may well be much more expensive than the taxes in staying in the community. And that's what we're trying to help people work out," he said.

Annual membership dues cost $360 for singles and $480 for couples, about 98 percent less than a congregate living community that offers supportive services, as noted on the organization's website, www.stayathomeinwilton.org.Stay at Home in Wilton is run by a board of 16 directors, two employees who manage a part of the operations and an advisory board of 11 people.

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