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Stay At Home in Wilton still seeks members

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By TOM EVANS

Villager Staff Writer

WILTON -- The challenges of maintaining a home increase as a couple gets older, and Stay At Home in Wilton, Inc. wants to make those challenges a little easier to deal with.

And as of April of last year, when the organization received recognition from the Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c) (3) public charity, gained access to a visiting nurse coordinator, and got covered by insurance, Phil Richards, president of the board of directors, said "things are moving along with Stay At Home in Wilton."

"The key was the access to the coordinator," Richards said. "Ridgefield Visiting Nurse Association also works in Redding, and they said they would share with us so we won't have that hurdle. (Coordinator) Eloise Barron is a real peach. We had an interesting three weeks in April, and she said she could join April 18. She's been active and aggressive, and it's worked out great."

Richards said the Visiting Nurses have been crucial to getting the program off the ground.

"The Visiting Nurses have been wonderful, and they have allowed us to get started right away," he said.

Richards counts 31 members in Stay At Home in Wilton, with more than 2,000 more seniors in town eligible to join up.

"The membership is gradually growing," Richards said. "It's not fast enough to satisfy me. My job is not to be satisfied."

Stay At Home in Wilton offers transportation, social activities, technical assistance, home help and repairs, or just a friendly visit -- all while the senior couple stays in the home they've lived in, raised a family and now want to enjoy as long as physically possible.

"We try to do social events on a regular basis to make the program not just a transportation service," Richards said. "We want this to be a social experience. The glue that makes it work is transportation, because many seniors can't drive."

One of the "success stories" on the Stay At Home in Wilton website, www.stayathomeinwilton.org, told of a volunteer who was supposed to drop one of the members at the train station on Thanksgiving.

They missed that train -- and the next train was too late -- so the volunteer



[Phil Richards and his wife Anne with their brochure on Stay at Home Wilton for seniors. photo/matthew vinci](#)
[Phil Richards and his wife Anne with their brochure on Stay at Home Wilton for seniors. photo/matthew vinci](#)

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drove the member all the way to the member's destination in New York state.

Another of those stories was a couple who considered a congregate or assisted living facility, but found the cost of membership in Stay At Home in Wilton was far less than any alternative.

They also did not want to give up the home they loved for so many years, and Stay At Home in Wilton provided the services of small home repairs, while allowing the couple to maintain the friendships they had developed.

"The other key is an involved and supported board," Richards said. "Everyone does something to make it work. We've done a lot of fundraising. We've found a lot of places that don't give to this type of operation -- and some that do. The latter is what we're interested in."

Richards said he wants to keep this organization free of government intervention, especially because federal grants are difficult to get.

"The government makes it complicated to get grants, so we try to stay independent," Richards said. "We work with social services, and we had a public session in December with the police, fire and social services. Several elected officials showed up too, even though they weren't on the agenda. We had it at Trackside (Teen Center), and it was packed. The reports were quite good from that."

Home repairs are another major concern for seniors in their homes, both financially and physically, and Richards said Stay At Home in Wilton has that covered.

"We have a list of vendors, and they're all checked out," he said. "We offer a discount, and they all do a good job for a reasonable cost."

Richards is proud to be on the cutting edge of what is becoming a national trend, especially in suburban areas.

"A study by the AARP, done in Washington, D.C., found they have the same concerns we have," Richards said. "It's a growing issue in this country. We had to turn down a few people from Norwalk because Norwalk doesn't have an equivalent program to this. We have to have people to sign up who are willing to make it work."

Richards said all the information folks need is at stayathomeinwilton.org, including membership forms, volunteer forms, donor pledge forms and much more.

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Many thanks to Tom Evans who got the whole story right on target. I hope this helps more Wilton Seniors enjoy their lives here

Posted by: Phil Richards | 14 hours, 42 minutes ago

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