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Walkers at the Heineberg Community Senior Center's "Walk of Ages" fundraiser, sponsored in part by SASH, circle the track at Burlington High School. Regular exercise such as walking helps maintain balance, prevent falls and even improve brain health. (Photo courtesy HCSC)

National Report Cites SASH as Model for Preventing Falls

HUD Calls for Care Coordination; Names SASH 1 of 3 Best Practices

Falls are the fifth-leading cause of death among adults 65 and older -- and statistics are especially grim in our state. [Vermont ranks third in the U.S. for the number of fatal falls](#) among this population, with 122 deaths per 100,000 people.

While much research on successful fall-prevention strategies is available, there remains a "significant gap [in knowledge about] how to overcome obstacles to improve policies and programs designed to reduce senior falls," says the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development in a recently released report.



The new report from HUD tackles this issue head-on, calling for care coordination and aging-in-place practices designed to prevent falls. It also singles out three programs -- with SASH at the top of the list -- that are leading the way in this effort. Significantly as well, HUD calls for the "creation of a dedicated and coordinated funding stream to support aging-in-place, senior safety at home, and continuous care models." [Links to the final report and a "Toolkit for Program Success" are available here.](#)

The 'Falls Free Vermont' Coalition

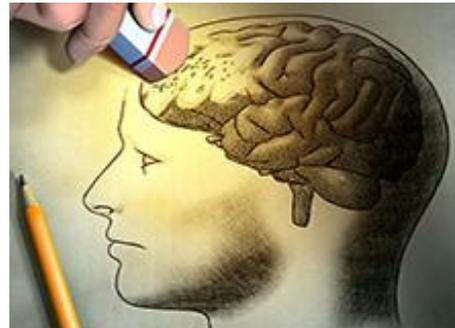
SASH is part of the [Falls Free Vermont Coalition](#), a program of the Vermont Department of Health comprising representatives of health, aging and other organizations throughout the state. Subcommittees work on data-informed projects and initiatives year-round, and members meet

quarterly. Next month's newsletter will include an article by Stephen DeVoe, falls-prevention coordinator with the Vermont Department of Health, about the coalition's work.

News Briefs

Report Cites 'Clear Inequities' in Health Resources to Treat Dementia

According to new data reported at the 2017 Alzheimer's Association International Conference in London, multiple regions of the U.S. are considered neurology "deserts," including Vermont, due to a chronic shortage of neurologists and a rapid rise in Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. This speaks to the need for additional resources, training and education for primary care physicians and caregivers, researchers add. Worth noting is the fact that SASH staff receive extensive training and support in caring for participants with dementia (and their families) through our close partnership with the [Vermont Alzheimer's Association](#) and SASH Program Director Molly Dugan's seat on the [Governors Commission for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders](#). *Vermont Business Magazine* online posted [an article about the findings](#) July 18.



SASH Nurse Rita Bennett Receives Dartmouth-Hitchcock Award

Rita Bennett, RN, BSN, CRNI, wellness nurse with the Windsor SASH program, was honored in May with the **Dartmouth-Hitchcock Nursing Excellence Award** in recognition of her contributions to the nursing profession and her leadership in a number of areas, including improving patient quality of care and pioneering advanced nursing practices. SASH serves as the perfect vehicle for accomplishing both! In addition to her stellar work with SASH participants in the Windsor area, Rita works at Mt. Ascutney Hospital & Health Center, a Dartmouth-Hitchcock affiliate.



SASH Success Profile

Nurse's 'No Nonsense' Intervention Spurs a Change of Heart -- Literally

Having "lived off the land" for most of his life, 68-year-old "Jake" moved into a SASH housing site and proudly proclaimed that he abstained from all medications -- and from doctors. In fact, he said, the last time he'd seen a physician was 20 years ago. He biked regularly, ate healthy foods and meditated, he said -- so who needs a doctor?



His reality check came in the form of a blood-pressure reading by SASH wellness nurse Christina Melvin, MS, PHCNS, BC, CHPN: **190/100**. "You need to see a doctor right away," she implored, explaining the health risks. But Jake would have none of it.

Melvin created a list of doctors who were accepting new patients and encouraged Jake to connect

with one, but Jake insisted he'd be fine. "I'm a no-nonsense person, and I didn't mince words. 'I'm very worried that you will have a stroke,' I told him," she says. "It wasn't an easy push, but I kept at it."

The two developed an easy rapport over time as Melvin monitored his blood pressure and worked to educate him about the risks of foregoing treatment. More than a year later, just as Jake was starting to come around -- "he was starting to say that *maybe* he'd go see the doctor," she says -- Jake landed in the emergency room with chest pains. Next came a pacemaker and blood-pressure medication.

To say that Jake "dodged a bullet" is an understatement, says Melvin. "He was a stroke waiting to happen -- it was just a matter of time," she says. "Now he keeps thanking me for saving his life."

Today Jake's blood pressure and heart rate have "totally normalized," and he's taking his health more seriously, Melvin reports. He now has *two* doctors -- the primary-care physician and a cardiologist -- in addition to Melvin, whom he sees twice a week.

It may have taken a year, a scare and a pacemaker to prompt Jake to act, but the steady persistence of SASH was -- and remains -- an important factor in his success.

"[Jake] is a real success story," says Melvin, longtime clinical professor of nursing at the University of Vermont, now retired. "I love helping people, and I'm glad I've been able to help him."

Professional Development Opportunities

[Click here for the full calendar of events, with links to details about each event below.](#)

- July 24 - August 28 (6 *Mondays*, 8-10 pm ET) - NAMI "Homefront" class for military members, families and friends (online)
- July 25 - August 29 (6 *Tuesdays*, 10 am-12 pm ET) - NAMI "Homefront" class (online)
- July 25 - Age at Home by Sharing One's Home, webinar (Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging)
- July 26 - August 30 (6 *Wednesdays*, 7-9 pm ET) - NAMI "Homefront" class (online)
- July 27 - August 31 (6 *Thursdays*, 9-11 pm ET) - NAMI "Homefront" class (online)
- August 22 - Through the Eyes of Dementia, Shelburne (Alzheimer's Association)
- September 15 - Aging in Vermont: Communities on the Move conference, Killington (VT Assn. of Area Agencies on Aging)
- September 19 - Person-Centered Interviewing, Randolph (VT Assn. of Area Agencies on Aging)
- September 19 - Focus on Family Caregivers, Randolph (VT Assn. of Area Agencies on Aging)
- September 24 - MINDwalk, Burlington (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- September 27 - Medicare from A to D, webinar (VT Assn. of Area Agencies on Aging)

SASH Online

SASH Job Opportunities

Learn about [available positions](#) with SASH organizations statewide.

SASH Forum

For **current training information** as well as staff tools and resources, visit the [SASH Forum](#) on our website.

SASH Website

For the most **up-to-date contact list and referral forms**, visit sashvt.org.



Keep in touch!

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