SASH is a caring partnership among Vermont Nonprofit Housing Providers | Area Agencies on Aging | Home Health Providers | Mental Health Providers | Vermont Hospitals & Primary Care Providers

SASH-sponsored gatherings like this, hosted at Town Meadow Senior Housing in Essex, are among the ways SASH helps combat loneliness and isolation among older adults -- particularly those who aren't typically "joiners."

Combating Isolation = Improving Health

Especially at this time of year, older Vermonters are more likely than other age groups to stay indoors and become isolated -- and suffer significant health consequences as a result. Research has attributed social isolation to conditions including depression, dementia and early death. In fact, the AARP Foundation equates the health consequences of prolonged isolation to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

SASH is well-positioned to address this issue head on, since it's based in housing communities throughout Vermont, right where people live. This makes it easy to for participants to join in SASH-sponsored events and helps SASH coordinators get to know each person's challenges and needs. Moreover:

- SASH wellness nurses screen each participant for loneliness and isolation using two different measures.

- For participants who enjoy group activities (which research shows to be more effective than one-on-one interventions) there's no shortage of SASH programs and activities to join. One new initiative at Bennington SASH sites is a program specifically targeting social isolation and loneliness called "Call Me Friend."

- For participants who prefer to keep to themselves, SASH is an ever-present companion that checks in on them regularly.

- A number of SASH partners have strong initiatives of their own to counter isolation, such as the community meals and volunteer-companion programs run by Vermont's area agencies on aging.
AARP notes that poor physical and mental health and poorly designed communities are contributing factors to isolation among older adults -- all of which SASH addresses.

These are just some of the ways the statewide network of SASH partners in affordable housing, home health, agencies on aging, developmental/mental health/addiction services, and community and primary care -- is helping Vermonters get and stay healthy, live longer at home, and save Medicare costs.

**Resources on the Dangers of Social Isolation -- and Cures!**

Here are some resources about the health consequences of loneliness and isolation -- and how SASH is helping to nip the problem in the bud.

- SASH Fact Sheet: "Combating Social Isolation & Loneliness"

- January 2018 report from The Commonwealth Fund: "Sick & Alone: High-Need, Socially Isolated Adults Have More Problems but Less Support," which notes that three out of four high-need, socially isolated adults have mental-health problems and that 40 percent of them earn less than $15,000 a year.


- The AARP Foundation's website devoted to the health impacts of isolation among older adults: "Connect 2 Affect"

- A November 2017 qualitative study of older adults in England, which among other things found that elders felt "primary care practitioners lack understanding of non-physical problems and that a good relationship is necessary to discuss sensitive issues like loneliness": "What do older people experiencing loneliness think about primary care or community-based interventions to reduce loneliness?"

- A review of 32 studies on interventions to combat loneliness among older adults, which indicated better outcomes for group-based participatory interventions than non-participatory interventions -- and also better outcomes for group interventions that did not explicitly target isolated/lonely older people (80%) vs. those that did (58%): "Interventions targeting social isolation in older people: a systematic review"

- A far-reaching initiative in the United Kingdom called the Campaign to End Loneliness (Connections in Older Age), which offers a number of resources, including a compilation of case studies in "Promising Approaches to Reducing Loneliness in Later Life," and for caregivers, "Measuring Your Impact on Loneliness in Later Life," which among other things explores the tools for measuring loneliness and offers one of its own.

**Professional Development Opportunities**

Click on the SASH Forum Calendar for details about these and other opportunities.

- February 16 - **CARE: A Documentary Film** (NHPBS, The Endowment for Health and the Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging), online

- February 20 - **New England’s Fall Prevention Coalitions - A Panel Discussion**, webinar

- February 27 - **Parkinson's Disease Psychosis: Hallucinations, Delusions and Paranoia** (ASA), webinar

- March 6 - **Culinary Medicine: Mediterranean Diet in Clinical Medicine** (UVM Integrative Medicine), online
March 7 - Holistic Aging: Mind, Body and Soul (ASA & Home Instead Senior Care), webinar

March 14 - Stepping Forward Together - The Conversation Continues (Vermont Care Partners), Burlington

March 22, 23, 29 & 30 - Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) Leader training (UVM Health Network), Bennington

March 26 - 2018 Gerontology Symposium: Caregiving for Persons Living with Dementia: Families and Professionals Working Together (UVM Center on Aging), Burlington

March 26 - FreshStart Leader training (UVM Health Network), Rutland

April 5, 6, 12 & 13 - Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP) Leader training (UVM Health Network), Waterbury

April 7 - Integrative Pain Management Conference: National Experts, Local Focus (UVM Integrative Health), Burlington

April 11 - 13th Annual Vermont Geriatrics Conference (VT Area Health Education Centers Network), Colchester

April 11 - FreshStart Leader training (UVM Health Network), Rutland

April 16-20 - WRAP Facilitator Training (Copeland Center for Wellness and Recovery), Waterbury

April 21&22 - NAMI Provider Program Teacher Training, Rutland

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**SASH Online Resources**

**SASH Website:** For the most up-to-date contact list and referral forms, visit [sashVT.org](http://sashVT.org).

**SASH Forum:** For current training information as well as staff tools and resources, visit the Forum on the SASH website.

**SASH Job Opportunities:** Learn about available positions with SASH organizations statewide.

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**Keep in touch!**

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