

Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard  
Community Action Plan

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - HEALTHY AGING MARTHA'S VINEYARD – COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

**Purpose:** All the things that make the Vineyard a great place to live or visit also make it a great place to grow old. That's why a lot of baby boomers have moved here over the years and why many seasonal residents retire here. Island elders bring great wisdom and experience as they contribute to the island's quality of life. Population projections show that the Vineyard's 65+ population will consequently grow much faster than that of Mass. and the U.S.: by 2030 1 of every 3 Islanders will be 65+ (compared to 1 in 6 in 2010)! A recent Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard (HAMV) Survey showed the vast majority of island seniors want to stay here, living in their own homes, for as long as possible.

That creates a challenge for the community because as Islanders get into their 80's or develop a disability/chronic disease or can no longer drive or live on fixed incomes, the Island becomes a harder place to live. With our high cost of living and housing, it is especially hard on those with low incomes, and although some services are provided for those with very low income, there is a large group that earns more but still can't afford the services they need. Almost 50% of our elder households earn less than \$35,000 a year and almost 60% earn less than \$50,000. There are long waiting lists for elders who want to downsize into Island Elderly Housing. There's a shortage of primary and dental care, and specialty care requires time consuming and expensive travel off Island. There is no affordable assisted living facility on Island and limited market rate assisted living. There is no memory care, affordable or otherwise, for those with Alzheimer's or dementia, and national studies suggest that up to 43% of people over 85 will suffer from this disease.

Developing the infrastructure, services, workforce (and housing they can afford) to meet the needs of this growing elder population is a major challenge for our small isolated community. HAMV was created to help the Island meet that challenge. This Community Action Plan outlines the strategies and programs we will implement over the next 3 years, and suggests future actions to consider to make the Vineyard an even more Aging Friendly Island.

**Vision:** An Aging Friendly Island enables Islanders of all ages to participate in the community and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age or status. Being an Aging Friendly community brings value and benefits to all who live here. It's a place where people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages and where those who can no longer look after themselves receive the appropriate support they need, with our most vulnerable getting the top priority. It is both a great place to grow up and a great place to grow old. HAMV's role is to help the community work together to achieve this vision.

**Mission:** The mission of HAMV is to create an Aging Friendly Island meeting the needs of the rapidly growing 65+ population and those who care for them. HAMV does this by educating the community about these needs, and by developing collaborative approaches and programs that will improve services and facilities for Island elders. HAMV is a planning and advocacy organization and although it may incubate programs, it is not a service provider.

**History and Structure:** HAMV started in 2013 as a grass roots advocacy organization. Today it consists of over 75 people representing over 36 organizations serving elders. Strategic direction and priorities are set by a 37 member Oversight Committee including a Selectman from each Town, the four COA Directors and key stakeholders/community leaders. Daily activities are coordinated by a 9-member Executive Committee and staff person. Strategies and programs are developed by work groups focusing

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on specific areas of need. HAMV uses a model for solving complex social problems called "Collective Impact" to develop and implement these collaborative Island-wide strategies/programs. In this model HAMV is the "backbone" -- an independent, dedicated staff that guides vision and strategy through community wide planning, supports and coordinates activities of stakeholders, cultivates community engagement, and mobilizes resources.

HAMV also gets support from partnering with leaders at the national and state levels (e.g. Dr. Donald Berwick of IHI, and Alice Bonner, MA Secretary of Elder Affairs). HAMV was one of the first Age Friendly organizations in the State, and one of the first to be accepted by the World Health Organization/AARP Network of Age Friendly Communities. Since its inception, HAMV has raised over \$600,000 in grants and donations to fund staff and programs.

**Accomplishments:** It's remarkable what the Island community has already started or accomplished in this Aging Friendly Island effort:

- The 6 Island towns, facilitated by the County, funded the \$1.6 million purchase of a permanent home for the MV Center for Living, which will allow expansion of the Center's Supportive Day Program to 5 days a week. Towns are also contracting services for CORE (an in-home elder mental health counseling service) from MV Community Services (\$53,000 per year), and *FirstStop MV*, a staffed and online Information and Referral Service (\$86,990 per year) originally developed and piloted by HAMV as a service for Island Elders. They also fund the annual operating costs for *My Senior Center* at each of the Councils on Aging, a management information and scheduling system designed for COAs that was also developed and purchased for them by HAMV.
- Edgartown re-bricked its sidewalks to make it safer for elders to get around Town, and several Towns have made beach access possible and/or safer by constructing walkways and providing special beach wheel chairs.
- As a result of the Vineyard Transportation Authority's Consumer Advisory Board meetings, the VTA began the process of securing funding for a vehicle for a Cape Area Medivan four years ago, which was finally funded in FY 17. The VTA and Center for Living hope to begin this service in the new year. HAMV is working with them and the Wampanoag Tribe to strengthen elders' off-island medical travel as well as expand on-island possibilities.
- MV Hospital is in the process of converting to the *Medical Home Model*, a patient-centered, comprehensive, coordinated, accessible and committed to quality and safety model for primary care. This shift should improve accessibility as well as quality of services to elders, as well as other island residents.
- Organizations like the YMCA (which added a Director of Senior Programs/Services) and Featherstone created new programs for elders, including Featherstone's support group for people with dementia.
- HAMV recruited, educated and mobilized 70 "Senior Advocates" to help build political support for HAMV programs and advocate for elder needs at Town Meeting and other venues in their Towns.
- HAMV received grants to pilot two evidence-based programs: The first, *Matter of Balance*, is a fall prevention program that continues to be offered at Island Health Center and the Y. The second, *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*, is a self-care education program that teaches caregivers tools and strategies to manage the challenges they face. It continues to be offered by the Island Health Center.
- HAMV made a presentation to all Town Planning Boards and Affordable Housing Committees about the growing elder housing crisis and the need to change zoning to create more options (e.g. accessory apartments, "visitability", and multifamily housing). Two towns subsequently added

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bylaws to permit accessory apartments, and all towns are considering zoning changes to support creating elder and workforce housing options.

- HAMV held a National Association of Homebuilders training for Island Builders, Architects and Occupational Therapists to become “Certified Aging- in-Place Specialists” so they can help elders make home modifications needed to safely age in place.
- HAMV has participated in the island’s Coalition on Substance Use Disorder (SUD), assuring that the special needs of elders facing the challenges of alcohol and opioids are being met.
- As a critical first step in the Planning Process, HAMV conducted a needs assessment of all Islanders over age 65+ in association with the Heller Institute at Brandeis University. This Senior Survey had a remarkable 49% response rate and the resulting picture of elders’ views/needs provides an amazing resource for HAMV, the towns, service providers, advocates, and other collaborating organizations.

**The Community Action Plan** identifies strategies and programs each with specific indicators that will be used to measure results and help fine tune programs over time. These indicators will be determined before each program is launched. From the beginning, HAMV identified seven domains of critical importance to making this an Aging-Friendly community. Although this plan reflects our focus on four of those priority areas, the others – Community Engagement and Community Infrastructure – are no less important. They will be added as soon as resources can be found.

### **Highlights of the Major Strategies/Plans for HAMV’s top priority areas:**

#### **Health and Mental Health:**

1. **Reduce the incidence of falls.** Falls are the primary cause of injury for elders and fourth highest cause of death of seniors nationally . State health data show we have above average incidence of hospital admissions for falls, and in the HAMV survey 28% of elders suffered a fall in the last year. Over 50% of falls occur at home, and on this Island, many homes were not designed for elder use and present real risks. Therefore HAMV:
  - a. Formed a Falls Prevention Coalition that is the primary Island-wide vehicle providing education and information on the prevention and reduction of falls.
  - b. Launched a collaborative *Home Assessment and Modifications Program* where a Board of Health appointed nurse provides a free evaluation of the major risks in an elder’s home and makes recommendations to address them, including possible modifications. This, and the outreach program below, are a joint effort with our Housing Modifications programs.
  - c. Will conduct a major outreach campaign on the dangers of falls and how to avoid them, including the importance of home modifications. It will also promote the *Matter of Balance* and other fall prevention-related evidence-based programs HAMV launches.
  - d. Produced a half hour show on MVTV as part of a major outreach campaign for 2017 National Fall Prevention Day.
2. **Initiative to Increase Advance Care Planning (ACP) in partnership with MV Hospital.** Although many elders say they want to die at home and without undergoing extreme measures, many have avoided taking the steps necessary to assure their values and choices are known and will be followed if they are not able to communicate those wishes. When elders don’t make those decisions and assure their care goals and values and desires are known, both doctors and families struggle. All too often, patients who want to remain at home with loved ones end up being in a hospital, subject to procedures they never wanted. It is more useful all around for individuals to explore information

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and make care choices, talk with loved ones and write their choices down, and then talk with their doctors to make sure those decisions are clearly stated in medical records.

3. Together, HAMV and MV Hospital will:
  - a. Conduct a baseline assessment of how many Islanders have an advanced care plan.
  - b. Build a coalition of Island organizations to support the initiative.
  - c. Train all Hospital personnel in the importance of Care Plans and in how to convey this to patients.
  - d. Train a corps of volunteer ACP advocates to teach families about the importance of having "The Conversation" and creating an ACP, and how to do this using materials adapted from a Statewide ACP Initiative and national organizations like The Conversation Project and Honoring Choices Massachusetts.
  - e. Launch a multi-year media and PR outreach effort to teach about the importance of having both "the conversation" and an ACP, and where people can get help to do both.
4. **Other Programs/Strategies.** The Community Action Plan includes other Health and Mental health programs/strategies including: other health- related evidence -based programs; a "Medicaring" model for frail elders; geriatric training for healthcare and other service providers; increased use of "tele-health" and other hi-tech methods of bringing care to people in MV Hospital, physicians' offices, or in their homes; and new initiatives in community engagement and in workforce and volunteer development

**Housing and Housing Supports:**

1. **Housing Assessment and Modifications Program:** In addition to participating in the joint outreach and home assessment programs listed under Fall Prevention above, HAMV is developing a program to provide subsidized home modifications for elders who lack some or all of the resources to pay for them. The HAMV survey showed 45% of elders need to make modifications (e.g. grab bars, ramps, chair lifts, wider doors, etc.) to make their homes safer or improve their ability to stay there as they age, but 34% lack some of the resources needed for the modifications and 13% do not have the resources needed at all.
2. **SAFE SENIORS:** Many at-risk elders fail to reach out for help because they don't know they need it due to memory loss or physical issues or because they are ashamed or don't want to lose their independence or be sent to a nursing home. Safe Seniors has just been launched by the 4 COA's and HAMV which are the lead partners in this collaborative HAMV program to train people likely to be in contact with at-risk elders (e.g. first responders, bank tellers, store employees, postal workers) how to identify elders who need help, how to handle the situations in which they discover these elders, and who to call to get them the help they need. A presentation has been prepared and trainings will begin this fall. A training video will also be made so the training can be conveniently taken online.
3. **Creating More Elder Housing Options:** HAMV will continue to work with the Towns, the MVC, the Island Housing Trust, Island Elderly Housing, the Regional Housing Authority and the All Island Planning Board to create more housing options for elders. This includes zoning changes, home sharing programs, co-housing projects, and conversion of B&B's like the Arbor Inn in Edgartown to congregate elder housing, and other options.
4. **Other Programs/Strategies.** The Community Action Plan includes other Housing and Housing Support programs/strategies including: home visit programs using emergency personnel or volunteers; and developing collaborative subsidized non-medical home services program to help elders who can't afford them (driving, lawn/home maintenance, cleaning etc.).

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**Transportation:**

1. **On-Island, Develop an On- Demand, Arm-in Arm, Door to Door, Low Cost Transportation Service for essential travel (medical appointments, shopping, and post office) and for keeping elders engaged in the community.** There are models in other communities, including a "Shared Uber" service, which could be adapted to the Vineyard as scale allows.
2. **Other Programs/Strategies.** The Community Action Plan includes other Transportation and Infrastructure programs/strategies including: training all taxi and others who drive elders to be sensitive to complications and issues they might encounter driving elders with Alzheimer's/dementia, chronic diseases and disabilities; promoting the benefits of the existing VTA services to elders; and improving/expanding transit and pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks, signage, lighting, cross walks and handicap parking).

**Caregiver Support:**

1. **Caregiver Outreach Campaign.** Conduct a broad outreach campaign to raise Island consciousness about the numbers of island caregivers, the issues and harmful consequences Island caregivers face, and what resources are available to help them.
2. **Other Programs/Strategies.** The Community Action Plan includes other Caregiver Support programs/strategies including: strengthening the few diverse sources of support for caregivers into a stable network of available support, expanding those support and respite care services based on successful models elsewhere; launching other evidenced -based programs to address caregiver needs; revising/updating and digitally publishing the Health Council's 2010 *A Resource Guide for Caregivers on Martha's Vineyard*;

**Strategies/plans that cut across four priority areas:**

There are some strategies/programs that are internal to HAMV (not Community Wide) and others that are broad and overlap several priority areas. These are summarized briefly here.

1. **GreenHouse Model for Assisted Living and Nursing Home Care Market and Feasibility Study Release and Follow Up.** Over the last 2 years HAMV raised funds for and conducted a study of the local demand for and financial feasibility of building GreenHouse facilities for both Assisted Living/Memory Care and as a possible MVH alternative for Windemere. The GreenHouse model features a small scale home-like (not institutional) setting with 10-12 private rooms/private bath per home, family style dining, an open kitchen and a unique staffing model using Certified Nursing Assistants which maximizes the amount of quality time/attention given to residents by staff. HAMV is about to release the studies, which indicate there is demand for both types of facilities, and that the economics of this model are much better than what Windemere currently experiences. After release, MV Hospital and the entire community will need to discuss what is needed, and if the GreenHouse approach is appropriate, how to find developer, construction funding and land.
2. **Make HAMV Sustainable.** After considering a number of options to efficiently and effectively support its future work, including the formation of a new non-profit entity, HAMV has chosen to partner with MV Community Services as its fiscal agent. This arrangement will supply critically needed administrative services necessary to support a broad based, grassroots, volunteer effort like HAMV. As part of the fiscal agent arrangement, MV Community Services will provide an administrative home for personnel employed to support the work of HAMV. As another key part of its sustainability plan, HAMV has formed an additional partnership with the MV Commission. The MV Commission has agreed to provide much needed planning expertise. Finally, stable financial support by the Towns of Martha's

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Vineyard forms a third critical element in the sustainability plan. A modest but stable financial support by the towns is essential to demonstrate community commitment to potential outside funders. This combination of grassroots engagement, strong administrative support, planning expertise and modest but stable financial investment by MV Towns will sustain the vital work of HAMV into the future. We are confident that external funders (e.g. foundations and private philanthropists) will find such a sustainability plan attractive as they make decisions on our requests for grants to bring new ideas and resources to our community.

**3.Other.** The Community Action Plan includes other broad strategies including: an Island-wide volunteer recruiting, vetting and scheduling system; and an integrated, patient centered, subsidized system of home care that combines both medical and non-medical long term services and supports.

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