

Our towns need a Community Nurse or Healthcare Coordinator. 42% of us are old now, lack of housing options or retirement homes, we need to consider aging at home. My Sharon town has had a Care Coordinator for 9 years. We get to know her and can depend on her finding the necessary resources we're in need of. She lessens many trips to the medical facilities and cuts down on emergency situations.

She helped me and my husband several times providing a learned relationship we can go to, always there for us. She helps translate and explain medical terms we don't understand, advise about medicines, and make our surrounding safer for us to avoid falls. To combat isolation she interviews us about what music we enjoyed when young and gets a CD made especially for us.

Our Care Coordinator helped a complicated case; a senior with advanced dementia, living alone at the wheelchair level, for more than 1.5 years. Through advocacy, communication with agencies, facilitation of doctor's appts, application assist to choices for care, implementation of durable medical equipment to prevent falls, the client has been able to meet her goal of remaining home. All this is free.

Many of the good agencies that service the elder population, have staff shortages and have cut back or stopped doing home visits. Having a town Nurse/Coordinator on the ground enables a connection to these services. They don't do hands on medical tasks like the Visiting Nurses, they appraise and navigate to what's needed.

The Community Nurse or Care Coordinator idea is spreading around the Upper Valley. I urge more towns to consider getting this kind of help in place. There's bill in the House: H.358 for the purpose of establishing community nurse programs in more Vermont communities. Nina please encourage this idea!