



## Neighborhood Connections Is Off to a Fast Start!

The buzz is growing.\* Recent news coverage of Neighborhood Connections (NC), a new and innovative program of JFS Worcester, indicates that Worcester is excited to have a dedicated program that helps folks 60 and older remain living at home as they grow older.

Beginning in May, the program will provide services to its members. Initially membership is limited to residents of Worcester's West Side. With just a phone call to Neighborhood Connections, members can connect to each other and the services and support of trusted local vendors.



“Neighborhood Connections is all about just that – connections,” said Laurel Blair, director of the program. “We’re here to help seniors sustain an independent life style in the comfort and convenience of their own homes.”

Neighborhood Connections doesn't provide the actual services, but rather links members with the services and other resources they need. For example, transportation is high on the list of concerns for many seniors. The program will help seniors solve their transportation issues by making sure they're aware of all of the options available.

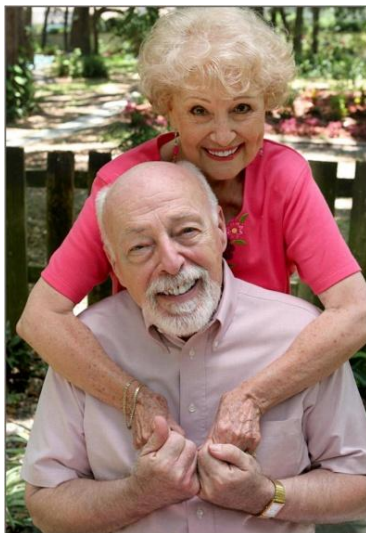
### Addressing Financial Challenges

“In this tough economy, the need for a program like Neighborhood Connections is greater than ever,” said Steve Slaten, Ph.D., JFS executive director. “Seniors need to figure out how to spend their money wisely, and this is one of the many things that Neighborhood Connections can help with.”

For example, the program can connect members with a fuel assistance program or help negotiate group discounts. When a snow storm is expected to hit, NC can help its members be ready, from arranging for grocery shopping, to lining up someone to clear the walkway or driveway once the snow stops.

At a recent kick-off event held at Blessed Sacrament Church's Phelan Center, financial advisor and registered representative Joonu-Noel Coste offered attendees advice on “Conserving Your Money Now.”

For a reasonable membership fee, Neighborhood Connections provides access to vendors whose services have been meticulously prescreened by JFS, such as plumbers, landscapers, computer technicians, massage therapists and countless others.



“Social connections are also important,” added Laurel. “Neighborhood Connections will sponsor social and cultural programs for seniors to get them out of their homes and engaged with each other and their community. We’ll encourage our members to form clubs of all sorts – book, gardening, cooking – as a way of staying connected and having fun.” The program collaborates with organizations from across Worcester, such as the Worcester Senior Center, the Jewish Community Center, and Elder Services of Worcester Area.

### Growing Trend in Elder Services

According to surveys by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), most American older adults do not want to leave their familiar surroundings, with nearly 90% of those polled reporting a desire to stay in their current residence for as long as possible.

Neighborhood Connections is part of a growing movement to make neighborhoods comfortable places to age by connecting seniors with

community resources that address their changing needs as they grow older.

Neighborhood Connections traces its roots to Sam Gordon, a beloved West Side resident who teamed up with JFS Worcester to fulfill his vision of a community of neighbors aging together safely and with dignity. Greater Worcester Community Foundation recognized the need and, based on the reputation of JFS, provided consultants to create a business plan and eventually awarded JFS a five-year grant. Sadly, Sam passed away in 2007 and thus was not able to see his vision come to fruition.

Volunteers are a vital part of the organization. "We welcome volunteers of all ages for activities such as visiting homebound seniors, escorting members on shopping trips and to doctor's appointments, leading clubs and helping with various programs," said Laurel. "Volunteering will be a lot of fun and provide much-needed services to seniors."

"We're grateful for the support of the Fairlawn Foundation, the Jewish Federation of Central Mass., the Central Mass. Agency on Aging, the Weinberg Foundation, individual donors and many others," said Steve. "This has been a tremendously collaborative effort, and we are indebted to everyone who has helped make Neighborhood Connections a reality."

For more information, please contact Laurel or Kim Hall at 508-438-0964 or [lblair@neighborhoodconnect.org](mailto:lblair@neighborhoodconnect.org).

---

\* Word of Neighborhood Connections is getting around through stories in the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, *Fifty-Plus Advocate* and other publications, and interviews with Laurel and Steve on TV-3, WCRN, WCUW and other local broadcasters.

