LOWLINC
LIVING INDEPENDENTLY IN OUR COMMUNITY

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Message from the President

by Steve Hein

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Happy New Year! As I begin this year as the President of the LOWLINC Board of Directors, I want to thank **John Beisheim**, **Emily Slunt**, and **Mary Jane Oldham** for their work on behalf of LOWLINC members. They have all completed their terms of service on the Board. I appreciate their leadership and I hope they won't mind too much if I call on them every once in a while as I embark on my new role. Also, I'm pleased to welcome **Candy Hovanetz** to our Board as she begins her term this year.

Many of you know that my mom and dad, Lynn and Carol, were among the first LOWLINC members when the organization began operations back in 2015. At the time, my wife, Debbie, and I were still working professionally and living in northern Virginia, though we had already planned to move to LOW upon retiring and did so just about two years later. Being members of LOWLINC gave my mom and dad the confidence they needed to feel comfortable living on their own in their "Dun Movin'" house here at LOW. As they began to have mobility and other health issues, even though I was close by, they did not always need to call on me; they could call LOWLINC. They developed new and lasting friendships with several of our volunteers, and, even today, I hear stories about them from LOWLINC volunteers.

I agreed to serve as a volunteer on the LOWLINC Board beginning in 2021 partly as a way to thank LOWLINC members and volunteers for helping my mom and dad, partly as a way to honor my mom and dad's memory, and mostly to help other families maintain their relationships by assisting their older loved ones living here at the Lake. This is a benefit of LOWLINC that we often don't see and can't really measure, but I know it is one that really makes a difference.

As we enter 2023, LOWLINC has an expanded professional staff organization to support our growing membership, many new and continuing volunteers, more social activities than ever before, a minibus, new programs, and a long-term strategic plan in place to allow us to sustain the organization for years to come as we reach out to more of our older adult neighbors who could benefit from LOWLINC. Thank you all for the opportunity to serve the LOW community as President of the LOWLINC Board.

From the Executive Director's Desk

By Jeanne Comeau

We are excited to watch our LOWLINC membership continue to grow! Please invite friends and neighbors to learn more about LOWLINC. You can help ensure that anyone at the Lake who is 55+ has the opportunity to benefit from LOWLINC services, health and wellness information, and fun social activities. Our Speakers Series is open to everyone in LOW, and members can bring guests to social activities. Also, LOWLINC welcomes adult volunteers of any age.

In addition to our regular services and activities, LOWLINC is increasingly active in advocating for older adults. Our volunteers promote community action for expanding transportation options in the area, make our voice heard at the local and state levels, and help other communities learn from LOWLINC's experiences as part of the village movement. We envision a world where all older adults have access to resources, support, and community.

Please join us this spring for presentations on an array of interesting topics, including using technology, and health and wellness. Our minibus trips will include going to see *Escape to Margaritaville* at Riverside Theater featuring Jimmy Buffet's iconic music and Judy Carmichael presenting American songs with swing piano at Stage Alive.

In addition, please call us to schedule any member services that may be helpful. Did you know that, in addition to requesting a ride to the doctor, you can ask for a medical note taker to accompany you? This volunteer captures the information provided by your doctor during your visit so that you can review the notes later at home.

There is no greater feeling than knowing there is someone you can call on when you need just a bit of help. That helping hand can be just what we need to remain in our homes—healthy, happy and connected with friends and neighbors. We are grateful for our members who bring their wide range of interesting experiences and life stories to our community and for our LOWLINC volunteers and generous supporters who are always there for our LOWLINC members.

I look forward to seeing you in 2023!

Warm regards,
Jeanne

Area Transportation Assessment Reveals Needs, Gaps

by Carolyn Rourke, LOWLINC Volunteer

Older adults, as well as adults of all ages who have mobility problems, face challenges in obtaining reliable transportation to critical services, a recent survey of transportation needs in eastern Orange County has found. The survey was conducted in August and September 2022 to better understand the transportation needs of these residents. This topic is extremely timely as our population continues to age and in light of anticipated growth in our part of the county.

The assessment was performed by the Center for Survey Research, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia. It was sponsored and funded by the Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) on behalf of LOWLINC and the RRRC's Regional Transportation Collaborative. The RRRC is a regional planning group formed by the five county governments that make up Virginia State Planning District Nine, which includes Orange County.

Respondents were asked about their current driving status and habits, access to transportation, distances traveled for various services, and how often those services are needed. Respondents were also polled about their awareness of available transportation assistance resources. For the respondents, 81 percent reported they are able to drive themselves for all their needs, while 19 percent said they need help with transportation all of the time or some of the time.

Among the respondents who reported transportation needs, the following information was revealed:

- **Driving Status.** 53 percent considered themselves physically unable to drive, 31 percent reported a physical impairment or disability that affects their access to transportation, and 34 percent said they prefer not to drive.
- **Access to Transportation.** 79 percent said they get rides from family and friends; other types of transportation methods included volunteer-program-provided driving services (15%), rides from church or community groups (12%), using a paid driver (12%), and walking or biking (6%); 12% reported they are homebound.
- **Distances Traveled and Frequency of Trips.** More than half of respondents with transportation needs reported needing assistance for prescription pickup (65%), groceries and shopping (55%), and religious services (52%) within 1 to 5 miles of their homes. More than 75 percent of respondents with transportation needs require weekly transportation for grocery and other shopping.
- **Awareness of Transportation Resources/Services.** Respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of a variety of area resources and services for obtaining transportation. These were among the most surprising results: 21 percent of respondents with transportation needs were *not aware of any* of the listed resources and services. In addition, 68 percent have not used any of the services or resources.

Conclusions/Indications/Next Steps: The survey concluded *"there is demonstrated need for public transportation and expanded transportation support services in the region. Additionally, many residents are not familiar with the currently available transportation resources and even among those with expressed transportation needs, use of these existing services is relatively low."*

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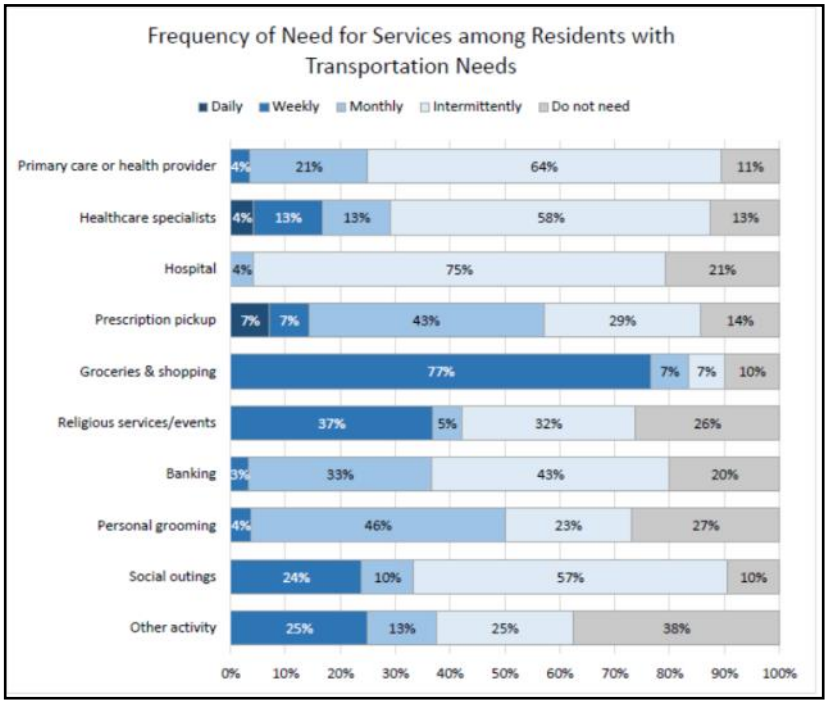
Area Transportation Assessment *(continued from page 3)*

LOWLINC has consulted with the Regional Transportation Collaborative about next steps and plans to develop an information campaign to raise awareness about available transportation resources in our region. We will also meet with Orange County officials, including Supervisor Lee Frame, to review the survey results and discuss potential areas of county involvement. The study has presented us with a wealth of information about transportation needs in our region and identified several areas for further study and action.



Meet New Board Member Candy Hovanetz

Candy Hovanetz moved to Lake of the Woods in 2012 and was elected to the Board of Directors at the end of 2022 for a two-year term. Candy has been an active LOWLINC volunteer, serving as a member of the Social Committee, a driver for the new minibus, and a host at our weekly Meet, Greet and Eat get togethers at the Fareways Cafe. Candy brings to the board over 40 years of IT experience. Most recently she held Service Delivery Executive, Program and Project Management, and Operations Manager positions on the NMCI (Navy Marine Corps Intranet) project. Candy formed and led startup staff for two Network Operations Centers for the NMCI in Pearl Harbor, HI, and Quantico, VA. After retiring in 2014, she joined LOW Lions where she served as Secretary for three administrations and remains involved in Sight and Hearing programs, blood drives, and golf committees.

Meet Our New Administrative Services Coordinator, Angie Jones

Angie Jones began her tenure on the LOWLINC staff as our part-time Administrative Services Coordinator at the end of November. She brings to LOWLINC a range of small business administrative and operations experience. In a previous position, Angie compiled, computed, and recorded financial and other data. She analyzed accounting systems for efficiency and use of accepted accounting procedures. Angie also overhauled the standards of practice for departmental onboarding processes and improved the software system, resulting in increased employee performance and training. Originally from Maryland, Angie and her family lived in Northern Virginia for three years. In early 2019, they visited LOW and immediately knew this was where they wanted to be. Then, in 2022, they bought their home in LOW and moved into this beautiful community. She and her partner plan to raise their children and eventually retire here in LOW. She is excited to serve and be involved in her community through her work with LOWLINC.

What Does Volunteering for LOWLINC Mean?

by Terry Maple, Volunteers Committee Chair

LOWLINC has a total of nearly 160 volunteers and just before Thanksgiving we celebrated at our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner how much our members value their service. At the dinner, I closed by saying, “It’s only because you volunteers give so generously of your time that LOWLINC exists—thank you for all you do for our community. Your service is truly appreciated by everyone.”

This past year, volunteers provided more than 5,040 services. **Just how amazing is that!**

Last year, we introduced several new activities for our members, but for me personally, the best was offering boat trips on the lake. Here we are, living in our beautiful lake community, yet many of our members (and other residents) aren’t able to enjoy being on the water on a regular basis. Some have lived here for years and not seen the lake from this unique and beautiful perspective. Well, thanks to a small, and hopefully growing, number of volunteers, that is no longer the case. Well done to those who stepped forward last year to provide boat rides and to all those who will do the same this year.

One of the most important opportunities we offer LOWLINC volunteers is training, thus ensuring they have the necessary skills to undertake their volunteer roles and feel comfortable working with our members and other volunteers. Attendance is not compulsory, but if you’ve not attended any training sessions, you might want to avail yourself of some of them this year. You never know when you might need the knowledge they offer, plus, you get the chance to learn something new that may help you serve our members while meeting some other amazing volunteers like yourself. Our training program is also an excellent opportunity to provide feedback to help us improve our services and processes or to offer new ideas to look into. This feedback is incredibly important.

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Volunteering (*continued from page 5*)

Now, I've mentioned this in my past two monthly Volunteer News and Updates e-newsletters, but one of my major concerns is the resurgence of COVID-19. If you've not kept up with the boosters, please consider scheduling your next one soon. With waning protection over time and new strains of the virus appearing, being up to date with vaccine boosters is essential. Additionally, having a few home COVID tests handy so you can check yourself if you have symptoms is another way to help prevent transmission, as well as give you a jump on possible treatment if you test positive. Since it's also flu and cold season, please try to keep yourself and others as safe and healthy as possible.

As LOWLINC membership grows among our older adult neighbors here in LOW, so too does the number of service requests for transportation, particularly for medical appointments. Even with 160 volunteers, new volunteer drivers are essential to helping us maintain our ability to match drivers with our members' growing needs for transportation. If you know anyone who has hinted they'd like to volunteer but hasn't, please encourage them to do so, especially if they like to drive. Many of our drivers and members establish great friendships—an added benefit!

I mentioned above how much we appreciate our volunteers, and we try to express this through our appreciation events. Please watch for announcements of dates and come to one or more of these events. It's not only our chance to thank you, but an opportunity for you to get to know other volunteers.

Enjoying a non-winter day on the Clubhouse deck!

Volunteers and members enjoying a Stage Alive performance.

Volunteers made our 1st Annual Walk last fall a memorable and fun event for the entire community at Lake of the Woods.
Thank you!

Tips and News Briefs

10 Ways To Prevent Falls

One out of four older adults will fall this year, but fewer than half of them will talk with their doctors about it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Per the CDC, falls are the No. 1 cause of injuries in adults over 65, resulting in hip fractures, cuts, and even serious head and brain injuries that can be fatal. Even when there's no serious injury, a fall can be so frightening that people may avoid certain activities out of fear they'll fall again. And that's not unreasonable, because if you fall once, your chance of falling again doubles, according to the CDC.

Whether it's slippery floors, rickety stairs, or electrical cords, some of the most common causes of falls are in the home, where you might have a false sense of security. That's why fall prevention starts with creating a safe living space. It doesn't have to involve a complete house remodel. You can make yourself safer from falls at home with just a few basic changes. Home care experts offer the following advice for preventing falls at home.

1. **Clean up clutter.** The easiest way to prevent falls is to keep your home neat and tidy. Remove all clutter, such as stacks of old newspapers and magazines, especially from hallways and staircases.
2. **Repair or remove tripping hazards.** Sometimes home fixtures can contribute to falls. Examine every room and hallway, looking for items such as loose carpet, slippery throw rugs, or wood floorboards that stick up. Then repair, remove, or replace those items for more effective fall prevention.
3. **Install grab bars and handrails.** If your mobility is limited, these safety devices can be crucial for going up and down stairs, getting on and off the toilet, and stepping in and out of the bathtub or shower. Have a handyman or family member help with this if necessary.
4. **Avoid loose clothing.** You want to feel comfortable at home, but very baggy clothes can sometimes make you more likely to fall. Opt for better-fitting and properly hemmed clothing that doesn't bunch up or drag on the ground.
5. **Light it right.** Inadequate lighting is another major hazard. To create a home that's easier to navigate, install brighter light bulbs where needed, particularly in stairways and narrow hallways. Consider adding night-lights in bedrooms and bathrooms.

6. **Wear shoes.** Socks may be comfortable, but they present a slipping risk. Preventing falls at home can be as simple as wearing shoes. If shoes are too uncomfortable, you can also buy nonslip socks that have grips on the soles of the feet.

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10 Ways To Prevent Falls *(continued from page 7)*

7. **Make it nonslip.** Bathtubs and showers, as well as floors in kitchens, bathrooms, and porches, can become extremely dangerous when wet. To prevent falls on slick surfaces, consider nonslip mats.

8. **Live on one level.** Even with precautions like guardrails, stairs can present a significant falling hazard. If it's not possible to live on one level, try to limit stair trips.

9. **Move more carefully.** Many people fall at home by moving too quickly from a sitting to a standing position and vice versa. Preventing falls can be as easy as taking your time. Pause after going from lying down to sitting and then from sitting to standing.

10. **Join a preventive exercise program.** There are several exercise programs for older adults available here at LOW. These exercise regimens focus on improving balance and strengthening muscles. A physical therapist can also recommend exercise programs and assistive devices, if necessary, to help keep you safe.

Did You Know?

… Americans Are Spending More Time Alone

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Time Use Survey, our social lives have been getting less social for years. Between 2014 and 2019, time spent with friends went down (and time spent alone went up) more than it did during the pandemic. The survey found that between 2010 and 2013, the amount of time the average American spent physically with friends was 6½ hours per week. But in 2014, this time began to decrease, and by 2019, was only 4 hours per week, a significant 37 percent decline in just five years. COVID then deepened this decline in time spent with friends to the point that, in 2021, the average American spent just 2 hours and 45 minutes a week with friends. Perhaps more alarming, Americans did not transfer this lost time to spouses or children either—instead, they chose to be alone. While it is too soon to know the long-term consequences of this shift, spending less time with friends is not a good practice by most standards. LOWLINC knows the importance of maintaining social connections with others and helps our members increase and enjoy their time with others.

… Your Medicare Monthly Premium Actually Went Down This Year

The standard monthly premium for Medicare Part B went down just a little bit more than $5 for 2023—from $170.10 to $164.90. Of course, it had gone up around 14% from 2021 to 2022, but every little bit helps. Many Medicare beneficiaries have their premiums automatically deducted from their Social Security benefit payments, so "seeing" your Medicare premium payments often requires you to review your Social Security 1099 form received at the beginning of each year.

… Tips To Make Your Kitchen Storm Ready

With winter upon us and the prospect of severe weather and the potential at Lake of the Woods for occasional power outages, it's important to prepare by readying our kitchens. Before a potential power outage, here are a few things you can do to be ready in the kitchen and to keep perishable foods as safe as possible:

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Did You Know? *(Continued from page 8)*

- Clean the kitchen. Run your dishwasher or otherwise wash your dishes; keep a flashlight or other battery-powered light in your kitchen/eating area, and make sure you have a manual can opener at the ready.
- Stock your pantry. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross recommend a three-day emergency supply of nonperishable food items such as canned fruits, juices, vegetables, beans, meat or fish, cereals, peanut butter, and root vegetables like carrots or turnips that can keep for days and be eaten raw.
- If you do lose power, keep your refrigerator and freezer closed as much as possible. Food will remain safe in a closed refrigerator for up to 4 hours, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Food will stay safe in a full freezer for up to 48 hours. You can also prepare in advance by gathering coolers and freezing some ice packs in case you need to move items from your refrigerator or freezer during an extended power outage. After power is restored, perishable foods that have been held at temperatures above 40 degrees for two hours or longer should be discarded, according to the USDA.

Amazon.com Is Eliminating Amazon Smile

For many years, Amazon's Smile program allowed shoppers to designate a charity and made a small donation (0.5% of order amount) to these selected charities at no cost to the shoppers. In February, Amazon will be discontinuing this program. Thank you to all who have supported LOWLINC in this way! It is much appreciated.

LOWLINC Board and Staff:

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Reggie Gavett, Secretary
Jean McLallen, Treasurer
Candy Hovanetz, Member

Jeanne Comeau, Executive Director
Jane Capone, Member Services Coord.
Angie Jones, Admin. Services Coord.

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Fundraising and Donor Engagement: TBD
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Member Outreach: Carolyn Rourke, Chair
Service Providers: Peggy Siegel, Lead
Social Activities: Elaine Cook, Chair
Technology: TBD
Volunteers: Terry Maple, Chair

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LOWLINC (Lake of the Woods, Living Independently in Our Community) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit fee-based volunteer service organization whose mission is to enable LOW's older residents to remain safely and independently at home. Our operating model is based on the nationwide village model.

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