



ALBANY GUARDIAN SOCIETY®



**Capital Region  
Villages Collaborative**

**Wednesday, February 10, 2021**

## **Agenda**

- 9:30 a.m. Welcome & Introductions**  
Ken Harris, Executive Director, Albany Guardian Society
- 9:35 a.m. Shenendehowa Neighbors Connecting (SNC) WIFI Access Program**  
Hear about how SNC coordinated a grant to provide 100 seniors living in senior housing free Wi-Fi for the next two years.  
Partnership Grant: Saratoga Foundation (Adirondack Trust Company)  
Presenters: Nancy Varley, Kim Swire, Sue Streett - SNC
- 10:00 a.m. "Caring Village" Care Coordination App**  
An overview of a care coordination software that allows access to a calendar, "to do" lists, medical information, and important documents.  
Presenter: Ken Harris, Albany Guardian Society
- 10:20 a.m. Villages Technical Assistance Center (VTAC) Updates**
- 10:40 a.m. Capital Region Villages Collaborative Updates**
- Bethlehem Neighbors
  - City of Albany
  - Guilderland Neighbors
  - Neighbors of Northern Columbia County
  - Niskayuna Neighbors
  - Rhinebeck at Home
  - Shenendehowa Neighbors Connecting
  - Others...
- 11:00 a.m. Adjourn**

**Attachment:** Article: "Gift of Technology to Help Seniors" (SNC WiFi Access Program)

# Community News

## Gift of technology to help seniors

Dec 25, 2020

CLIFTON PARK, N.Y. — Senior citizens residing in two local apartment communities will get full Wi-Fi connections for the first time thanks to the work of a local organization focused on making neighborhood connections.

After hearing numerous reports of social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and reasoning the effect on those in senior community without access to the internet must be worse, members of Shenendehowa Neighbors Connecting (SNC) decided to do something about it.

The organization applied for and was awarded a \$4,000 grant that will give more than 100 seniors living in the Shenendehowa School District free Wi-Fi for the next two years.

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SNC is a three-year-old membership organization focused on enabling social connections among its members and encouraging participation in the community. As part of the Village Movement, its mission is to engage residents in the Shen School District who are 55 and older in social, educational, and supportive activities that enable them to live fully and independently in their own homes in southern Saratoga County.

The Village Movement is named after the first “Village” established in 2002, Beacon Hill Village. The term “Village” is used to describe the concept of coordinating a variety of existing senior services, local services, volunteers, and new partnerships to assist seniors to remain independent. There are 18 Villages open in New York State with others in development including several being planned in the Capital District.

Francine Rodger, a member of SNC, said she suggested submitting the grant after attending virtual meetings during the past year centered on technology and seniors.

“I joined a meeting of a group called Senior Planet (Center), it’s part of a larger organization called OATS, Older Adults Technology Services,” Rodger said. “In that meeting they talked about doing this type of thing in Manhattan and in other places and that got me to thinking; what places here don’t have this.”

A longtime southern Saratoga County resident, Rodger knew of two possible senior communities that might need internet connections, Bishop Hubbard Apartments and Shenendehowa Village. SNC members contacted management in both communities and found internet access was on a unit-by-unit basis and for many the cost was prohibitive.

“We had a survey done in both communities asking the residents if they thought having internet access was important and how many were computer literate,” Rodger said. “We found having internet access was important to them and about 75 percent were computer literate.”

As part of its research SNC reached out also to the Capital District Regional Planning Commission for data.

Nancy Varley, the president of SNC, said one of its board members happens to be a grant writer by profession and she completed the application for the group.

“She told us there was grant money out there for good causes, knew the names of a number of foundations and knew their award cycles,” Varley said. “Our mission is to help senior citizens who live in the Shen School district to continue to live independently in their own homes as long as possible and it’s a lot easier to do that if you at least have access to the internet.”

Varley said the grant was submitted to the Saratoga Foundation in September. The Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Adirondack Trust Company. To help the application stand out SNC asked for and received a letter of support from Rep. Paul Tonko.

“We thought let’s try for the grant. It’s a good thing to do; they are not members of our Village but they are members of our community,” Varley said. “We thought having internet access might brighten their lives and help them contact people in this virtual world we’re going through.”

Varley said the organization received word it had been awarded the grant three to four weeks after the submittal.

Each community contains 50 residential units. The grant funding covers the cost of having internet provider, Spectrum, install a building Wi-Fi unit in each community and provide internet access to each residential unit for the next two years. The work is expected to be completed by the end of the month.

“We polled some of the residents before we started this and they were all very excited to have an opportunity to get internet,” Varley said. “It’s a civic kind of a thing to do. COVID is hard on everybody but more so for seniors, especially so if you don’t have internet.”

Rodger agreed that getting internet service to the seniors might help any feelings of isolation.

“We call it Shenendehowa Neighbors Connecting and it is,” she said.