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## Message from the President

By Steve Hein

Even though it was a pretty mild winter, I'm sure many of us are eager for the longer days and warmer weather as we go through another spring season here in Central Virginia. Our 2023 Speaker Series kicked off in March with a presentation and discussion on dementia, led by Ellen Phipps, Executive Director of Aging Together. April's Speaker Series program is coming up fast and will focus on decluttering. Other Speaker Series topics planned for the year include mental health and prescription drug costs. LOWLINC presents this series not only for our members and volunteers, but also for the entire Lake of the Woods community, with topics focused on the interests of older adults. Be sure to check the calendar of events on the LOWLINC website and make plans to attend these informative and useful sessions.



In the last edition of NewsLinc, you read about an area transportation needs assessment conducted last fall as a joint initiative of LOWLINC and the Regional Transportation Collaborative (RTC), funded by the Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Commission. LOWLINC continues to advocate for the transportation needs of our older adult community, and, along with Kristin Lam Peraza of RTC, recently reviewed the results of this study with Orange County Supervisor Lee Frame and Orange County Planning Commissioner Bryan Nicol (both LOW residents). We discussed ways we can respond to the results and brainstormed some ideas for potential additional transportation services in our area of the county.

Many of you knew long-time LOWLINC member and volunteer Nora Simpson, who passed away in early 2022. We recently received a bequest from her estate. We are honored and humbled to have been remembered by our good friend and colleague.

Have a wonderful Spring everyone!



## From the ED's Desk

By Jeanne Comeau

I am excited to share that May 2nd will mark one year of my service to LOWLINC. You have made this a wonderful year, and I thank you.

I continue to be impressed by the LOWLINC community.

**Our members** bring a wealth of stories about lives well lived. In 2022, LOWLINC members, guests, and volunteers enjoyed 184 activities, events, and programs.

**Our volunteers** bring their skills, experience, and passion for serving others. During 2022, LOWLINC volunteers contributed a total of more than 10,000 hours of their time.

**Our donors** bring their resources, ensuring that we can continue our work. In 2022, our generous supporters wowed us with their individual donations, event sponsorships, grants, and partnerships. Their recognition of the value of LOWLINC is deeply appreciated.

In addition to providing a wide array of member services and social opportunities, LOWLINC actively advocates for older adults and provides education to the community. Through advocacy, we promote extending transportation options, increasing access to state and local programs, and developing resources that support aging with dignity within our community. Our ongoing education programs provide practical, hands-on information and increase community awareness about our lives as older adults, both the challenges and the rewards.

We envision a world where all older adults have the welcoming, neighbor-to-neighbor support that enables each of us to age with dignity within our communities. I look forward to all that we will accomplish together this year.

See you around LOWLINC!

Jeanne Comeau  
Executive Director



*"Enhancement of my independence and friendliness/  
genuine concern of volunteers. Friends made."*

– LOWLINC member



## Volunteer Spotlight: LOWLINC's Minibus Drivers

By Mary-Jane Atwater

For many LOWLINC members, getting to a social activity is at least as much fun as being there. That's because they are transported in comfort in a 14-passenger minibus where they can sit back, relax, and socialize with other members. Since May 2022, LOWLINC has had use of a brightly decorated, wheelchair-accessible minibus, which was procured by the Regional Transportation Collaborative [RTC] and is owned by Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services [RRCS], our local Area Agency on Aging. The bus is parked at the LOW Church and is used for a wide range of LOWLINC social activities and outings. Plans are being developed to expand the use of the minibus within the community, under LOWLINC's administration. RRCS and RTC cover all vehicle expenses, including gas, maintenance, and insurance.

**This month's Volunteer Spotlight shines on LOWLINC's six volunteer minibus drivers: Dave Davies, Reggie Gavett, Elaine Cook, Jeff Flynn, Carolyn Rourke, and Candy Hovanetz.** According to Dave Davies, "The bus is easy and fun to drive, and the members love it. We couldn't go to as many places as we do without it. We always have a host from the Social Activities Committee who rides along. The driver is responsible for the bus, and the host is responsible for the participants." Popular bus outings have included Stage Alive concerts in Culpeper, Fred Nats games in Fredericksburg, Fall foliage trips, the U.S. Army Museum, Yoder's Farm Market, Riverside Theater, the Spotsylvania Mall for walking and shopping, and the Culpeper Library.

According to Elaine Cook, chair of the Social Activities Committee and a driver, "We have many members who no longer drive, so even for a small outing, such as a library trip, our members can get out of the house and be with others. While we're on the bus, I can also check in with members to ask for their suggestions for events they'd like to see us add. We're building our social program this way." For LOWLINC member and frequent minibus rider Hope Hall, "The minibus program opens up the world to us. There are so many places we go now where we wouldn't be able to drive to."



*LOWLINC members show off the books and magazines they chose during a minibus trip to the Culpeper Library. From left to right, Peggy Grella, Michael Mangan, Jeff Flynn (driver), Don Wright, Elizabeth Wiley, Judith Ayers. Hidden: Terry Hines and Hattie Brinsfield.*

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### LOWLINC's Minibus Drivers *(Continued from page 3)*

In order to drive the bus, volunteers participate in a training program that includes how to operate the wheelchair lift, secure the chair, and complete a pre-trip 25-item checklist. Dave Davies and Reggie Gavett have completed a more extensive training program offered by the Community Transportation Association of America, which certifies them to train other volunteer drivers. Dave and Reggie are developing a training program for new minibus drivers that will include classroom instruction, as well as practical training on the bus. The training will be held here at LOW. **If you would like to learn more about becoming a LOWLINC volunteer minibus driver, call 855-569-5462 or email [lowlinc.communications@gmail.com](mailto:lowlinc.communications@gmail.com).**



*LOWLINC members and volunteers take a break from walking and shopping during a minibus trip to the Spotsylvania Mall. Clockwise from the front, Frances Lynch (in blue jacket), Michael Mangan, Debbie Beisheim (event host), Elaine Cook (driver), Hattie Brinsfield, and Peggy Grella.*



*Volunteer drivers Reggie Gavett and Elaine Cook practice using the minibus wheelchair lift during a training session.*



## Decluttering As We Age: Is It a Loss or a Gain?

By Lyn Fogarty

A study by the University of Connecticut found that by removing or controlling clutter, we can directly reduce the stress that stems from the mess. Controlling clutter can help us to feel happier, less anxious, and more confident in ourselves. Decluttering can also energize us and sharpen our focus. By getting out from under the weight of all our stuff, we have more time for the people in our lives. While these benefits apply to all ages, there are additional positives to decluttering as we get older. I have found that the more stuff I have around me, the more stress I feel, and I am already feeling more stress because I'm aging. I don't need any more!

*"Clutter isn't just the stuff on the floor. It's anything that gets between you and the life you want to be living" - Peter Walsh, professional organizer*

### ***Make the tough decisions, bit by bit***

When I set out to reduce the contents of our home, I didn't tackle the entire house as a megaproject. I picked a closet or a drawer and went through it, evaluating what to keep and what could go. Those decisions are not always easy. One category that my husband and kids teased me over was all of the artwork, schoolwork and report cards and — you get the picture — that I had been hoarding (no other word for that "collection"). I didn't do it all at once. I'd reduce the number of treasures by maybe 10%, and then they sat for a couple of years. Then I'd repeat. I'm not sure how much I have left, but it isn't a lot. Some things I gave to the kids to let them decide whether to keep or let go. They let 95% go.

Which leads to another good reason for reducing clutter as we get older — you won't be leaving a huge undertaking for your children. Our passing will be hard enough on them without their having to make decisions about the thousands of items we leave behind. I have asked each of mine if they see themselves wanting a particular piece down the road. Sometimes it's yes and sometimes no. But when it's no, I feel free to donate it when it has run its course in my home. So many times, we hold on to family pieces thinking our kids will treasure them as we did. Usually that isn't the case. I have a strict rule that I don't bring in anything new unless something leaves.

As I said, it won't be easy parting with some items. You may feel it necessary to hold on to something because a dear friend gave it to you, or it reminds you of a special trip or any number of the emotional ties that bind us to things. The memories will still be with you, even if the physical reminder is gone. Take a picture of those treasures as a reminder; photos take up so little room. You can put these photos into an album as a memory book. Picture "A Lifetime of Memories" sitting out as the ultimate coffee table book! Imagine the discussions you'll have as you go through it with friends and family.

### ***Ask for a trusted second opinion***

Enlisting a friend or your children to go through the tougher decisions with you will lighten the emotional burden you feel. Many times, guilt prevents us from decluttering. A trusted second opinion will assure you that you need not feel guilty for donating Great Aunt Edna's peacock lamp. The decisions really do get easier the more you make.

LOWLINC is devoting a large portion of this year's speaker series to improving our mental health as we age. Decluttering our homes can go a long way toward supporting both our mental and physical health. We feel responsible for what is in our homes, and not necessarily consciously. For me, that responsibility actually felt like it was weighing me down physically. You will be surprised at the relief felt when things

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## Supporting LOWLINC

*"Everyone I've dealt with has been very kind and supportive. It's a fantastic organization. I'm grateful we have it here."* – LOWLINC member

Special thanks to our members, volunteers and donors for being a part of LOWLINC. You continue to make LOWLINC a well-respected model community, enabling older adults to live in Lake of the Woods, leading healthy, happy, and connected lives on their own terms as they age.

People often tell us that they support LOWLINC in appreciation for the services they or a family member or friend receive. Others are excited about the opportunity to "pay it forward", while others recognize that supporting LOWLINC is vital to a vibrant LOW community for people of all ages.

### How can I support LOWLINC as a volunteer?

Our dedicated and talented volunteers provide transportation to medical and other appointments, handyman services, friendly visits and phone calls, a robust social events calendar, health and wellness education, tech assistance, and member and volunteer recognition. They also support our Member Services call-in line. To join the LOWLINC volunteer team, visit [www.lowlinc.org/volunteer](http://www.lowlinc.org/volunteer) opportunities to download an application.

### How can I support LOWLINC through a personal donation?

LOWLINC relies on the generosity of our community. Your gift will support our services and programs while helping to expand our reach to more people. There are two easy ways to give:

1. Mail a check payable to LOWLINC to:  
LOWLINC, P.O. Box 518, Locust Grove, VA 22508
2. Donate online via credit card to the LOWLINC Fund by visiting [www.lowlinc.org/Donate](http://www.lowlinc.org/Donate).

### What are some other ways I can support LOWLINC?

Other ways to give include donating your vehicle, matching gifts through your employer, legacy gifts, and Qualified Charitable Distributions from an IRA RMD. Visit our Donate pages at [www.LOWLINC.org](http://www.LOWLINC.org) to learn more. Businesses can support LOWLINC by becoming an event sponsor.

### Questions?

Contact Jeanne Comeau, Executive Director, at [execdirector@lowlinc.org](mailto:execdirector@lowlinc.org)

LOWLINC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

### Decluttering (Continued from page 5)

are gone. Please don't think that this applies only to crowded-to-the-ceiling situations. My homes have never looked cluttered. I could safely open the closet doors. But subconsciously, I knew there were way too many things lurking therein.

Try it. One closet. One drawer. Taking days or weeks off in between. It isn't a race; there isn't a deadline. You actually might find that you enjoy the process, which is an added benefit. Once I started, I found that I love decluttering and organizing!

## Bob Beecham: 100 Years Young

By Mary-Jane Atwater

Charles Robert (Bob) Beecham, who celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 2, has had a fascinating life filled with accomplishments. Over the course of two afternoons, Bob discussed his early years on a farm in South Dakota, graphic wartime memories, and his work for the FBI and the (then) U.S. Information Agency (USIA).

Bob was born in Madison, South Dakota, on March 2, 1923. Life on the family farm wasn't easy, and as an only child and "country boy" (his words), he was closely supervised by his mother. He remembers as a child riding horses bareback and loving to draw. When Bob's father died during Bob's high school years, his mother sold the farm, and they moved to Hayes and then to Jennings, Kansas, where Bob completed high school. When Bob's mother saw a newspaper ad for positions in the FBI in Washington, D.C., she insisted that Bob apply. At age 18, he was accepted and left Kansas to work at the FBI and live with a family in the District. World War II was under way, and, in 1943, Bob joined the Army. He received training in Oregon before being sent to the front in Italy as an infantryman.

Bob has vivid memories of the war — the unrelenting cold, sleeping in dirt holes dug in the ground, facing German tanks, and firing on a group of Germans who may have wanted to surrender. Reflecting on his war experiences, Bob says, "One of the most amazing things in my life is that I lived through the war." When the war ended, Bob returned to the FBI, but not for long. He returned to Kansas to attend Wichita State University, where he received a degree in world history, and then attended the Corcoran School of Art for one year.

In 1953, Bob joined the USIA, a new independent foreign affairs organization within the executive branch of the U.S. government whose mission was to promote foreign policy and national interests through a wide range of overseas information programs. Bob had a six-year posting at USIA in Tokyo before he was sent to Bangkok, where he worked as a Foreign Service Information Officer. Upon his return to the U.S. in 1962, he studied international relations at Stanford University. By that time, Bob was married to Jane McKenzie, and they had four children, three daughters and a son. A second posting in Thailand during the Vietnam War was followed by a 1969 return to USIA headquarters in Washington, where Bob worked as an editor at the Voice of America. In 1974 he became director of the USIA's Press and Publications Service, serving in this capacity until his retirement in 1979.



*Bob and Jane Beecham relax in their home with their dog, Noah.*

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### Bob Beecham Birthday *(Continued from page 7)*

In 1999, Bob launched the *Chronicle of International Communication*, a newsletter he singlehandedly wrote and published for five years, focusing on international communications and policies. When asked what he is most proud of, Bob, who remains a champion of public diplomacy, says that "It's the Chronicle, the best thing I ever did."

"I love to write," says Bob, and in 2017, at age 94, he published a book of historical fiction, *Dire Road to the Untold*, which in part draws on his life and government service and is available on Amazon. After retirement, Bob also continued to paint, sculpt, and draw, and he was an avid golfer. These days, he gently exercises at home on an elliptical machine and enjoys visits from family, LOWLINC volunteers, and his LOWLINC Phone Buddy.

Bob's son, Jeff (known familiarly as "Danny"), died in 2020. Before becoming ill, Jeff worked as a scientist in gene therapy. Bob's daughter, Joan, is a teacher in Washington, D.C. Another daughter, Tane, works with foreign exchange students in the Chicago area, while his youngest daughter, Megan, followed in her parents' path and joined the Foreign Service. Bob has seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild on the way. In 1996, he married Jane Taylor, whom he knew from their years at USIA, and in 2000 they moved to Lake of the Woods. Bob and Jane have been members of LOWLINC since 2016.

Bob celebrated his milestone birthday with family gatherings over several days. On March 2, LOWLINC organized a celebratory drive-through, with honking horns, balloons, and lots of waves. LOWLINC thanks Bob for his many years of service and wishes him a very Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday!



*LOWLINC volunteers' and members' cars line up to celebrate Bob's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 2.*



*Bob enjoying the festivities as cars honk and drive by to celebrate his birthday.*



*LOWLINC volunteers and a neighbor gather with Jane and Bob. From left to right, Jane Beecham, Eileen Appleyard, Bob Doney, Bob Beecham and Carolyn Rourke*



## LOWLINC'S Member Outreach Committee

By Carolyn Rourke, Committee Chair

The friendly voice a new LOWLINC member hears on the telephone a month or two after joining our organization belongs to a representative from LOWLINC's Member Outreach Committee, calling to discuss how their membership experience has been to date. "Have you used any services, and, if so, how have they gone?" "Have you tried any social activities yet?" "What else can we be doing for you?" These calls give new members a chance to ask questions about processes and operations, as well as learn about services they may not yet be aware of, helping them make the most of being a LOWLINC member.



*Member Outreach Committee (l to r) Diane Franklin, Eileen Appleyard, Joe Sauro, Gerri Colucci, Peggy Grella and Carolyn Rourke. Not shown: Evelyn Wiltshire.*

Reaching out to new members is just one of the many roles played by the enthusiastic and dedicated group of LOWLINC members and volunteers who make up the Member Outreach Committee. This committee's focus is twofold: 1) develop strategies and programs that inform Lake of the Woods residents about LOWLINC membership and 2) create and carry out programs to enhance the member experience and ensure members are benefitting from their membership.

The committee uses several approaches to attract new members. We hold open houses where committee members chat about LOWLINC with LOW residents. Each year we make presentations to a few Lake clubs and organizations to make their members more aware of LOWLINC. We distribute brochures to businesses immediately outside our gate. And most importantly, along with other LOWLINC members and volunteers, we serve as ambassadors for LOWLINC in the community, spreading the word about membership and its benefits for older adults. The majority of people who become LOWLINC members have done so because they heard about our work from friends, neighbors, and other members.

Throughout the year, the committee sponsors several one-time special services for members, including arranging for volunteers to pick up and deliver to the county landfill for recycling hazardous waste and electronics and collecting prescription drugs for safe disposal and sensitive papers for shredding. We also conduct an annual survey of members to gauge satisfaction and solicit ideas for new services and ways we can improve existing ones.

In 2022, the committee managed two grants that provided unique services to members that would not have been possible without the funding. The first, courtesy of American Woodmark, allowed us to provide Thanksgiving dinners to nearly 60 LOWLINC members. The other grant, from Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services, was managed jointly with LOWLINC's Health and Wellness Committee and used to procure goods and services that gave respite to LOWLINC members who are caregivers for their loved ones.

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### LOWLINC'S Member Outreach Committee *(Continued from page 9)*

The Member Outreach Committee partners with the Social Activities and Volunteer committees to conduct the popular annual Picnic on the Point for members and volunteers. This year's picnic is scheduled for Wednesday, June 21. Mark your calendars! Last year, thunderstorms drove us inside, but this year we hope to be back on the Point to enjoy fishing, games, boat rides, and the barbeque!

LOWLINC is fortunate to have a robust committee system that works with the LOWLINC Board of Directors, Executive Director, and staff to carry out our organization's programs. Previous articles in NewsLinc have centered on the Social Activities Committee, which is responsible for developing and conducting an array of fun and interesting activities and events, and the Volunteer Committee, responsible for volunteer recruitment, training, and retention. Future editions will focus on other committees and programs, including Health and Wellness and Service Providers.



*Committee members Joe Sauro and Peggy Grella staff a table at an open house for potential members.*



*Committee members Diane Franklin (left) and Eileen Appleyard prepare holiday gift bags for distribution to members.*



### Did You Know?

By Dave Kraus

.....**May is Older Americans Month 2023.** It is sponsored by the Administration for Community Living, which falls under the federal Department of Health and Human Services. When Older Americans Month was established in 1963, only 17 million living Americans had reached their 65th birthday. About a third of older Americans lived in poverty, and there were few programs to meet their needs. Interest in older Americans and their concerns was growing. A meeting in April, 1963, between President John F. Kennedy and members of the National Council of Senior Citizens led to designating May as "Senior Citizens Month," the prelude to "Older Americans Month."

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**Did You Know?** *(Continued from page 10)*

Historically, Older Americans Month has been a time to acknowledge the contributions to our country of past and current older persons, in particular those who defended it. Every President since Kennedy has issued a formal proclamation during or before the month of May asking that the entire nation pay tribute in some way to older persons in their communities. Older Americans Month is celebrated across the country through ceremonies, events, fairs, and other such activities.

The 2023 theme is “**Aging Unbound**”, which offers an opportunity to explore diverse aging experiences and discuss how communities can combat stereotypes by promoting flexible thinking about aging — and how we all benefit when older adults remain engaged, independent, and included. You can learn more about Older Americans Month 2023, including planned activities, at <https://acl.gov/oam/2023/older-americans-month-2023>.

.....**Older Americans in LOW are in good company.** According to the 2020 census, 17% of the American population was age 65 or older. We did even better in Orange County. The census said that 21% of our residents were over 65. The census did not break out data for LOW.

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**LOWLINC (Lake of the Woods, Living Independently in Our Community)**, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit fee-based 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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