



## “Staying Put” in New Canaan, Connecticut: *Successfully Aging at Home*

An Interview with Jane Nyce, Executive Director  
By Marlene Kurban

“Staying Put” in New Canaan, a private, nonprofit entity in Connecticut, celebrated its “first birthday” in January 2009. The mission of Staying Put is to “give New Canaan residents both the practical means and the confidence to live their lives to the fullest in their own homes as they grow older.” We interviewed Jane Nyce, Executive Director, in November 2008 about this thriving “aging in place” suburban community.

**Q. Staying Put in New Canaan is celebrating its first anniversary. What is your current membership and have you noticed any trends since the inception of Staying Put?**

A. The number of new members who joined exceeded our expectations. We anticipated that 150 households would sign up this first year, but we actually have 237 members in 168 households. Staying Put is open to anyone in New Canaan age 50 and up, but the average age of our members is 75. Many of our members say that they joined to support New Canaan seniors as well as assure their own future needs. We want to keep this program an open door to anyone

in town, not just for people with high incomes. That’s why our membership fees are low (\$360 per calendar year for a single person and \$480 for a couple).

**Q. Do you try to model your program based on the Beacon Hill Village model in Boston? What are the similarities and differences?**

A. While we do very much model Beacon Hill Village, New Canaan is a suburban community and there is no public transportation here. We don’t have a hospital affiliation. We do research and find resources and providers ourselves, and make it easier for people to stay at home. Many people would have stayed at home anyway, but they would have been more anxious about it. Many of the older homes in New Canaan aren’t necessarily safe for the frail elderly.

**Q. Your membership benefits include social events, assistance with locating resources through your Resource Center and even discounted rates with vetted providers, ranging from handymen to computer techs, drivers to home care. What are the most**

**requested services and how do you meet the needs of your members?**

A. Transportation is the most requested service. There is subsidized transportation in town. We also utilize 30 volunteers, mostly seniors, who have been trained to assist people in moving from their home to the car. Overall, we have over 100 volunteers who have signed up and 50 who are active. In fact, we would love to get volunteer geriatric care managers on board! We’ve also trained volunteers to make home visits to isolated adults, and encourage members to make use of local resources, such as the YMCA and senior centers.

**Q. How do you handle it if a member does not seem able to live safely at home any longer?**

A. If a person isn’t able to stay at home, I’ll help locate other living arrangements, such as an assisted living facility. I check on people routinely and I also hear from other members if they have concerns about someone.

**Q. When did you become Executive Director and what are your primary responsibilities?**

A. I became the Executive Director in October 2007, after interning here for the summer. I have a Master’s degree in Health Advocacy. I’m the public face of the program...I organize the logistics, do informational sessions, grant-writing and fund-raising, and talk with the members and with the general public to educate them about Staying Put. Forty percent of our operating budget is covered by membership fees, and the rest through grants. We don’t have a membership drive; it’s mostly word of mouth.

“Aging in Place” communities such as Staying Put in New Canaan are the wave of the future as more and more older adults choose to remain at home for as long as possible. This also presents opportunities for Professional Geriatric Care Managers to serve as a resource or partner. For more information on Staying Put, visit their website at [www.stayingputnc.org](http://www.stayingputnc.org)

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