

Volunteer of the Month

2006

January 2006 Anne Vlahos

Today we'd like to recognize one of our Altamont volunteers who signed on back in the early days. She has helped us as a weekly coordinator, lining up volunteers for needed transportation. She sends condolence cards on our behalf when they are needed for the families of volunteers or clients. And we owe a particular thanks for her help in finding a great location for several of our special gatherings: the Altamont Manor, where we have had Volunteer Receptions and staff training events.

Anne Vlahos of Altamont is our Volunteer of the Month for January 2006. We knew she had to be, when she returned an assignment a few weeks ago. There was one ride left unmatched, one client for whom she had not been able to find a driver. Anne said, "Well, I guess that's not too bad – it's the first ride I've had to return in ten years!" Not too bad, indeed!

Thank you so much, Anne, for your dedication and commitment to Community Caregivers and to the work you do for us. There are so many clients who have benefited from the time you have been willing to spend for us. We appreciate you!

February 2006 Mary Neumann

And now we'd like to recognize a very special volunteer. This one has been with Caregivers long enough to have been awarded the first Volunteer of the Month recognition, back in July 2001. At that time she shared the award with her daughters, but now they are off to college, and she's earned this on her own.

Mary Neumann is stepping down from her spot on the CC Publicity Committee to spend more time on other responsibilities. For more than five years, she has been responsible for the good looks and timely production of many newsletters, publications, forms and other documents for this organization.

On top of the graphics skills she's used on behalf of Caregivers, Mary maintained the database for most of the large mailing purposes: a job and a half in itself. This was while working at a full-time job too. In between, she found the time to help a neighbor with shopping, snow-shoveling and other chores. As she leaves her publicity post, we'd like her to know how much she'll be missed. For her hard work and dedication to Community Caregivers and its mission, we are happy to name **Mary Neumann of Altamont as our Volunteer of the Month for February 2006.**

March 2006 Greg Goutas

Community Caregivers would like to recognize a special volunteer this week. In fact, he's our volunteer of the month for March 2006. Greg has been helping Community Caregivers since September 2004, serving as a member of the Board of Directors, our Treasurer and a member of the Finance Committee. He agreed to step out of the volunteer role for a short time to be our interim Executive Director, and when Diane Cameron took over the ED job, Greg returned to his volunteer position(s).

Then, he coordinated the Caregivers Kids Valentine's Spaghetti Dinner for the residents of the Omni Apartments on Carman Road. He's written up all the details – how much pasta, how many fixings will serve 70 – so that next year the effort will be even smoother! And in between other commitments, he's been a driver for several last-minute transportation needs. His February service report showed 41 hours spent on administrative and event activities, and almost 100 miles driven.

And he did it all with a smile, stories of his kids, sports events, and new school classes – a picture of the busy person that you give a new task to, because you can be sure he'll get it done.

Greg Goutos of Altamont, we are happy to name you as **volunteer of the Month for March 2006**. Your dedication to the mission of Community Caregivers and your willingness to do whatever is necessary to get the job done – these things have earned our gratitude. And we appreciate that you have stepped out beyond the administrative tasks to meet and serve your neighbors, and that you come back with tales of how you enjoyed those opportunities. Thanks for all you do!

April 2006 Sue Griffiths

We'd like to introduce someone to you. We've selected our **Volunteer of the Month for April 2006!** She is **Sue Griffiths, RN**, from Albany.

Sue has been part of Caregivers since March of 2005, so she's just past her one year anniversary with us. In that time, she's become a star member of our Clean Team, helping a number of clients to organize their households, including setting up a garage sale, and helping with on-going housekeeping. She has helped other clients with grocery shopping, and some with paperwork problems. And she supplies transportation to appointments for others. She's helped in lots of ways.

The Caregivers' office has benefited from Sue's willingness too, as she has become our Wednesday afternoon office volunteer. She answers the phone, takes service requests, relays information to our coordinators, and pitches right into special projects – even unto the learning of our database system! And, using her nurse's listening ear and observing eye, she has helped with client intake interviews and blood pressure clinics for seniors.

Thank you, Sue Griffiths; we are pleased to recognize your skill and compassion in the volunteer role, and your commitment to Caregivers. We appreciate you!

May 2006 June Sano and Lillian Foss

We are taking this opportunity to thank two volunteers who live in the Bethlehem part of our service area. **Lillian Foss and June Sano**, both Glenmont residents, have been providing respite care to a Delmar family for almost a year now.

While many of Community Caregivers' clients are elderly, that's not true of all. Age isn't the only factor that makes it necessary to ask for a helping hand.

This family, with an active toddler girl and a five year-old boy named Max, called on Caregivers for help when they weren't sure of where else to turn.

About the same time that they were moving into their Delmar home, Max was diagnosed with a serious illness. He had been through chemotherapy when Mom called us. She had stopped working outside the home. Mom and Dad were on different schedules and rarely had

time to do more than compare “To Do” lists on the way out the door. Stressed is hardly a sufficient word.

“Respite care” is a service that’s provided to the caregivers of someone else. In this case, the respite care was needed to permit Mom (who no longer had a job as an outside relief valve) to get away for some much needed healthy exercise: she swims. Sometimes the respite care is to permit two weary parents to get out for a few hours together: they go out for dinner and talk.

So, June and Lillian share this volunteer job, each making weekly visits to provide child care. The gratitude of Max’s parents is enormous. And Max, who is now stabilized in his treatments, very bright and very mature, enjoys the company of two kind family helpers. We appreciate that June and Lillian donate their time, skill and compassion as they provide their caring. They demonstrate by their actions their commitment to the purpose of Community Caregivers.

June Sano and Lillian Foss, we are pleased to recognize you as our **Volunteers of the Month for May, 2006**.

June 2006 Nancy Alexander

And this month, we want also to recognize one of our office volunteers who has been a great help to us organizationally. **Nancy Alexander** is currently our Friday morning office volunteer, answering the phone when services are requested or neighbors call to become our clients. If you know someone who is thinking about becoming a volunteer, they may have had a recent call from Nancy encouraging them to attend one of our upcoming Information / Orientation sessions.

Nancy has two special roles; first, she is our Files Wizard. She has not only organized our files to include a constantly expanding set of topics and materials, all in neatly tabbed folders, but she created a files index. This is how we know what’s in those folders! We have many different volunteers who are in the office for varying purposes: committee members, Board members, special event coordinators. Nancy’s files index is a huge benefit as we search to find the materials that are relevant and needed for each visitor.

When it came time to prepare for our Second Annual Golf Tournament, held on June 19th this year, Nancy volunteered to serve as coordinator of data & systems, for which we are most grateful! Her help in this fundraising effort was invaluable; her organizational skill has blessed us indeed!

Nancy Alexander of Guilderland, thank you for all you do; we are happy to recognize you as our **Volunteer of the Month for June 2006**.

July 2006 Melissa Wiedman-Peragine and Collin Peragine

Today is the day we recognize our newest Volunteers of the Month. Yes, we have two of them! They are a mother-son pair. Melissa and Collin have been with Community Caregivers since last December, when Melissa called us. She was calling because Collin, age 8, wanted to share the Christmas holidays with a senior who would otherwise be alone. He was away from his own extended family, and thought of what a similar distance would mean to an older person. His Mom wanted to see that this good intention was not left unaccomplished. Well, that got us scurrying, trying to identify the right client for this special young man!

From that start, Melissa and Collin have helped with shopping and made reassurance calls. And, they have become a fixture at Delmar Place, the assisted living center in the heart of Delmar. They stepped in to fill a temporary vacancy when Fred, the regular bingo caller, was ill. But Fred passed away and never returned to his job. One evening, the bingo fans met, had a moment of silence to honor Fred, and then went on with what he would have chosen to do: play bingo. "B-11", said Collin.

Now, months later, Collin and Melissa are regular visitors to Delmar Place, hosting a weekly bingo game each Monday evening. Sometimes they bring small prizes to give to the winners, sometimes the play is for quarters. Always they are appreciated by the residents who so much enjoy this way to socialize and spend a few congenial hours.

We are happy to recognize **Melissa Wiedman-Peragine and Collin Peragine of Voorheesville as our Volunteers of the Month for July 2006.** They are making a difference in the lives of quite a few of our local seniors, and we are very grateful to them. They are caring and compassionate volunteers.

Our thanks to you, Melissa and Collin. You are special people.

August 2006 David Renz

Today we'd like to introduce you to a volunteer who's been helping Caregivers for more than a year. He's earned himself a spot in the hearts of our coordinators (those folks who make the calls to arrange transportation for our clients) by being a willing driver. He's been available for providing rides for clients who say they need a secure and encouraging hand at their elbow to keep them steady on their feet. From his home in Altamont, he's driven clients who live as far as Berne, Duanesburg and Schenectady to appointments in Albany and Schenectady, Loudonville and Niskayuna. He drives a sedan, and so is able to help some of our less mobile clients who have problems climbing into taller vehicles. (In the office, we mark the records of drivers with sedans with a special note: they are the only ones we can call on for some clients.) He even is willing to help those whose hard situation has resulted in tales of woe for the volunteer driver's ears!

We are happy to name **David Renz** of Altamont as our **Volunteer of the Month for August, 2006!** David, we thank you for being willing to drive at short notice, and multiple times in a week. You helped with nearly fifty rides in your first year as a volunteer. We appreciate that you are giving your time, resources and compassion in order to help your neighbors. Thanks so much!

September 2006 Randy Duchesneau

This summer we had a volunteer who helped with services like these. But his situation was a little different from some of the volunteers who contact Community Caregivers. Randy Duchesneau came to us well recommended from GE, where he was a multi-tasking intern. He wanted to donate 40 hours of hands-on community service over the summer months.

We connected this poised and talented young man with two Delmar clients, and he demonstrated that having a 4.0 college background doesn't mean that you can't get your hands dirty. He helped with weekly vacuuming; he dusted, mopped and did laundry, and made a difference in the lives of those he helped. He even got a computer working for one!

We are happy to name **Randy Duchesneau of Rensselaer as our Volunteer of the Month for September, 2006.** We appreciate his caring and concern for those who need a helping hand. Thanks, Randy!

October 2006 Jill Genzano

Some volunteers combine several of these ways of volunteering. Last June, **Jill Genzano** completed a double term of service on the Caregivers Board of Directors; she joined six years ago. She served as liaison between the Board and the Caregivers Kids program, and then helped to shape the new Caregivers Kids and Families approach to caregiving as a family, with parents and kids serving together. She saw more than a fair share of spaghetti sauce, in helping with the annual CK Dinner for Omni residents on Carman Road.

Jill also served as the Caregivers contact person for her church, Christ the King in Guilderland, reaching out for volunteers from that congregation. And sometimes with her own children, and sometimes by herself (juggling those schoolbus pick-up times), she has provided shopping, housekeeping and transportation services for clients.

Jill Genzano of Albany, we are happy to name you as our **Volunteer of the Month for October 2006**. We have benefited from your willingness to lend your organizational skills, to serve as an ambassador for Community Caregivers and to help your neighbors. Thanks, Jill, for all you do for Caregivers. We appreciate you.

November 2006 Danny and Maureen Ramirez

For our **Volunteers of the Month for November 2006**, we are happy to recognize the couple who headed this 2006 Gala, **Danny and Maureen Ramirez** of Altamont. They had a vision for the big picture and also jumped in to help with every little detail: colors and tablecloths and decorating to make the setting special, soliciting great donations for the auction, and then packaging donated items so they were even more attractive. Their organizational skills were the key in the success of this year's shining event.

They must have felt at times like career Gala-planners! And their contagious enthusiasm even made sure that the gala volunteers had fun while working so hard. The result was a polished, professional and glittering evening, with a fine outcome.

Our thanks go to **Danny and Maureen Ramirez**; they have played a big part in helping to insure that Community Caregivers continues helping neighbors. Maureen and Danny, you are special to us.

December 2006 Joe Levinger

This month's Volunteer of the Month was brought to our attention by Anne Vlahos, one of our wonderful coordinators.

Anne's job each week is to match clients in need of transportation with a volunteer who has signed up as willing to drive. Anne calls the volunteers until she finds one who is available for the exact date and time of the client's appointment. In December, she was looking for a driver for a Monday afternoon appointment. She called **Joe Levinger**, who had said he could drive on weekday afternoons. And Joe agreed to drive for this particular appointment.

"He's always so willing and pleasant" said Anne of Joe. In fact, Joe also agreed to drive when two other coordinators called him for two other December appointments. Since we've been keeping track with our current computer system, starting some two and a half years ago, Joe has driven about 1500 miles for Caregivers. He joined Caregivers eight years ago! What do you suppose his total mileage is for his neighbors in need?

We are happy to name **Joe Levinger of Altamont** as our **Volunteer of the Month for December 2006**. His dedication to the mission and purpose of Community Caregivers is demonstrated by his actions, his hours and miles spent for his neighbors. We appreciate you,

Joe, and how easy it is to work with you, too. The coordinator's job is demanding, and you help to make it both easier and rewarding.