



# The YCAN Bulletin

Fall 2016

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**Rides Program.** Launched four years ago by YCAN Board members Joy Ahrens and Rae Garcelon, the Yarmouth Rides Program has come to fill an important need for a growing number of Yarmouth residents, reports Program Coordinator Jean Rafford.

"We've already logged 302 trips this year," says Jean, who's been at the job since the program's inception in September 2012. "But the program is more than free transportation," Jean says, adding: "For many clients – and it's no longer only seniors who use us – the program is just as much about relationships." She explains: "Through the connections our clients make with our drivers, some real relationship-building goes on, and that provides a fairly consistent degree of socialization that's so important to the well-being of those we serve."

When Rae Garcelon and Joy Ahrens were developing the program in 2012, they consulted Sandra Barron, Executive Director of Yarmouth Senior Housing's primary development at Bartlett Circle. Sandra arranged a focus group/luncheon to solicit residents' input on various issues. The #1 issue that emerged: transportation. Shortly thereafter – and with unanimous support from YCAN's Board – Rae and Joy began recruiting drivers and were able to launch the program within a few months. Initially, rides were offered two mornings a week, from 9 to 11.

For the first two years, there were 18 drivers; today, there are 30, all of whom reside in or close to Yarmouth. (There is no "average" driver. Some drive several times a week, some once a week, some every other month.) In terms of ride volume, the program had logged 350 trips by the end of 2013, which translated into some 480 hours of volunteer time. By 2015, the trip number reached 450, which amounted to 580 hours of volunteer time – a figure that no doubt will be topped this year, given the 302 rides already completed.

Late year, the program assumed responsibility for medical rides that had been handled by the Yarmouth Health Council. The medical rides now encompass a broad area – Freeport to Scarborough – and are offered between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, for all residents, not just seniors. The non-medical rides (to the Food Pantry, bank, supermarket, hair appointment, etc.) cover the Route 1 corridor from Freeport to Falmouth. These rides are also offered weekdays between 9 and 3 and, as with the medical rides, are also offered to non-seniors. "We are now serving some young mothers who need rides to and from the Food Pantry," Jean noted.

"Our biggest challenges going forward," Jean says, "include our aging population, which will inevitably call for more drivers, plus some support staff to succeed me. Also, it'll be important to have a community center where someone can do the coordinating and be the face of the Rides Program. People tend to use a program more frequently when they're familiar with the face on the other end of the line." For more information, contact Jean at: [jeanrafford@gmail.com](mailto:jeanrafford@gmail.com).

**Lunch Crunch Wrap Up.** Lunch Crunch, a YCAN and Yarmouth Community Services partnership addressing summer food insecurity, has wrapped up its second summer. This year's expanded program served 506 breakfasts and 1,283 lunches to children ages 2-18 at our open site, Yarmouth Pointe apartments. Lunch Crunch provided free meals every weekday (except July 4th and Labor Day) from the day Yarmouth schools released for the summer until the day schools resumed in the fall.

Our second summer brought many exciting changes that enhanced the Lunch Crunch program. Dedicated high school students spent countless hours providing an amazing half-day camp experience for local children. The campers had the opportunity to play outdoor games, learn new crafts and go on weekly outings to Yarmouth open spaces. The high school students were great role models while providing lots of fun learning opportunities.

In addition, Yarmouth volunteers gathered in school kitchens throughout the summer to pack lunches for Lunch Crunch campers. We also began serving breakfast as part of the Lunch Crunch program. Lunch Crunch worked to serve a variety of fresh produce in appealing ways to children (think: yogurt parfaits, fruit kabobs and smoothies). With the support of the Yarmouth Community Garden, Wayside Food Programs, and the Yarmouth Food Pantry, we were able to supplement our planned menus with local produce, snacks and some unexpected treats. In an effort to help alleviate weekend food insecurity, First Parish Church took the lead role in assembling weekend backpacks for distribution on Fridays to Lunch Crunch families. And, thanks to a group of dedicated drivers, leftover Lunch Crunch food was delivered to the community room at Bartlett Circle for Yarmouth seniors to enjoy!

This beautiful Maine summer provided an opportunity for the community to come together at Lunch Crunch to create a kid-friendly combination of free food and fun!

**Yarmouth Community Center.** We are excited to host a community-wide meeting Sept. 27 on the third floor of the Merrill Memorial Library starting at 7:00pm. All are invited to come hear updates and share your ideas about how to make this a community center for the entire town. Learn how to get involved and make this a center that works for all of Yarmouth. For additional information, contact YCAN Vice President Beth Costello at [bcostell@maine.rr.com](mailto:bcostell@maine.rr.com).



# YCAN Spotlight

Fall 2016

## **Katie Waeldner: Making a Difference in Yarmouth**

*Yarmouth has many organizations devoted to making a difference in the community, but sometimes, a single individual's initiative merits attention. Case in point: Katie Waeldner, a Yarmouth High School junior who recently launched two programs to help make Yarmouth an even more caring community – a voucher program that enables low-income residents to shop at the Yarmouth Farmer's Market and an initiative to foster "random acts of kindness." 'Spotlight' spoke with Katie over the summer.*

### **YCAN: What was your motivation to launch the voucher program?**

**KW:** I wanted to see more healthy-food options made available to everyone in the Yarmouth community. In March I went to New York City for a career-exploration program and learned about how hunger is being addressed on a large scale. With this information, I thought a simple voucher program could work in Yarmouth. I've been interested in hunger for some time, and through our town's Lunch Crunch program I have seen up close that, for those who are food-insecure, there really is a need in Yarmouth for greater access to fresh produce... to healthy foods.

### **YCAN: How does the voucher program work?**

**KW:** The vouchers are available at the Yarmouth Food Pantry and at the 317 Main Community Music Center, which is where the Farmer's Market takes place. Clients can go to these two places for the vouchers, which come in five- and ten-dollar increments. Anyone over 18 can redeem them at the Farmer's Market with up to three vendors. You just need to be a resident of Yarmouth – you don't need to establish proof of financial need, which is also how the Food Pantry works. At the end of the season, the farmers who participated will be reimbursed for the produce they provided.

### **YCAN: Where does the money come from to support the vouchers?**

**KW:** It comes from YCAN and First Parish Congregational Church, plus donations from shoppers at the Farmer's Market. We started with a voucher fund of \$300. Amy Sinclair, who manages the Farmer's Market, oversees the financial logistics for the voucher program.

### **YCAN: Will the program be repeated next year?**

**KW:** We're not sure yet, but we hope so. This initial year's effort is really our pilot.

### **YCAN: On June 12, Yarmouth High School launched its first "6 Hours of Kindness Day." Where did this idea come from?**

**KW:** Actually, it ended up being four hours of kindness because one of our locations cancelled. The idea was sparked by a speaker who came to our school – Michael Chase, who runs the Kindness Center in Biddeford. He spoke about how kindness can really make a difference in the quality of a community. So I thought that, to begin with, maybe we could try to replicate his "24 Hours of Kindness" program on a smaller scale and achieve the same result.

We ended up recruiting five volunteers for the four hours of kindness. We divided our time by picking up trash at Royal River Park and planting a garden for a wheelchair and house-bound woman who lives alone. All you had to do was look at the smile on her face to see the impact of our garden on her and her joy in having us around for a few hours. Kindness can definitely make a big difference, especially for those living by themselves.