

**We keep our seniors warm, fed, dry, and drugged—and we think we are doing a good job. And we're not—we're not at all.**

—Joanne Dodge, Founder, Senior Moments performance troupe



▲ **Improv troupe Senior Moments presents a look at senior living that is funny, poignant, incisive, and real.**

# Changing THE FACE OF AGING

It's a beautiful autumn day in New England. The kind that makes you want to pick apples, take a drive in the country to see the changing colors, and visit a pumpkin patch. Or, if you live in Manchester, New Hampshire you might be helping your neighbor with fall clean-up. As part of *Seeing Seniors: Shaping the Future of Aging in New Hampshire*, this community is taking responsibility for its elderly population who can't always do for themselves. Spearheaded by the Seniors Count initiative, a dedicated team of 250 volunteers is raking leaves, putting away hoses, securing storm windows, and readying the homes of 100 senior citizens to prepare them for the winter ahead.



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Neighbors caring for neighbors is only one positive outcome of *Seeing Seniors*. Through this unique community collaboration, the folks at New Hampshire Public Television (NHPTV) and its partner, *Seniors Count*, are nourishing a grassroots effort to improve conditions faced by this ever-growing, yet underserved, vulnerable population. Funded by *Sound Partners for Community Health*, *Seeing Seniors* incorporates the voices and views of local seniors in a process that is helping them construct a future that is rich with connections and opportunities.

An increasing number of U.S. citizens are over 85 years old, with the largest percentage of growth among those aged 100 or older. Notes Lynn Zuccarelli Austin, NHPTV Community Outreach Coordinator and Project Manager for this effort, "Census 2000 indicates that 12% of New Hampshire's population is 65 and older. That figure is expected to more than double by 2025. The *Seeing Seniors* project will help seniors of all ages optimize their quality of life."

*Seeing Seniors* focuses attention and resources on this often "invisible" population, in particular those who are not ill but face decreased capacity to care for themselves. One question the project seeks to answer is how to maintain quality of life for all seniors,

*(Continued on the next page.)*



**▲ Arlene Kershaw, Co-chair of the New Hampshire State Conference on Aging, calls for action.**

especially those who are not ill. While government programs and community agencies often provide help with doctors' visits, prescriptions, and other medical needs, there are few resources for the elderly who are healthy yet frail due to the normal aging process.

Today's adults can expect to live well into their 80s, even 90s and beyond. Arlene Kershaw, Project Director of *Seniors Count*, Director of Senior Services for Easter Seals New Hampshire, and Co-chair of the New Hampshire State Conference on Aging, observes, "Every single person is dealing with an aging issue."

As we age, keeping up with normal activities of daily living becomes increasingly difficult. Reduced energy levels, decreased mobility, and forgetfulness are just a few of the challenges of living longer. "When you're frail, it's not always about medical care and the big issues. Often it's the small things. Who's going to rake your leaves? How will you find a ride to the doctor? Who will take the trash out?" explains Kershaw.

Throughout the year, six feature stories on NHPTV's nightly newsmagazine, *New Hampshire Outlook*, along with other media efforts, focus on issues such as caregiving, community house calls, transportation issues, community life, and North Country rural poverty. Community forums across the state bring seniors and caregivers together with local leaders to build commitment to improving quality of life for the elderly. Visit [www.nhptv.org/outreach/seeing-seniors/default.htm](http://www.nhptv.org/outreach/seeing-seniors/default.htm) to view streaming video and read each forum's survey results.

Kershaw calls for action. "The issues surrounding seniors are mounting. We need to do something about it now." •

## LOCAL VOICES

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