

## CULPEPER TIMES, APRIL 2023 / Ellen Phipps, Editorial

April is National Parkinson's Awareness month, and, as it happens, I recently had the opportunity to meet an incredible person who has been living with Parkinson's disease since 2009. Barbara Adolphi, one of our extraordinary 5 Over 50 honorees, hosted the Culpeper Media film crew and Aging Together staff at her home in Sperryville last week. We learned firsthand about Barbara's selfless work in her community; how she has helped children and families; was instrumental in significant improvements to her town which in turn, increased tourism; and how she organized a movement workshop for persons living with Parkinson's. A retired social worker, her life has been devoted to others. I don't want to spoil the 5 Over 50 program but suffice to say Barbara is an example of how to live life to the fullest in spite of a debilitating diagnosis. She is a true inspiration to everyone she meets. To hear more about Barbara and the other 4 honorees, please be sure to join us on May 17 from 4-6 at one of our live, 5 Over 50 "watch parties". For more information, please visit at our website at <https://www.agingtogether.org/5-over-50.html>

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Parkinson's disease is a brain disorder that causes unintended or uncontrollable movements, such as shaking, stiffness, and difficulty with balance and coordination. Symptoms usually begin gradually and worsen over time. As the disease progresses, people may have difficulty walking and talking. The risk of developing Parkinson's disease naturally increases with age, and the average age at which it starts is 60 years old.

In addition to newer drug therapies, there are several innovative approaches to help people who are living with Parkinson's disease. A 2012 study of three forms of exercise — resistance training, stretching and tai chi — found that tai chi offered measurable improvement in balance and stability in people who had moderate Parkinson's disease. Qigong is another evidenced-based approach that people, such as Barbara, have found helpful. Read on to learn about other approaches as well, such as Rock Steady Boxing for Parkinson's disease; support groups; and where to find local help.

One of our goals at Aging Together is to help people to age in place – communities that assist older adults in remaining or becoming active community participants must provide the requisite opportunities for recreation, transportation, culture, education, communication, social connections spiritual enrichment and health care.

To better understand the strengths and challenges of Virginia communities aging in place, the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) partnered with Polco to administer the Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults across the state. The results have been published, and I was fortunate to be able to attend a recent meeting with DARS and AAA's to learn more about the results specific to our region.

In Virginia, those 60 and older make up nearly 25% of the population, and over half of those older adults (54%) say they want to stay in their homes as they age. However, many of those older adults fear they won't be able to do so for financial (52%) and health (44%) reasons. And 27% say their homes are not suited for aging in place. What are your needs and concerns? Please be sure to join us for one of our community conversations this month. **Click here** to complete and online survey or to find a conversation near you!

To view the full **DARS report**, **click here**.

<https://www.vda.virginia.gov/downloads/Virginia%20Needs%20Assessment%20Statewide%20Survey%20Results%20December%202022.pdf>