

THE VILLAGER

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From Here to Affinity

affinity group |a fin i te| noun. A group of people linked by a common interest or purpose.



A group busily plans cultural programs and trips during *Terrific Tuesdays*.



Executive Director Laura Connors speaks to attendees at a prospective members event on September 10. The event was hosted by BHV members Doug and Judy Fitzsimmons in their River House home and on the roof deck.

THE ALARM RINGS. It is much too early. It is much too hot (or cold or rainy). But it is WEDNESDAY and I am not about to miss *Second Cup*, one of BHV's affinity groups. It began simply with an invitation to come together for coffee and conversation, but it was 2008 – the time of a tense primary battle between Hillary and Obama – and the group quickly focused on politics.

New groups have a way of sorting themselves out and politics can exacerbate that process. Some of the original members stayed, some strayed and some new members joined. There were those who doubted that such a group could be sustained, but five years and several elections later, it still draws 18 or so regulars. Politics has remained the primary focus in this group with enough common ground to keep the conversation going and enough diversity of opinion to keep it interesting.

Second Cup is only one of many affinity groups launched by the Village and its members. Harry Fisher, an experienced travel agent of many years, and his wife, Joan Doucette, host a travel group once a month in their home. Joan actively recruits members who have been on interesting trips to share their photos and tell their stories, and will even help organize their photos. The meeting, which starts with tea, followed by a 30-minute presentation and discussion, usually attracts about 20 people.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Members:

Welcome to *The Villager* – our new quarterly newsletter, written for members by members (with a little staff input).

What a busy and exciting time it's been for BHV. In the past year we:

- Engaged more than 200 members in the Village's 500 exercise and wellness programs, 200 social and recreational events, and/or 12 different affinity groups – coming together to enjoy a *First Drink* or a *Second Cup* or such activities as Mah Jongg, movies, handicrafts, travel, and discussing tough topics.
- Traveled to new places (a plumbing museum) and old favorites (Tanglewood). We planned a new adventure (to Cuba). We viewed architecture from a different vantage point (afloat on the Charles River) and took advantage of new services (a used-book pickup).
- Provided more than 300 rides, filled approximately 385 grocery lists, and took members grocery shopping on 200 different occasions.
- Linked nearly 300 members to service providers more than 300 times and checked in on each other almost 400 times.
- Helped each other to stay healthy and vibrant and supported the running of our organization with the talents and hundreds of hours of time provided by our 90+ volunteers.

All this energy and activity didn't go unnoticed. The PBS NewsHour told our story in an 8-minute news segment, which prompted more than 75 inquiries from around the globe and an invitation to participate in a Pan-Pacific conference on aging in Singapore.

So here it is...YOUR newsletter. We welcome your feedback and contributions. Keep us informed about your preferences for activities, services, and opportunities that make your life richer, less worrisome, and more fun!

With warm regards,
Laura Connors



Laura Connors

Beacon Hill Village Establishes the Mary Louise Robertson Society

Mary Robertson died this past June. But she was still full of surprises. Beacon Hill Village recently learned she had left the organization a substantial sum. Her generosity has prompted BHV to establish the *Mary Louise Robertson Society* for those who have provided for similar bequests in their wills.

It wasn't as if Villagers didn't know that Mary appreciated BHV, since she was a regular on BHV sponsored trips, concert performances and museum outings, and she used the grocery service regularly.

But no one had ever left a bequest to Beacon Hill Village in a will, and no one had asked Mary to do such a thing. Now she has made a big impact in helping the decade-old organization, designed to help maturing adults in downtown Boston stay in their homes as they age, reach a milestone in financial security.

Mary was born in Philadelphia in 1928. She graduated from Wellesley College and went to work at the Boston Public Library in the children's department. Later she became employed at Houghton Mifflin, first in the home economics and later in the high school English department, said her friend Mary Scudder, also a Village member.

Mary Robertson lived first at the Franklin Square House in the South End, a residence for young working women whose parents were assured of their safety. One of the highlights of her early years was participating in a tour of Europe with the MIT Choral Society.

Several years ago Mary moved into 87 Beacon Street, where she lived until the end of her life. She spent her time in retirement enjoying music, reading and crossword puzzles. She joined Beacon Hill Village in 2007.

"Mary was friendly, intelligent, and independent-minded," said Mary Scudder. "She felt lucky to live in an area that had an organization like BHV. She was determined to stay in her apartment in the city."

Mary Robertson was able to stay in her home even in her final illness.

"This gift is a testament both to our organization and to the extraordinary support given to Ms. Robertson by Beacon Hill Village's staff," said board president Dan Taylor. "While she considered the help given to her exceptional, it is typical of the support our staff gives to all members in need."

Several Village members have already followed Mary Robertson's example and remembered BHV in their will. ■ —Karen Cord Taylor



Mary Robertson

BHV Membership is Booming

SINCE MAY 1, 23 engaging individuals from many downtown neighborhoods have joined Beacon Hill Village. Among them are former Cambridge at Home members who “crossed the river” a few years ago, an exercise, music, and reading enthusiast; a strategy consultant who enjoys learning; a self-described “tinkerer” with a closet full of tools; an individual who has lived in eight different Boston neighborhoods; and a number of individuals who share an enthusiasm for travel, meeting new people, and making new friends. ■

BHV WELCOMES...

Back Bay

Jan Beaven
Jane and Bob Burke
Lee Higgins
Richard Jewett
Amy Kaplowitz

Beacon Hill

John and Sarah Appleton
Nancy Coolidge
Cynthia Hallowell
Jane Hester
Eugene Merfeld

Downtown/Waterfront

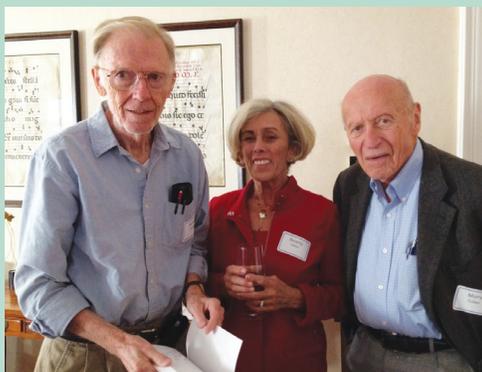
Carol Ball
Sylvia Blumenthal
Lynne Heye
Shirley Roberts

South End

Murry and Beverly Cohen
Murray Frank

West End

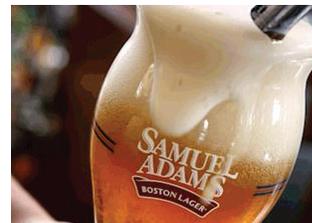
Helen and Louis Novick
Nancy Risser
Janet Urdang



Steve and Barbara Roop hosted a New Member Tea for those who joined BHV in the last three months. Top: Richard Jewett and Beverly and Murry Cohen. Bottom: BHV founder Susan McWhinney-Morse chats with Jane Burke and Carol Ball.

BHV Visit to the Samuel Adams Brewery

THE RAIN CAME down in sheets on the cold April day when we boarded our cozy mini-bus



to tour the Samuel Adams Brewery in Jamaica Plain. Inside, weather woes wilted with the warm welcome of our own Sam Adams guide, well steeped in the facts and lore of Sam Adams craft beers. Under rafters festooned with banners awarded to Sam’s blue ribbon beers, we sniffed baskets containing different varieties of hops that are used in brewing the beers. En route to the gift shop, we wound our way through rows of gleaming steel and warm copper vats to the Tasting Room to discern the qualities of Sam’s various beers and preview the new Oktoberfest brew. A snack and a Sam Adams at the vintage 1880’s Doyle’s Cafe topped off our wonderful outing. ■ —Lois Fontana

The Quirkiest Outing...Ever

HAVING HEARD THAT BHV members like “out of the ordinary” outings, the new program coordinator googled “quirky museums.” Hit #1: the Plumbing Museum in Watertown. Why not?

So, on September 24, BHV members were treated to a one and a half hour private tour of the museum, housed in a 150-year old former ice house.

A tin-lined bathtub, electric sink, and Maytag Wringer Washer are among the 19th century artifacts housed in the museum, not to mention the modern-day combined toilet-sink fixture used in prisons.

Despite some initial skepticism – one member was overheard saying “I’ll try anything once” – everyone agreed that it was a fun and informative trip. ■



Member and photographer Lois Fontana captured this shot of fellow member (and photographer) Nancy Jeanne Martin at the Plumbing Museum.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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THE VILLAGER *design by Joanne Legge*

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The travel group spawned a movie group that meets on Monday afternoons at Joan’s home.

Also on Monday, Susan Cox coordinates a meditation group in the morning to start the week off with a bit of serenity and reflection.

When it was suggested there be a group for men only, Roger Cox came up with the idea of *First Drink*. The first Thursday of every month this group meets at a different watering hole. They began their exploration of Boston bars at The Last Hurrah in the Parker House and have since been to Clink at the former Charles Street jail, now the Liberty Hotel, where BHV member John Sears, former Sheriff of Suffolk County, joined them with tales of the jail’s past.

Some affinity groups have a rocky start until they find their way. *Terrific*



Mary George and Tina DiMaggio were caught by the PBS camera sipping coffee while discussing politics at *Second Cup*.

Tuesdays had erratic attendance for several months until a group cohered around a focus on the arts. Twice a month they meet over a glass of wine at 75 Chestnut Street to explore all that is going on in the arts in Boston and beyond and plan trips to selected museums and theatres. They have been to the SpeakEasy theatre, arranged an overnight trip to the Mas-

sachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and the Williamstown museums, took a train trip to the Rhode Island School of Design, and are currently considering a trip to Philadelphia to explore museums there.

Some affinity groups, such as *Terrific Tuesdays* and *Second Cup*, have reached a size that precludes new members from joining. However, any BHV member is invited to add their name to *Terrific Tuesdays*’ mailing list to be informed of and participate in any of their trips.

The possibilities for more affinity groups are endless. What would excite you to get up and out? If you have an idea for a group, BHV can help you find others who share your interest, find a welcoming place and set you off on the path from here to affinity. ■

—Muriel Finegold