Today on *Across the Fence* the importance of support and services at home. We will learn about a program that supports teaching at home. It's called SASH. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us; I'm Judy Simpson. Living at home is a goal for most of us as we grow older. The SASH program helps make that happen. To find out more I'm joined by two guests. Molly Dugan is the director of the SASH program and Paige Larson is the SASH coordinator at Jerry Hill senior housing in Jericho. Welcome to both of you. Molly maybe we can start out by talking about what SASH does and who's involved?

Molly.: It's great SASH is it stands for support and services at home. SASH is about bringing together what we call the caring partnership two allow people to live their lives at home which is where people want to be.. Cathedral square which started the SASH program one of our organization partners who had been in the housing field for over 30 years now primarily doing senior housing and what we've heard consistently from our residents is they want to be able to stay at home even as their health status might change. That's where they want to be. What SASH does is pull together this partnership. This partnership includes the person who wants to stay at home their family members and other support person's as well as organizations that are mission driven to help people stay at home. Some of those organizations include the visiting nurse association the local area agency on aging pace which stands for the program for all inclusive care of the elderly. The community mental health providers. What's different about the program is that it brings in affordable housing providers throughout the state and the staff are imbedded in those housing communities. So were able to provide this community based program where people whether there in the house and building or outside of it living in the community have this hub where they can come to to connect to the services and supports that they need through the staff that are imbedded in the housing.

Judy.: So it's really for the whole community?

Molly.: Absolutely for the whole community. There's about 500 different affordable housing sites throughout the state of Vermont and that we thought was a perfect way to have support community-wide throughout the state because they're scattered around. The matter where you live there's affordable housing community somewhere close by so were able to serve people who were living there but also there's people that are living a couple streets away in a single family home or a mobile home or an apartment and they also want to live their lives at home. They have this close by hub where they can get connected to all of the existing wonderful services and supports that are out there.

Judy.: So Paige maybe you can talk about some of those services and what the participants get?
Paige.: Working at Jerri hill I have a small community of Elders. They're all independent living. From the bottom we have a wellness nurse that they see for initial assessment and assess is what they need and I being on site a majority of time develop this trusting one and one supportive relationship and I'm able to provide whenever they need. Some people need a little more support some people just come to me for a little cheerleading if they're losing weight if they want to walk. I'm integral to connecting to the VNA if they need VNA services. I am Integral to connecting with their family's if they need family support and helping family's navigate.

Judy.: So it's really individual care?

Paige.: Absolutely. Everyone is different.

Molly.: I would jump in to say the picture just on the screen showed one of our wellness nurses completing an assessment with one of our residents. One of the key services people get is this one on one in their home attention from a wellness nurse or SASH coordinator like Paige. There's also this key focus on prevention and wellness because SASH is clearly providing a safety net for the program but we also want to be in front of things to provide the prevention and wellness activities to keep people well so we're avoiding this unnecessary hospitalizations emergency room visits. The unnecessary length of stays in nursing homes. A lot of people end up staying in nursing homes longer than they need to because you don't have the support sit home. That's the other thing we're really working on.

Judy.: Because people cannot be released to their homes unless these items are in place.

Molly.: Right that's the radically the case and there's definitely been times where people have gone home before they're really ready and SASH is there to make sure that we're all set.

Judy.: Let's talk a bit about medications because I know many seniors are on not one or two but sometimes several medications.

Molly.: We have some very interesting situations around medication. We started this ash program in our Heinenburgh senior housing in the new north end of Burlington. Part of the assessment is to inventory the medications people are on. The average number of meds was six. People are on six prescription medicine. The clip you just saw is we have wellness nurses go in and do and inventories of their medications and help the SASH purchase a parent to make sure they stay on schedule with their meds. And a SASH coordinator like the gentleman you just saw on the video can come in and do medication reminders. One challenge for some folks is the good old are is to just remember all the different meds the need to take. If you have someone to come in and simply say it's noon it's time to take that med it really takes care of a lot of issues.

Paige.: I just want to share personally an example of that. I have a gentleman at my unit who has a bit of a memory problem not remembering to take medicine or have breakfast so I became the person who would go in four days a week regularly a certain time now when I go see him I pushed the time back and he already has that as a routine so he's no longer dependent on it.

Judy.: That's amazing. We talk a little bit about a person getting home from the hospital or a nursing home. Maybe you can talk a little bit about what exactly SASH does for those folks?

Molly.: The time when somebody's transition home from a hospital or nursing home is an incredibly vulnerable time for them. Research shows that within a number of days a lot of folks will bounce back that's because things are just not quite so well at home and they don't have the support system in place. What’s ash does they have a formulized partnership between the imbedded community housing staff with the other
agencies that I mentioned the VNA agency on aging. This team is formulized team gets together twice a month. This is our Heinenburgh team on the screen. They get together twice a month. I like to call them the brain trust. They get together and they talk about who are the two spends that are at risk right now that need help and the ones that are transitioning home from the hospital are always on the list. We go around the table and say the skilled nurse from the VNA what’s the role you're providing and how can the SASH coordinator Paige is a SASH coordinator help support that plan. What is the case manager from that agency on aging going to be able to provide this participant and Paige and the wellness nurse on site know the plan so everybody knows who's on first who's on second and the participant is on the center of that discussion so we come up with a plan of how we're going to make sure you have the support some place when you come home. Paige as the SASH coordinator takes that back to the participant and their family and says this is what we talked about does it work do you understand and this is our plan going forward. It's really this very intense action planning and to have a program were all these organizations have agreed that we're going to communicate freely and we're going to get together on these cases is really what makes this successful that team partnership. Including the participant and their family in that partnership this huge. It's the person centeredness of the program.

Judy.: It must be a huge relief to family members.

Paige.: Absolutely I feel that way. I also want to to add on that note that working with a hospital has been integral. I know when that person is coming home before they even do sometimes. It's integral to bring the family and when we get together before that happens and the families are overwhelmed the families are busy. They could be a sandwich generation where they have kids of their own so it's huge to help them navigate this and provide that emotional and physical support for them.

Molly.: Speaking of support were able to provide family's where we started the program we had a purchase a pent there who had surgery and came home and her daughter was the only person locally. She over and over again thank the support staff they are for what she said was I just didn't feel alone helping my mom. She still had to work every day and call in touch base with the SASH coordinator onsite who had added her mom to their daily check ins. A lot a SASH coordinators will do daily check ins of their most at risk residents. To be able to eyeball someone's mom or dad and say things are looking good or she's looking a little different than yesterday you might want to come by after work and check in.

Judy.: Which is really important too because you can have somebody check in on an elder but if they don't really know the person it's hard to tell if there's something wrong.

Molly.: That's exactly Judy why we thought it was so important to bring the housing community and imbedded staff in the picture because the housing staff by being there so frequently really gets to know the SASH participants and build is trusting relationship. There almost like family to a lot of them so their able to notice nuance changes in behavior and able to see red flags come up sooner when you know somebody and you're seen them day in and day out.

Judy.: Also it gives folks that you care for a name and a face they know they can call or talk to if they notice any kind of a change.

Molly.: Write exactly the connections and communication is incredibly powerful as we start dealing with some of these challenges of people trying to stay at home.

Judy.: I know that part of staying at home involves regular exercise. For those of us who are not seen years yet it's still a struggle to do that. How do you help folks with that?
Paige.: For me and my place we have a lot of chronic health conditions so they're limited at what they can do. We do bring in a Tai Chi program which runs through AmeriCorps every Monday. We're participation in the community as well as Jerri hill. And what I did is a lot of people just want to walk. A lot of people just want to get out and walk. I have 186 year old who wants to walk a mile a day and she and I now go daily a mile in 15 minutes. Then I have other people who are not as healthy and able so I give them a block of time and they say Paige let's go from here to the post and back. Walking as simple as it is is a huge having the support and motivation and buddy I call it a buddy. Exercise is huge.

Judy.: Yes because a lot of seniors feel isolated.

Paige.: Loneliness is a huge thing even in a community of 20 people neighbors don't often get together they don't often have similar interests at this time. Some were in routines from life and from price is right to across the fence or whenever they do. I think there's this lack of somebody needs to pull me out but once and engaged up I love it. I'm seen people that never came out of their homes for whatever reason just coming to say hello Paige. Then he'll talk to other people and they pull them in and it's amazing because social is so great for wellness physical and mental.

Judy.: These folks have a lot still to contribute.

Molly.: Absolutely and other thing of this course SASH model is to work on the volunteer aspect and not only bring volunteers and to help out with some of the need that come up with our SASH participants but also to engage our residents giving back with skills and expertise and knowledge that they have to give. It's another way that were engaging them mentally and they love doing it. We have so many SASH participants that are active volunteers even within their own SASH community. Other times are connected to school programs. We have some seniors this summer that are going to be doing a reading with kids program. It's really about looking at the holistic part of a person and figuring out how can we help them make these connections to stay engaged in life and stay healthy because that such a big piece of it.

Judy.: What are your future plans for the program because you mentioned a statistic before we started taping about how many people are going to be over 65?

Molly.: There's a number of really interesting statistics. One is that in the state of Vermont by 2017 which is not far from now one out of every three people you see walking down the street will be 55 are older. That's a real profound shift in our demographics. The other is that in January of this year baby boomers started turning 65. There's a lot of them that will be going through the system over the next 20 years so what we're so excited about through SASH has been funded for over a three year. By Medicare. So it's primarily for Medicare beneficiaries and warplane to do over these three years is proved how successful it is and we're going to be touching the lives of over 6000 Vermonters with SASH in every corner of the state they're going to be able to connect up with a SASH service hub is what we call it to get the help and care coordination and transitions home to help manage their chronic conditions that they need to stay healthy at home.

Judy.: How can people get more information?

Molly.: People can go to the cathedral square website up on your screen we have a whole section on our website about the SASH program. Also call our number 863-2224. We can connect you up with wherever you are in the state we can connect you with the closest SASH hub site and you can talk directly with the SASH coordinator about joining up.

Judy.: Molly and Paige thank you so much for joining us today and talking about these important services that's great.
Molly.: It's a pleasure thank you.

Page.: Thank you.

Judy.: That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson will see you again next time on Across the Fence.

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