

## Local seniors group helps folks stay in their homes

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“Working together to remain in our own homes as we age” is the motto of the Athens Village (TAV), and more people than ever are doing just that. “We surpassed 100 members during this past year,” reported Ed Baum, president of the nonprofit group, which soon will be getting a new executive director. The Athens Village is open to all who are 60 years of age or over and live in Athens County.

Founded in 2008, membership now stands at 113. Members live mostly in Athens but also in Albany, The Plains, Chauncey, Glouster, Jacksonville and New Marshfield, along with some of the county’s rural townships. “Our retention rate is phenomenal, so we are able to offer stability in services,” said Executive Director



Patty Mercer. “We have a lot of work to do in encouraging growth outside of the cohort of OU retirees and (among) folks living outside of the Athens city limits.”



TAV is one of “four or five such villages in Ohio with more being developed,” said Baum. “The annual meeting of all villages (The Village to Village Network) will be in Columbus in October.” Baum, 81, a retired Ohio University professor and former Athens City Council member, has been a TAV member since the beginning. “I considered this a type of insurance policy that would be in place when and if I needed some help,” he said.

Dues are \$400 per year per person and \$700 per household, or \$35 and \$60, respectively, per month. They buy members a variety of services, including free house maintenance by a coordinator who also does a home

safety assessment each year.

“I have attended some of the social and other events, and they do keep me in touch with many others in the community,” added Baum. “It is a type of self-help organization wherein our members may be willing to help others with such things as computer assistance, rides or shopping.”

One project in the planning stages at the Athens Village is providing members with a medical advocate. The advocate would be “someone to go with you to the doctor’s, take notes and discuss details with you afterwards,” according to a TAV document. Dealing with illness and death of members has been the biggest personal emotional challenge, according to Mercer. “Knowing that information or attention that I provided made a difference in someone’s quality of life” has been the most satisfying part of the job, she said. Mercer has overseen operations from day one but is leaving at the end of August. “Working with the Athens Village has been a life-altering opportunity, but I need to take a sabbatical to focus on family health challenges,” Mercer said. “Then I need to find full-time employment with benefits.”



Her successor will be Gregg Andrews, who has experience working in housing and community development, as well as with local and state government. “I was interested in continuing to work in a limited capacity after retirement from Hocking Athens Perry Community Action,” Andrews said. “This part time position sounded like a really good fit.” “Increasing membership and addressing members’ needs will be my priority,” said Andrews, whose first day will be Aug. 15. “I am very excited about this opportunity.”

A potluck picnic and reception in Mercer’s honor is scheduled at the (South Side) Richland Avenue park on July 28.

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