

North Fork Senior Connections

“I Do It Myself”: Accepting Help as We Age

by Laura Lee Yates for North Fork Senior Connections

When one of the members of North Fork Senior Connections was three years old, she remembers sitting down on the floor and insisting she would tie her own shoelaces. Since her child didn't know how to accomplish the task Mom offered to help, but the little girl insisted: “I do it myself!”

Most of us are determined to remain independent, regardless of age. Determination—along with genetics, healthy living, and pure luck—may have gotten us this far, but aging has a way of testing us in unexpected ways. One of the challenges of the process comes when we first discover we need help doing things we always aced before—perhaps something as mundane as twisting the lid off a jar of pasta sauce. Sometimes the filing system in our over-loaded brains can't sort out a name, a phone number, or why we entered a room. Technology whizzes forward while we may be learning to operate our first cellphone. That's what help is for. Just because you're not supposed to climb ladders doesn't mean you're helpless—maybe you've just gained enough wisdom to ask for assistance. (Synonyms for ‘determination’ include ‘pigheadedness’ and ‘inflexibility....’)

At North Fork Senior Connections, we want to keep older adults thriving and in their own homes as long as possible. Many of our volunteers are elders, too, willing to lend a hand to help with the little things that can make a big difference. We've all been there—or will get there soon enough if Fate allows. During a recent free soup luncheon at the Paonia Senior

Center for forty seniors, someone reminisced that she used to bring “old people” over for the low-cost meals. Now she'd passed the eighty-year-old mark herself—how had this happened?

Coming together in community can make the difference, whether it's attending the Senior Movie provided free by the Paradise Theater on the second Thursday of each month (in March it's Finian's Rainbow at 9:30 on Thursday, March 9th) or “visiting” Greenland and the Arctic with Ben Graves, formerly a teacher who traveled north with National Geographic. Currently the head of the local nonprofit Nature Connection, Graves will share dramatic photos and astute observations from his adventure at 1:00 on Tuesday, March 14 at the Paonia Senior Center (following a noon potluck—let us know if you'd like to attend!)

With the advent of our new Director, Medeina Ryan, our nonprofit is in the process of dramatically expanding our reach to the rest of the North Fork Valley. In the upcoming months, we'll be rolling out programs in Hotchkiss and Crawford. (Watch for more information on activities in these communities in future issues of the Merchant Herald.) Together we can build a network of volunteer assistance that can improve the lives of older adults, especially those without family. Even if you can still do it yourself, you don't have to do it alone. Assistance isn't charity when it's neighbors helping one another.

North Fork Senior Connections is a 501(c)3 non-profit with the goal of finding local solutions to enable senior neighbors to age in place. People interested in becoming members or volunteers are encouraged to call (970) 527-3482 or visit our website: <https://nfseniorconnections.helpfulvillage.com/>