



Vassar-Warner's **The Columns**

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Spring 2007

A Senior Residence of Distinction Since 1871 - Offering Independent Residency, Assisted Living and Respite Services

Message from the Executive Director *by Karen Harvatin*

Vassar-Warner is proud to say that it has been an adult home of distinction since 1871 and that it is the only not-for-profit adult home in Dutchess County. But what does the designation of “not-for-profit” really mean?

Management expert Peter Drucker characterizes not-for-profits as one of three major institutions in America, the others being government and business. Government’s role, Drucker suggests, is to protect and oversee; the role of business is to generate an economy. But the role of not-for-profits is nothing less than to change lives. (AAHSA 2006)

The long standing credibility of all not-for-profit organizations stems from the fact that these organizations were established out of community need, rather than economic interest. Our missions are rooted in charity, philanthropy and volunteerism, not in the private interests of investors and managers.

Like other not-for-profit organizations, the opening of the “Old Ladies Home” in 1871 was in response to a community need for housing aged, indigent women unable to support themselves. The “Old Ladies Home” merged with another not-for-profit, the “Home for Aged Men” in 1974, resulting in the change in name to recognize the historic benefactors of both homes.

Throughout these 135 years, Vassar-Warner has remained true to its mission to provide the compassion and warmth of a true home in a setting where residents are able to maintain individual well being, independence and a strong sense of community. Residents are admitted regardless of sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual preference, or socio-economic status.

Throughout the history of the residence, volunteers have been an integral part of the organization. Of particular importance is the voluntary Board of Trustees who oversee the operation of the organization. Unlike the board of a private company, a not-for-profit Board of Trustees is accountable to the public, not a group of shareholders. Board members also have a fiduciary responsibility to use the organization’s funds wisely and for their intended purpose. Our Board members come to us in various ways. Some have or have had family mem-

bers living at Vassar-Warner. Others join to offer a particular expertise. The one thing they all have in common is a belief in the mission of Vassar-Warner and a desire to enhance the lives of our residents. We would like to thank those individuals who currently serve on our Board and those who have come before them.



Stephen Wing, President: City of Poughkeepsie Corporation Counsel, Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency

Levester Cannon, Ed.D., Vice-President: Shaw Cannon Jones Telson and Associates, Ltd. Vice-President

Lucy Hawkins, Treasurer: Arlington School District Retired Teacher, Daughter of Vassar-Warner Resident

Kip Bleakley O’Neill, Secretary: Former Dutchess County Legislator, Daughter of Former Resident

Gail Webster (Past President): Hudson River Housing Executive Director and Co-Chair Dutchess County Housing Consortium; **David Augello:** Ben Ciccone, Inc. Project Superintendent; **Anne Cross:** Board of Advocates President; **Jon Behrends:** Owner, Precision Contractors; **Steven Densmore:** Pattern for Progress Communications Director and Former Publisher/Editor of *Poughkeepsie Beat*; **Brian Doyle:** Ulster Greene ARC Associate Executive Director, Common Council Chairperson and 4th Ward Council Member; **Reverend Kay Greenleaf:** Pastor, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Poughkeepsie; **Janet Houston:** Former City Council Member and Hyde Park School District Retired Teacher; **Colette Lafuente:** Former Dutchess County Clerk and Former Poughkeepsie Mayor; **John Libolt:** IBM Retiree and St. Mary’s Church Parish Council Member; **Henrietta Mountz:** BOCES and Marist College “Teaching American History” Program Project Director, Wappingers Central School District Retired Teacher and Daughter of Former Resident; **Evelyn Stevenson:** Historical Interpreter, Tour Guide and Community Volunteer; **Steven Taft, M.D.:** Physician in Private Practice; **Dora Visbeck:** TD Banknorth, N.A. Assistant Vice-President/ Business Sales Manager and Dutchess Outreach Public Affairs Committee Co-Chair

Lori Jones: A Beacon of Light at Vassar-Warner by Steve Densmore

For many centuries people in Sweden and Norway have marked one of the longest, coldest nights of the year (December 13) by asking a young girl adorned in white with candles ringing her head to carry a flaming torch from village to village, symbolically bringing good fortune and casting back the darkness (and the demons) associated with the long, harsh winter nights.

It is fitting then that, year after year, Dietary Assistant Lori Jones is asked to dress up as St. Lucia - the patron saint of light - for Vassar-Warner's annual celebration of the traditional Scandinavian holiday. If her co-workers' words are any indication, Lori Jones' special light has been brightening and warming the lives of residents and fellow employees at Vassar-Warner for many years.



Dietary Assistant Lori Jones is presented with the Employee of the Year Award by Executive Director Karen Harvatin

Not only do Lori's co-workers describe her as a conscientious and dedicated employee - one who is always willing to help everyone - but many say Lori's personality goes "above and beyond" workplace expectations. "She always has a smile on her face and nice words for everyone!" wrote one employee. It's this outpouring of sincere appreciation from numerous co-workers that garnered Lori recognition as Vassar-Warner's Employee of the Year for 2006.

"What makes the Employee of the Year Award so special is that the nominations are all made by a person's peers," said Executive Director Karen Harvatin. "It did not surprise me that all of her co-workers talked about Lori's attitude. Lori is one of those individuals that residents and co-workers just like to be around."

Maybe that's because Lori likes being around them so much. "I'm just really happy here. I love the residents. The residents make my job. You get to know them like they're part of your family," Lori says. "You could be having a down day, and they cheer you up."

As for cheer, Lori dispenses more than her fair share. Along with her annual rendition of St. Lucia, Lori is willing to dress up in virtually any outlandish costume to the delight of residents and other staff members, who often "nominate" her for tough assignments like Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer or

the Lion King or Village People. "I get elected because I'm not afraid of anything," admits Lori, who has been working at Vassar-Warner for 21 years.

Over those years, Lori has seen the venerable residence change in many ways, such as when men arrived for the first time after the Home for Aged Men on Church Street closed. "There were all kinds of reactions from the ladies, from -- 'Oh, my goodness, men are coming!' to 'Oh boy, men are coming!,'" she recalls with a laugh. But that, she says, underscores why Vassar-Warner has been able to survive and thrive for more than 135 years - its ability to adapt to changing times and situations while always keeping its core values intact. "You're always striving to improve. That's what makes Vassar-Warner so special. We don't get into a rigid thing," Lori points out.

And that willingness to adapt has translated into professional development opportunities for Lori and many co-workers, who welcome the chance to learn new skills and train in different roles within the organization.

Lori has learned some of the computer programs now used daily in the dietary department and she has been working with the Activities Supervisor, Samantha Cerero, in hopes of someday helping with resident activities. "I like Vassar-Warner because they give you room to grow and have new experiences," she said.

But in the end, it's the relationships that Lori has forged over the years with residents that have made Vassar-Warner so much more than a job for her. When her mother died nearly 12 years ago, Lori recalls returning to work, somewhat in

"Through a lot of trials and tribulations in my life, Vassar-Warner has been my salvation. I've always known Vassar-Warner would be there for me."

- Lori Jones

a fog from despair. "As the residents came down for their meals that day, every single one of the residents shared condolences, hugs...it touched me. Through a lot of trials and tribulations in my life, Vassar-Warner has been my salvation. I've always known Vassar-Warner would be there for me."

Lori Jones has become as much a part of Vassar-Warner as the white columns on the front porch. "People tease me and say that, on the day I stop working here, I'm going to move in," she says. "This is a part of who I am."

Happenings in the Activities Department *by Samantha Cerero*

“What is your earliest memory of your eldest relative?” “Tell me about your ancestry.” “What is your mother’s maiden name?” These are some of the questions that our residents have been answering during the past few months. Several of the residents at Vassar-Warner have begun to record their life history with the help of our many volunteers from Marist College.

The idea for this project came from a former resident, Mel Eufemia, who had received a journal from one of her grandchildren to record her life history from childhood to the present. I thought it was an amazing way for each resident to tell the “story” of their lives and to leave their legacy on paper for their families. I know that each family will value this gift.

The holidays were terrific as always. We started the season with the traditional decorating of the parlor Christmas tree on the day after Thanksgiving. The residents were assisted by Girl Scout Troop 230 from Wappingers Falls, led by Nancy Terwilliger, the daughter-in-law of our resident Ann Terwilliger.

The month was filled with music including performances by the Arlington Middle School Chorus, Dutchess Horizons, Poughkeepsie Middle School National Junior Honor Society Chorus, Judy Hammond’s piano students, flutists from Marist College, and the Van-Voorhis family and friends.

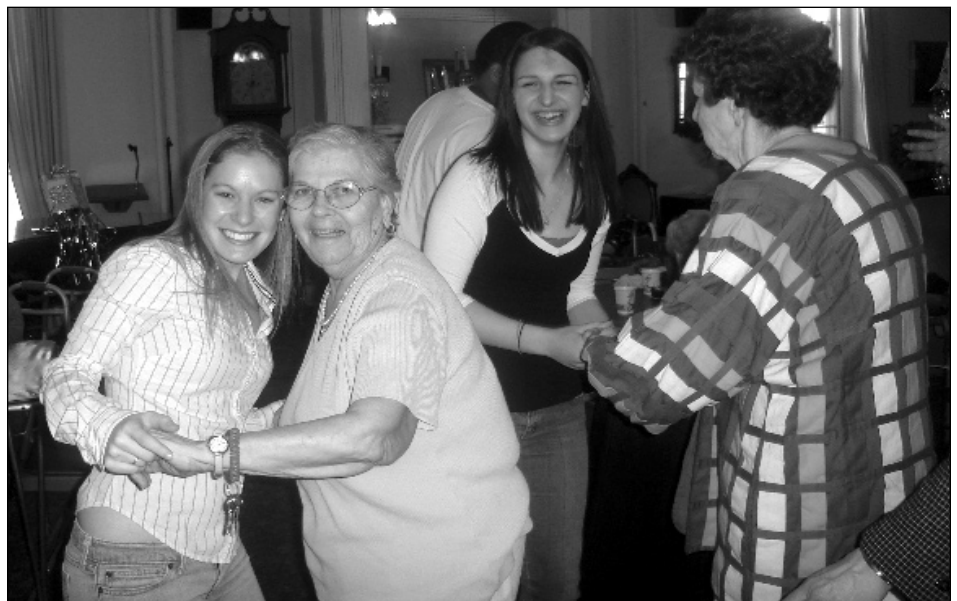
And there was a never ending assortment of food beginning with the Holiday Coffee sponsored by the Board of Advocates for the residents, staff and volunteers and ending with a special Christmas Eve Buffet. Several of the residents also attended a Senior Luncheon at the Grand Hotel where they enjoyed an afternoon of music and dancing.

We held our second annual Luau in January to help chase away the winter blues and had the opportunity to taste fresh pineapple straight from Hawaii.

Pat Lund, daughter of resident Helen Zirkel, just happened to be returning from her vacation in Hawaii the week of the Luau and brought a case of pineapple home with her for the residents to enjoy.

We have introduced several new activities including a cooking club and a book club, and we are already thinking about our plans for the flower and vegetable gardens. There is always something going on at Vassar-Warner.

(Photos: Vivian Doerr at the Luau; Marist College students Amy Lang and Angelica Lombardi dancing with Sandra Lassman and Helen Zirkel at the monthly birthday party; Case Manager Denise Van Cuyck and Margaret Jenner at the Senior Holiday Luncheon)



Volunteers Committed to Vassar-Warner

The Board of Advocates is a truly special group of volunteers at Vassar-Warner. The purpose of this Board is to enhance the lives of the residents, and members work in conjunction with Executive Director Karen Harvatin to assist residents in various ways.

Each Board member develops a one-to-one relationship with one or more residents. The relationship includes visiting, sending birthday and holiday cards, and at times, driving the resident to medical appointments or social events. Several of the Advocates coordinate the services of the in-house store called "The Shoppin' Place." The store is open every Wednesday morning for the residents to purchase toiletries and other personal items.

Other activities sponsored by the Advocates throughout the year include a Jewelry Party, Valentine Luncheon, Victorian Tea, Clothes Rack, Spring and Fall Card Parties, and a December Holiday Coffee. The Advocates also strive to get to know each resident and identify any special needs by visiting the residents each month on a rotating schedule.

One extra project this past year was the sponsorship of Joseph Allen, a teen who coordinated and constructed his Eagle Scout project for Vassar-Warner. The repainted benches, flower boxes and plants made a big difference and are appreciated by the Advocates as well as the Vassar-Warner community.

Karen Harvatin recently said, "I have never worked with a more dedicated group of volunteers, some of whom have been associated with Vassar-Warner for over 25 years. They make such a positive difference in the lives of the residents."

The Board of Advocates is always looking for new members to enrich the lives of residents. The Board meets on the first Tuesday of each month (except for July and August). To learn more about becoming an Advocate, please call Anne



Advocate Arlene Barresi and her dog Sparky spend time with Anna Stewart during their weekly visit to Vassar-Warner

Cross at 845-462-2315. The members of the Board of Advocates (and the year they joined the Board) are:

Anne Cross, President (1993), Susan Roe, Vice-President (1997), Barbara Tryon, Secretary (1992), Jane Fisher, Corresponding Secretary (1995), Patricia Drain, Treasurer (1994), Joan McDonald, Assistant Treasurer (2003), Betty Allen-Clark (1982), Arlene Barresi (2007), Mary Bastian VanVoorhis (1988), Anne Christmas (2007), Janet Croushore (1998), Lillian Easton (1998), Betty Francis (2001), Cheri Gifford (2001), Lillian Hanlon (1974), Blanche Murray (1982), E. Beatrice Northway (1979), Therese O'Connor (1994), Grace Raunick (2007), Kathleen Roach (1999), Eleanor Skov (1995), Elizabeth Underhill (2007), Virginia Walsh (1993).

Respite Care for Someone You Love *by Barbara Mindel*



Anne Sherer had looked at other Respite facilities for her mother, Madeline but chose Vassar-Warner because, as she told me, "I can't say enough good things about it! When my husband and I want to vacation, I want a place where she's cared for. At Vassar-Warner, my mother gets personalized attention, is safe and secure, her meds are dispensed, she's got her own room, and someone is always around to be sure she is comfortable." And what is especially important to Anne Sherer is knowing that "when I come to take my 98 year old mother back home, she is more mentally bright and alert because of her stay at Vassar-Warner."

Vassar-Warner welcomes individuals 60 years of age and over for short term stays of up to 42 days in a calendar year. Services include: a private room, assistance with personal care and medication administration, three meals a day and evening snack, housekeeping and laundry services, activities, and much more! For information, contact: Denise Van Cuyck, Case Manager at 845-454-3754, extension 13.

It's True...Doctors Really Do Make House Calls!

We were glad to introduce a new service for our residents in September of last year. **House Calls of America** has brought back the time honored "house call."

Founder Raymond Mott, Physician Assistant, has partnered with a local physician Dr. Deepesh Patel, to offer individuals the convenient option of being seen at their residence for routine medical needs. (House Calls of America does not replace emergency medical services or the emergency room.)

The benefit for our residents is that they can be seen in the comfort of their own rooms, and often within 24 to 48 hours. No longer do they need to worry about transportation to an appointment or a lengthy wait time.

The Physician Assistants are able to prescribe appropriate medications and order lab work and diagnostic testing. Lab work can be initiated at Vassar-Warner and samples sent to a lab for testing rather than the resident having to go to an off-site lab.

House Calls of America is the only physician based service that visits senior facilities throughout the Hudson Valley. Both P.A. Mott and Dr. Patel are "privileged" at Vassar Brothers Medical Center and St. Francis Hospital.

Having privileges in both local hospitals means P.A. Mott and Dr. Patel can admit our residents and follow their care closely in the hospital if needed. That also means that if there is a need for any follow up appointments, the residents can be seen in the comfort of their own home!

Several of our residents are now utilizing the services of House Calls of America. While they have all been impressed with the prompt response, the thoroughness of the exam

and the follow-up, what the residents like best is that they do not need to leave Vassar-Warner to receive routine medical care. It is just one more way that Vassar-Warner is responding to the changing needs and wants of our residents.



Catherine Papastrat and Laura Leger keep themselves limber at one of the daily exercise programs



Then and Now at Vassar-Warner

When Vassar-Warner opened in 1871, residents were admitted as "full care residents" - meaning they would transfer all of their assets to Vassar-Warner upon admission with the understanding that Vassar-Warner would provide care to that individual for the rest of their life.

In many ways, this system was a precursor to the Continuing Care Retirement Communities that are opening today!

However, probably starting sometime in the 1970s (we do not have records of the exact year), there was a tremendous change in Department of Health regulations, particularly with regard to the level of care that could be provided by an Adult Home.

Today, all residents pay a monthly fee for their room and board and for any additional services, including Assisted Living. All residents are required to disclose their income and assets upon admission, and it is expected that those assets will be used to pay for their monthly fees, but

they are able to maintain those assets in their own accounts. Residents pay the monthly fee only for as long as they retain a room at Vassar-Warner. So if you're talking to someone in the community, please tell them how times have changed at Vassar-Warner.

A Senior Residence of Distinction

Vassar-Warner



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Get Lucky!

The Board of Advocates will be hosting their semi-annual Card Party on Thursday, April 19th from 10am to 2pm.

The cost is only \$10 per person (and that includes a delicious luncheon and door prizes)!

The proceeds of the Card Party are used to provide a number of special events for Vassar-Warner residents throughout the year.

Reservations are required. For more information or to make a reservation, please contact Barbara Tryon at 845-485-6866.

