



Vassar-Warner's

The Columns

Volume 5, Issue 2

Fall 2006

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

Message from the Executive Director *by Karen Harvatin*

I wrote in the Spring 2005 issue of *The Columns* about the application that Vassar-Warner was filing with the New York State Department of Health for licensure as an Assisted Living Residence (ALR) to enable more of our residents to "age in place."

This is a new license that was created as a result of the Assisted Living Reform Act, signed into law by Governor Pataki in October 2004 to "provide added protections for our seniors, encourage new development of much needed Assisted Living Residences across the state, and hold operators of these facilities accountable for the services they provide."

The Vassar-Warner application was filed in August 2005, but unfortunately, there is little to report on this or any Assisted Living Residence application filed throughout New York State. The Department of Health has recently released the assessment tools and other materials for this level of care, but is still working on the regulations. I will keep you updated as we receive more information.

I would like to ask for your assistance, however, in advocating for state funding for the Assisted Living Residence program. While Medicaid dollars are available for the Assisted Living Program (Vassar-Warner has six Assisted Living Program beds), the Governor has not allocated any Medicaid dollars to cover the expenses in Assisted Living Residences.

That means that Assisted Living Residence services will only be available to those individuals with private resources. The need for funding is expressed best in the following letter,



written by the daughter of one of our residents who has lived at Vassar-Warner since April of 1998:

"When my mother first entered Vassar-Warner, she was a private payer who needed the services of an adult home,

since it was difficult for her to live on her own due to short term memory loss.

Initially, she needed no assisted living services. Fortunately, when the time came, Vassar-Warner was able to accommodate her. Since then, in the past 18 months or so, Medicaid became my mother's tertiary provider.

Without the Assisted Living Program bed, my mother might have been forced into a Skilled Nursing Facility prematurely. I am convinced she would have declined precipitously had this been the case. As it is, her independence in a cost effective setting is assured.

Shouldn't her experience be extended to all SSI and Medicaid recipients who are not yet ready for a Skilled Nursing Facility?"

I would encourage each of you to contact your state representatives to advocate for funding for this level of care. For more information on this issue, email us at vwhoffice@aol.com. To contact your elected representatives, please visit www.ny.gov or www.assembly.state.ny.us or www.senate.state.ny.us.

Residents of Vassar-Warner are a contented family, and Sandra Lassman who relocated here from an apartment in Wantagh, New York, moved in this past July to become part of it.

"The first time I came to Vassar-Warner, I was very pleased with the atmosphere of the home and was made to feel so welcome." Within a month, she settled in quickly to personalize her room - a photo gallery of her parents, her deceased first husband and their three children, her deceased second husband and his four children, all of the children's spouses, and her thirteen grandchildren.

Her loved ones smile from every wall, bookcase and shelf. "My family is a League of Nations, and I love them all," Sandra said. "As long as they are close with me, that's all that matters."



You might notice Sandra's charm necklace. Each small child-like figure's gem represents a grandchild's birthstone. She fingered the necklace thoughtfully as she shared her innermost feelings. "I'm a very happy person with everything in my life. I have the best of two possible worlds." With obvious glee, she proceeded to explain that not only has she a close family - but now that she's at Vassar-Warner, "I don't

cook, clean, do laundry, or worry about medications! And everyone is friendly. There's lots to do, too." Her daughter Risa who lives in Poughkeepsie can testify to that because of the times she or one of her brothers or sisters or grandchildren try to get Sandra on the phone. "It's not easy! We get her answering machine."

But no complaints from a daughter who wanted her mother to live closer, investigated facilities and learned about Vassar-Warner from others as well as on-line. "I fell in love with its homey feeling," Risa says. And even more important, "People at Vassar-Warner seem to care; it's not institutional."

One visit to Vassar-Warner with her daughter, and Sandra too, was smitten. She knew she'd be content here. Our hearty welcome, Sandra!

NEWS IN BRIEF

OUR NEW ROOF:

We are happy to report that our roof work has been completed! The timing could not have been better, given the amount of rain that we have had this summer. Once again, we are grateful to the Dyson Foundation for approving a grant of \$200,000 to cover the costs.

A NEW PARKING LOT:

We are working on the development of a parking lot on the corner of South Hamilton Street and Montgomery Street that will provide us with twelve additional parking spaces.

The site plans have been approved by the City of Poughkeepsie Planning Department, and the project is now being put out to bid. Thank you to Pete Setaro of Morris Associates Architects who donated his time and skills to develop the site plans and oversee the bidding process.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBER:

We welcomed Samantha Cerero into the position of Activities Supervisor in May. Samantha has worked with older adults in various residential and day programs for the past seven years. She has already introduced several new programs for the residents, and we are all amazed by her creativity and energy.

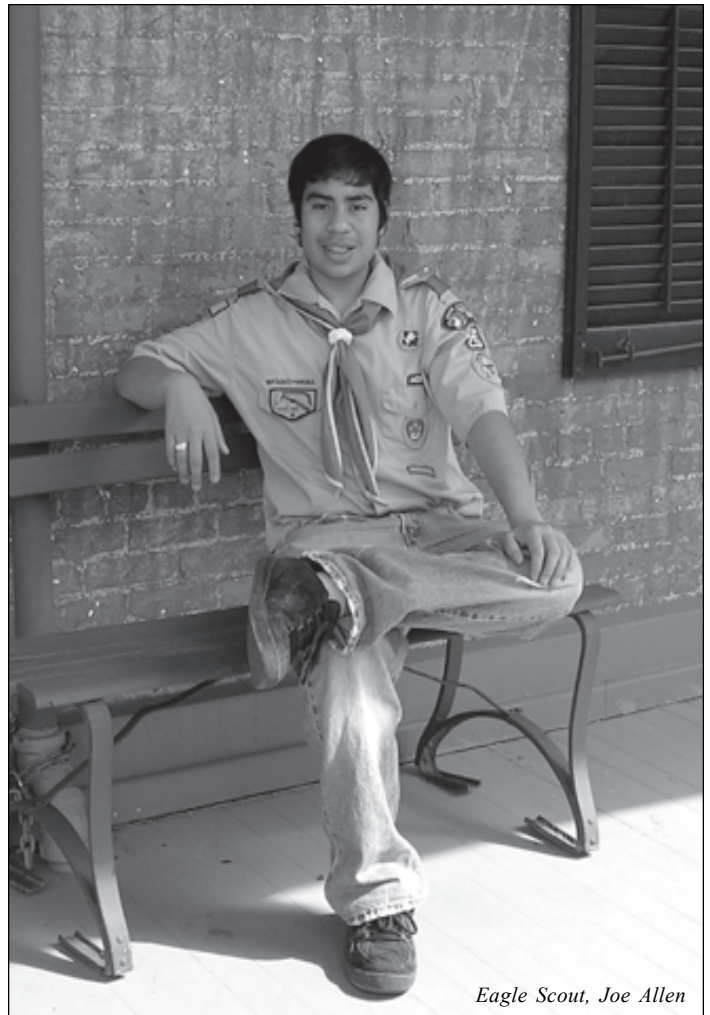
Joe Allen, Our Special Eagle Scout

by Evelyn Stevenson

By the time this newsletter comes out, Joe Allen will be an Eagle Scout! And Vassar-Warner is the recipient of his actions on behalf of earning the award. Joe built and filled flower boxes and reconditioned benches at Vassar-Warner with lovely results. He even provided a before and after summary documenting the entire project.

Vassar-Warner was most fortunate in hosting this Spackenkill High School sophomore who cares for the environment and actually did something about it. Ann Cross, Co-President of the Board of Advocates and member of the Board of Trustees, is Joe's next door neighbor. When she heard that Joe, a Boy Scout for many years, was looking for an Eagle Scout project, she suggested a landscape project at Vassar-Warner.

Joe Allen, a Guatemalan by birth expects to go to college and currently has a 93 average. (He is considering one day becoming a Doctor of Rhinoplasty, but currently is enjoying palming around with friends and going out for JV football.) Joe has received a special scouting award from St. Martin de Porres Church and has received a merit badge in Environmental Conservation and Fish and Wildlife. Vassar-Warner's former Activities Director, Maryellen Libertella said, "Joe was very professional: planning, developing and following through from the start of the project to completion. He provided great leadership for our student volunteers - something that was really appreciated by both students and Vassar-Warner."



Eagle Scout, Joe Allen

Consider a Bequest to Vassar-Warner

For more than 135 years, Vassar-Warner has provided so much more than shelter for thousands of older adults. It has provided them with a rich life and a caring home where they could enjoy the passing years with grace and dignity.

We don't need to tell our friends and supporters what a special place Vassar-Warner is; they feel it every time they stroll down the hallways or stop in for tea. What some might need to be reminded of, however, is that Vassar-Warner's special atmosphere and its commitment to helping those who might not be able to afford such splendid accommodations elsewhere, doesn't come without a cost.

"We rely on interest generated by the Vassar-Warner Foundation trust and donations from the community to subsidize those residents whose incomes cannot cover the costs as-

sociated with their care and housing," points out Executive Director Karen Harvatin.

That's why we're asking our friends, benefactors, residents, and their families to consider a bequest to Vassar-Warner. A bequest is a gift that keeps giving long after you've departed and helps maintain this wonderful landmark and its mission.

A bequest can come in many forms - from a charitable donation of a portion of an estate to an endowment that keeps generating income in perpetuity. But whatever shape it takes, a bequest contributes marvelously to the preservation of Vassar-Warner's wonderful legacy and helps insure that it will continue to serve residents for another 135 years. For more information, please call Karen Harvatin at (845) 454-3754, ext. 11. -Steve Densmore

These past few months have been very exciting for us at Vassar-Warner. Several young women from the Eleanor Roosevelt Center Girl's Leadership Workshop visited Vassar-Warner in July.

One of the objectives of having Workshop participants visit nonprofit agencies is to help them see and understand the role nonprofits play in addressing the needs of individuals and communities in our society.

These young women, who were chosen from hundreds of applicants from around the world, spent time talking with residents, assisting with activities and learning about the purpose and mission of Vassar-Warner.

August 23rd marked the day of our Hawaiian Luau. The day was full of food, music, laughter, dancing, and fun! Residents, family members and staff enjoyed a delicious fruit salad, a pineapple upside down cake and tropical punch.

Everyone donned Hawaiian leis and Native Island clothing, and some even wore straw hats and grass skirts. With authentic island music playing, we danced the afternoon away, giving our best attempts at the hula and the limbo. It was a joyous event!

Several residents, staff and family members once again participated in the annual Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk with the Vassar-Warner team collecting \$787 in donations. Many thanks to all who donated to this very worthy cause.



Catherine Papstrat, Rose Rossi, Sandra Lassman, and Laura Leger meet the Hudson Valley Renegades mascot at the Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk



Vassar-Warner staff members do the hula!

Contributors to Vassar-Warner at the \$100 level or greater:

Pillar (\$10,000 or more) The Dyson Foundation

Sponsor (\$1,000-2,499) Rod and Joann Crotty, Colette Lafuente, Stephen and Carol Wing

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A Senior Residence of Distinction Since 1871

Vassar-Warner

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



"Work doesn't kill you, but I think worry does! Now that I'm at Vassar-Warner, my family and I don't worry anymore."

*- Marion Parks,
Resident of Vassar-Warner*

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Molto



Sholto

Here Kitty, Kitty...

We bid a sad farewell to Coco, our resident cat, this past March. When Coco came to Vassar-Warner ten years ago, looking for a home, no one could have imagined how much joy he would bring to our lives. While we still miss him, we could not imagine Vassar-Warner without a cat or two. So we were delighted to be able to adopt two 4 year old sisters - Sholto and Molto - at the SPCA this April.

Any concerns we had about their adjustments to a new home were quickly put to rest. They were surprisingly unafraid of strangers, and they immediately made themselves at home on the wide window sills, the parlor chairs, and even occasionally, on the grand piano. They prefer not to be held, but love to be petted by anyone passing by - which happens often! Sholto's favorite spot to rest is the Executive Director's office while Molto is our explorer who can be found in multiple places on the upper three floors. When you're visiting Vassar-Warner, stop to see them. They always welcome the extra attention.

Then and Now at Vassar-Warner

As reported in the *Poughkeepsie News-Telegraph* September 26, 1898:

"I heard a story about the Old Ladies Home the other day which amused me very much. Mrs. Rhynus is the matron, and she is very careful as to what the old ladies read.

One morning there appeared in one of the papers, like enough the *News-Press*, a paragraph calling attention to the condition of the sidewalk in front of the Old Ladies Home. Mrs. Rhynus saw the paragraph and concluded that the old ladies must not see it.

When the old ladies saw that something had been cut from the newspaper, they at once lost all interest in the remainder of the paper and all day long kept up a ceaseless inquiry as to what had been kept from them, until I venture to say, the matron wished she had left the paragraph where it was."

As quoted from Karen Harvatin, Executive Director September 2006 (108 years later):

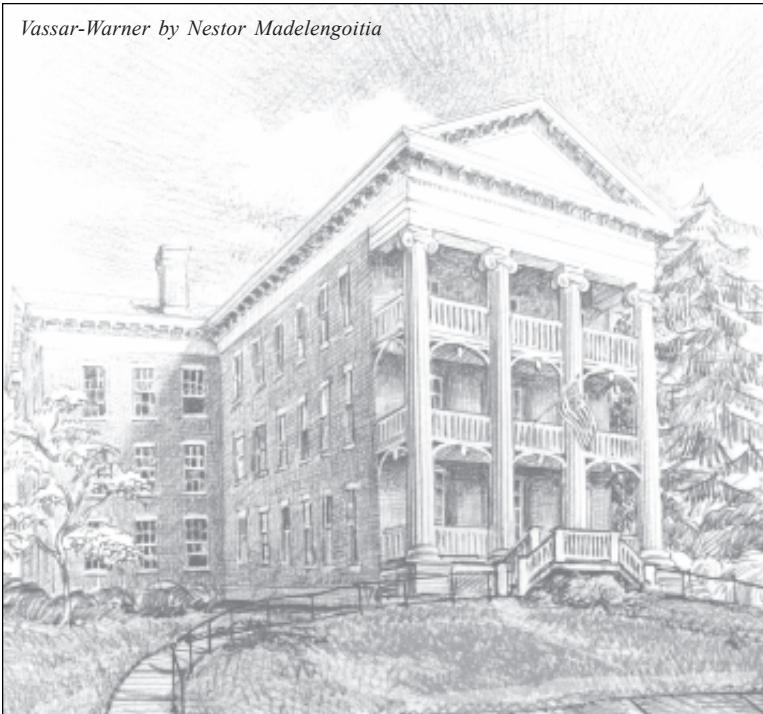
"The residents of Vassar-Warner have not changed their desire for current and accurate information. What has changed is how we communicate.

Rather than hiding information from our residents, we are the first to share information with them about their home, their community and the world. It provides them with an opportunity to ask questions, to present their opinions and to be involved in what goes on around them.

It may be a formal communication process such as the monthly Resident Council or a current events group; or the delivery of a daily newspaper (fully intact!) or magazine; or an individual meeting with the Executive Director or staff. The residents and staff at Vassar-Warner would not have it any other way."

***Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*: October 30, 1879 "Anniversary Exercises - Sale of Fancy Articles - Pin Money for the Old Ladies - The Evening's Programme"**

Vassar-Warner by Nestor Madelengoitia



"At three o'clock yesterday afternoon, the doors of the Old Ladies Home were thrown open, and the building ready for the inspection of visitors. The three rooms at the right of the hall on the main floor were turned into a bazaar filled with fancy articles made by the inmates, who were to share the proceeds from their sale.

Afghans, home made stockings, mittens, of such honest fabric as our grandmother's used to knit, quilts pieced by old ladies over ninety years of age, and many other articles pleasing to the eye and suggestive of warmth and comfort for the winter, were attractively arranged and offered to the buyers by the obliging volunteer saleswomen. During all the afternoon, the sale went on, and the silver for the old ladies' pin money, rapidly accumulated. The rooms had been handsomely trimmed by the Reading Club, an organization of young ladies who read to the inmates.

In the evening by half past seven the rooms were crowded and the sale continued. At eight o'clock the Reverend Dr. Elmendorf opened the anniversary exercises with prayer, after which the Messrs. Myers sang a trio adapted to the occasion. Mrs. Hoagland then gave a reading, "Lady Wentworth," and the poem's romantic humor, brought out by the reader's excellent delivery, lent a most pleasing variety to the entertainment..."