

# Aging in Place In White Plains

July 2012

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*Paul Schwarz introducing guest speaker Paula Meighan*

## AIP Events Attract Members, Friends

### How to declutter your home

More than sixty members and guests got together as Aging in Place in White Plains hosted our "Spring Fling" on Wednesday afternoon April 25 at Burke Rehabilitation Center. Actually, the theme of the event was "Spring Fling-Away," or "decluttering." Food, music and socializing preceded the formal program. The speaker, Paula Meighan of Changing Places (a moving service that helps seniors transition from one place to another), gave us some useful insights about why we hold on to things, and some practical suggestions for eliminating excess stuff.

- Start with the rooms you use the least. Attics and basements are easiest.
- To keep from being overwhelmed, set a maximum of two hours for any one clean-up session, and focus on one place at a time.
- In each room, have two bags or boxes: one for donations, one for trash.
- For "keep" things, put the same type (e.g., DVDs) together in one container or one place. Develop systems for identifying what you actually use, and eliminate the "might-use-someday" items.
- Take old paper documents to a mobile shredder.
- Learn about resources for donations—your clutter may be useful to someone else.

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## New Officers Elected

Congratulations to our new officers, who were elected by the steering committee at its meeting on June 19 and began serving their one-year term on July 1:

- Ellen Blauner and Paul Schwarz , co-presidents
- Judy Meyer Morse, vice president
- Helen Greer, secretary
- Simon Aronin, treasurer

*Profiles of the officers will appear in this and future newsletters. Thanks to Mary Miller and her nominating committee for presenting this slate.*

## An Introduction to Elder Law

The phrase elder law encompasses a wide range of legal topics, and is used generally to refer to all legal matters that affect the senior citizen and elderly populations. Elder law attorneys concentrate their practice in legal matters of the elderly. As such, they can assist with a wide range of needs, including estate planning, locating programs to address the needs of the elderly and their families, and helping their clients obtain the care and help they need now and in the future. Among the issues an elder law attorney might be called upon to address are:




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*Elder lawyers specialize in legal matters that affect senior citizens.*

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- Financial and health care planning for seniors
- Estate and tax planning
- Transfer of assets and asset preservation and protection
- Medicare and Medicaid planning
- Issues affecting older workers
- Hospital discharge and nursing home admission issues
- Housing alternatives for seniors
- Surrogate decision making, including guardianships

To find an elder law attorney, begin by obtaining recommendations from friends, relatives, business associates, and others who are likely to have had regular contact with lawyers. The National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, based in Vienna, Virginia is a national organization of elder law attorneys which can make referrals to attorneys located in your geographic area. Locally, the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services, the Pace Women's Justice Center, and the Westchester County Bar Association may be able to assist in providing information concerning elder law issues and/or offer lawyer referral services. Often, such services will provide several names from a panel of attorneys known to have expertise in elder law.

It is best to interview more than one lawyer before making a choice. During the initial interview, you should request that the prospective lawyer address the issues that you believe are most important. Make sure that your lawyer is experienced in the area of elder law. To determine the lawyer's expertise, it is acceptable and proper to ask the attorney how many elder law matters the attorney handles annually, and/or what percentage of his or her practice is devoted to elder law.

*This article is excerpted from "Elder Law Q & A: Answers to Questions About Estate and Financial Planning, Health Care Planning and Elder Abuse, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition," a comprehensive, readable manual about all aspects of elder law. Its author is attorney Steven Schurkman of Keane & Beane, P.C. in White Plains. The publication is sponsored by the Westchester Public/Private Partnership for Aging Services, the Pace Women's Justice Center, and the Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Abuse Prevention at the Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale.*

To obtain a free copy of the Elder Law manual, call Steven Schurkman at (914) 946-4777. To access the publication online, go to [westchestergov.com/seniors](http://westchestergov.com/seniors) and click on "Publications" on the left side of the screen.

## Profile: Judy Meyer Morse

Judy Meyer Morse loves White Plains and would hate to leave it. That may be why, about four years ago, having heard about aging-in-place communities, she decided to start a group here. "It sounded like such a good idea to stay in my own home, rather than going to a continuing care community," says Judy. She also likes the idea of having a built-in support network rather than always turning to friends or family, who may be busy or resent being relied on too much.

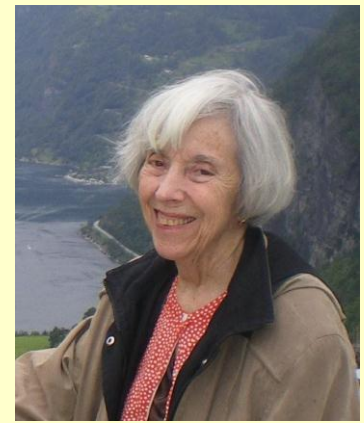
Having heard presentations by members of Westchester-based CAPS (Center for Aging in Place Support), Judy sought their help in starting a White Plains organization. A core group of White Plains residents, originally calling itself Under My Roof, met regularly for two years, ultimately running a series of focus groups discussing the needs of older people in the city. Two years later, in September 2011, Aging in Place in White Plains (AIPWP) became a reality.

Talking to Judy in the comfortable apartment she shares with her second husband Ted, whom she married three years ago, it's clear that her enthusiasm for living and for undertaking challenges long predates her involvement with AIPWP. Discovering that she had a knack for working with people and with informational materials, she became the first person to handle public information for Westchester County's Department of Social Services and Health. Subsequently she was head of public relations for the Westchester County chapter of American Red Cross, and later became executive director of the American Red Cross for Norwalk-Wilton, CT.

Widowed at the age of 37 with three small children, Judy returned to work in a short time. Eventually she started her own public relations business, where for 15 years she worked with individual entrepreneurs and non-profit organizations. "I so enjoyed interacting with and helping clients," says Judy. In fact, she says, her number one goal in life is to try to help people think about others. "If at the end of my life I could feel that I had helped somebody to be less self-absorbed, I would feel I had accomplished something."

Founding AIPWP channeled her talents and beliefs into a project that also drew upon her appreciation of the city where she has lived for 43 years. "White Plains is unique because of its diversity, and because it's an 'urban suburban' city," says Judy. She likes the changes that have occurred downtown, attracting younger people to the bars, restaurants, movies and cultural activities.

At the Spring Fling event in April, Judy was proud as she looked around the crowded room. "I felt that AIPWP was really happening—and that it was going to succeed." While acknowledging that there is still a lot to do in order to affect and involve the whole community, Judy is hopeful about the organization's future—and about her own ability to continue to age in White Plains.



*"If at the end of my life I could feel that I had helped somebody to be less self-absorbed, I would feel I had accomplished something."*

## Upcoming Events

We have an exciting schedule of events coming up in the next six months. Please mark your calendars:

**Wednesday, July 25, 3-5 p.m.** Sing-along with our esteemed pianist, Michael Friedman. Songs of the 40s, 50s and 60s. Memorial United Methodist Church, Bryant Avenue, White Plains.

**Wednesday, September 12, 3-5 p.m.** Selena Barron, social worker, and Robert Barron, attorney, will lead a discussion on "What Do Seniors Have at Stake in the Coming Election?" Music Conservatory of Westchester, Central Avenue, White Plains.

**Wednesday, October 10, 3-5 p.m.** "The Roosevelt Era: How History Gets Made; A Look at Unexpected Influences." Lecture and discussion led by David Leinwand, adjunct professor of history at Iona College.

**Wednesday, November 7, 6 p.m.** William Kuang, former president of the Organization of Chinese Americans in Westchester County, will discuss aging in China. Chinese dinner at Bao's Restaurant in White Plains. \$20 members, \$26 non-members.

**Wednesday, December 19.** Holiday party.

*Complete details of fall and winter events will appear in the fall newsletter.*

## Events Attract Members, Friends (continued)

Paula distinguished between "packrats" and "tossers." Packrats tend to keep things because they might be useful someday (they rarely turn out to be); the grandchildren might want them ("Trust me—they don't"); or for the memories associated with them (suggestion: take photos, then toss the items). Tossers, on the other hand, are good at avoiding clutter creep.

The event ended, as it started, with more informal socializing, during which we were privileged to be entertained by the music of WPAIP member and jazz pianist Michael Friedman.

Our thanks to members Carla Anderson and Rhoda Fidler, who led the committee organizing this program. And special thanks to Burke Rehabilitation Center for generously providing the space for our event.

### Hammond Museum Trip

On Wednesday, June 27, fifteen members of AIPWP and friends enjoyed a visit to the Hammond Museum and Japanese Stroll Garden in North Salem. A docent-led tour of the gardens followed a visit to the museum and lunch at the outdoor Silk Tree Café. The beauty and variety of the gardens, enhanced by a sparkling summer day, provided an oasis of tranquility in our usually hectic lives.



*Member Michael Friedman will lead a sing-along on July 25.*

**To attend any of these events, please RSVP to Carla Anderson:  
Phone: (914) 328-6497;  
Email: [bander6641@aol.com](mailto:bander6641@aol.com).**

For the mobile shredder schedule in Westchester, go to [www.environment.westchestergov.com/residents/household-recycling-days](http://www.environment.westchestergov.com/residents/household-recycling-days).

**To learn more about  
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