

Lake Barcroft Village Health Support Networks

By Vic Utgoff

The Lake Barcroft Village Board of Directors has decided to establish Health Support Networks for chronic conditions that are privately identified by Village members as topics they would like to discuss in confidence with other members sharing the same condition.

Rationale:

Lake Barcroft Village was established as “A group of neighbors providing support and volunteer time to enable our neighbors to continue to thrive”; that is, “neighbors helping neighbors.” There is of course a social component to that, and Lake Barcroft Village has programs that are appreciated for their social connections. Yet, there is something that often leads to feelings of isolation that we have not addressed – health issues.

When a person is newly diagnosed with a chronic condition it is not uncommon for that person to feel that the normal circle of friends – and even family – don’t fully understand. Doctors provide clinical advice. And, there may be support groups that serve wide areas. But there can still be a desire to talk with someone who is both nearby, and familiar.

In a *Washington Post* column by Colman McCarthy on September 10, Dr. Kelli Harding is quoted as saying:

“There’s a social dimension to health that we’ve completely overlooked in our scramble to find the best and most cutting-edge medical care...Ultimately, what affects our health in the most meaningful ways has as much to do with how we treat one another, how we live, and how we think about what it means to be human than with anything that happens in the doctor’s office.

The Lake Barcroft Village Board expects that enabling private discussions among Lake Barcroft Village members who share the same chronic conditions can provide opportunities for more understanding discussions of those conditions and the problems they may impose.

Establishing Lake Barcroft Village Health Support Networks:

Lake Barcroft Village members dealing with a chronic condition are invited to find out if there are other members privately interested in discussing that condition. If so, they can contact the Lake Barcroft Village Executive Director Cindy Waters (703-354-0652, [Lake](#)

[Barcroft Villagecoord@gmail.com](mailto:BarcroftVillagecoord@gmail.com)) to register their interest. Cindy will keep a private paper record of members who register their interest in any specific chronic condition.

When a Lake Barcroft Village member makes contact with Cindy about joining a network for a specific chronic condition, but no other members have yet done so, Cindy will keep that first request pending a second. Appearance of a second will allow Cindy to provide each the contact information of the other, and a new HSN will have been formed.

When a Lake Barcroft Village member calls about joining an HSN that has already been formed, Cindy will provide the contact information of the newcomer to the members of the HSN and their contact information to the newcomer.

Guidelines for Lake Barcroft Village Health Support Networks:

The Lake Barcroft Village Board expects that Health Support Networks that form will determine for themselves how they might function. The HSNs will maintain the privacy of their members and may develop in different ways, depending on the individuals involved. (One network has already been formed: Health Support Network for Diabetes. Members of that network keep in touch by email and by phone. They have no meetings as a whole and no group chair.)

The Lake Barcroft Village will provide no resources to HSNs, except for the initial communications provided by Cindy that are required to enable members and prospective members to make contact with one another.

The Lake Barcroft Village is not responsible for any medical advice or legal matters that may be discussed by members of Lake Barcroft Village HSNs.

Cindy has no other involvement with HSNs, other than to keep confidential paper records of the membership of any HSNs that have formed, and of Lake Barcroft Village members who have indicated that they are interested in forming a new HSN, when and if another Lake Barcroft Village member informs Cindy of the same interest.

The Lake Barcroft Village Board notes that HSNs could be formed to support other possible needs of Lake Barcroft Village members. For example, an HSN could be formed for Wellness, or for Nutrition. Many of us have had to ditch old habits, even giving up the idea of dieting, and learn new ways of eating. Another variant might be to have a Health Support for Caregivers. Participants might be dealing with a variety of chronic conditions, yet issues of self-care and coping may be common.