



Network News: The Power of Volunteers & Why to Attend NVG16



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VtVN Volunteer Spotlight: Liz Backus

How did you first learn about VtVN?

I met Natalie Galucia in 2013 when I joined the committee that was working on starting STL Village, the first Village in the St. Louis, Missouri metropolitan area. At that time, Natalie was the Village to Village Network membership services coordinator and had recently moved back to St. Louis. We were so lucky she was on hand to help guide the strategic planning of STL Village. In January 2015, VtV Network relocated to St. Louis, and I offered to help Natalie with communications projects as she was getting settled into her new role as its director.



What Village do you currently call home and what is it about your Village that you love? What is challenging?

I continue to be a communications volunteer with STL Village in St Louis. However, I'm not a member because I live outside the service area, though not too far away. I volunteer because I believe strongly in the Village mission. I work part time as an in-home caregiver for a local agency and I see firsthand how much it means to people to stay in their homes and retain their independence. STL Village is also committed to reflecting the diversity of the St. Louis community within its membership and volunteer ranks, and that makes it a very vibrant and welcoming organization. It can be challenging to make the Village accessible to all income levels, but STL Village is working hard to build funding relationships in the community so that it can provide member dues assistance for those who need it.

What is your volunteer role with VtV network? What changes have you seen within the network since you started your involvement?

I have provided communications help as needed over the last two years, in particular last year when Natalie was getting things up and running in her new office. I helped prepare some materials for the annual development campaign and have written for the newsletter. I also provide the same type of help for STL Village. I've watched VtV Network become a leading voice in advocating for a new view of aging in our society. The view is shifting from retirement and winding down to "third chapters" that can be even more fulfilling as older adults channel their energy into personal development and community projects. VtV Network champions the idea of older adults as a tremendous resource for keeping neighborhoods and communities strong.

What would you like to share with newsletter readers to allow them to know you just a little bit better?

I enjoy writing and recently completed an M.A. in public relations just so I could exercise my skills. I think I was the most energized student in my classes and was fortunate enough to have the time to focus on my studies now that my three children are grown. After my mother passed away, I was drawn to work with older adults who wanted to stay at home but needed a little help. My mother is my inspiration as she lived to be 93 and was able to stay in the house she'd lived in for over 50 years, near the neighbors she loved and who loved her. This is what the Village movement is all about and what resonates with me. When the time is right, I hope there is a Village in my neighborhood; if not, I'll just have to start one!

Interviewed by Kimberly Kinser

Village to Village Network: Supporting Villages and Village Supported

Today, the Village to Village Network provides leadership, education, mentoring, and technical support nationally to 200 open Villages and an additional 100+ Villages that are in start-up mode. This is nearly twice the number of Villages that existed in 2014 when we began the process of becoming a free standing, nonprofit entity. When we started this process, we did so with the promise that the level of service would remain the same while looking to future growth.

This has been no easy feat, as we run the Network with only 2 full-time staff (down from 4 FTE in 2014) and the support of the VtVN board and other volunteers. Our budget to administer and provide all of the resources below is \$300,000 for 2016 (down from \$450,000+ in 2014). Our operating budget is derived from membership dues (30%), the National Village Gathering – which is also our biggest expense (30%), and other donations

and small grants (40%).

VtV Network continues to offer and manage resources such as:

- Village Document Library containing 500+ samples of materials from business plans to budgets to membership applications and much more.
- Active Discussion Forums that provides easy access to your fellow Villages to ask questions and share advice.
- Village 101 Toolkit: Step by step guide to starting a Village
- Monthly calls and webinars to learn about topics, products and procedures that are useful for starting and operating your Village.
- Organizing an Annual Conference for 300+ attendees.

In addition to those listed above we have added or will be adding the following benefits in 2016:

- A more formalized mentoring program for both developing and existing Villages. We have a growing pool of mentors ready to help you with anything you need.
- Increased the number of secondary members who can access the resources on the website from 10 to 20 so more individuals can take advantage of each Village's benefits through VtV Network.
- Updating and enhancing our website later this year to provide easier access and improved information.
- Formed a dedicated volunteer team to work on growing and expanding our Strategic Partnerships to benefit the Village Movement.

Over the next 2-3 years we expect to:

- Continue growing all our strategic partnerships.
- Create larger marketing and publicity campaigns to bring more awareness to all Villages and the Village Movement.
- Provide more support to growing regional Village groups
- Put more resources into diversifying the Village Movement.
- Re-implement our Village Business Sustainability Grant program.

Our two staff members and volunteers maintain all of the resources and the 300+ Memberships that represent over 1,700 total Village to Village Network members across the country. Membership dues fall short of covering all of the Network's operating cost. We close the gap with small grants, support from conference sponsors, donations from VtVN board members and other community supporters who believe in our work. This is why in the past few years and at past gatherings we have asked for additional Village or personal donations. We are grateful for all of the various support we receive and look forward to the future to come for the Village Movement.

Bob Lotz, founding member, of Groton Neighbors best sums up the importance of our work: *"VtVN provides a reservoir of experience and shared commitment to helping older members of any community stay in their homes and connected as they age. Even being distant by half a continent from the VtV Network office in St. Louis, I never-the-less feel supported on an ongoing basis by the VtVN staff and board as I and my fellow directors and officers move step-by-step from idea to plan toward an operational Village."*

Why Should You Attend the 2016 National Village Gathering?

The 2016 NVG provides each attendee with the opportunity to meet face to face and learn valuable information from their peers. Our agenda is full of presentations on starting, operating and sustaining your Village. Jim Kimbler, Co-Founder of Charlotte Village Network and 2015 National Village Gathering attendee states:

"The 2015 National Village Gathering was so affirming for our developing Village in North Carolina. My co-founder and I, along with our pro bono planning consultant friend, made the trip to gather as much information as we could. We found so much information we literally divided the agenda three ways to make sure we attended as many sessions as possible. The vendors were great too. Our questions about business operating software, vetting volunteers, and transportation were readily answered. I recommend the Gathering to anyone considering or committed to forming a village. The people we met were wonderful, helpful and remain our friends and sources to this day! I can't wait for the 2016 NVG in Columbus!"

Join Jim and 350 others in Columbus this October to continue "Making Your Future a Good One," as this year's theme states. Early bird registration pricing ends on August 31, so be sure to register and reserve you spot today. For more information and to register – [click here](#).

In Case You Missed It: New VtVN Website Coming Soon!

In case you missed it, Village to Village Network is getting a new website! We are revamping our website so it is easier for you, our members, to navigate. We are very excited to unveil our new site, and need your help to make this project a success. We want to include photos from our members on our new website. Pictures from real Village members, in action, will enhance our Village presence that much more. Please send your best high resolution pictures with a brief caption to nisha.moorkoth@vtvnetwork.org. We will be featuring all of your pictures on the website at some point! Thank you for your help in making our new website look the best it possibly can.

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