Connecting with Friends
Newsletter
April 2015

From the Director:
It’s been a long winter here in Maine and we are hungry for flowers and fresh Spring air! At Friends in Action, there are a lot of new things happening and we wanted our newsletter to bloom again to keep you informed. We can mail copies to those who do not have email; just contact us to be on a monthly mailing list!

We are now in our new headquarters at the Moore Community Center. If you have not yet stopped by for a visit, please do! It is hard to believe that we have already been here for four months. There are still many things being set up and we do not have all our equipment and furniture yet, but the Senior Center is hopping with programs every day!

The heart of Friends in Action will always remain the same, a local organization that is responsive to individual situations and offers one-on-one volunteer support. But there have been big changes this year and the day-to-day operations now look very different than even a few months ago. As the founding director, I must admit that some of the change is a little daunting. The daily level of activity has grown dramatically. Our budget has nearly doubled. We have increased our staff. (see below for introductions!) It means that as director, I am BUSY.

But in spite of the anxiety that change and growth can bring, it also brings great opportunity. Every day we are meeting new people whom we would not have encountered were it not for the Senior Center. And we are delighted that people are coming from all over the County to participate in programs here, because that was the intent. In this newsletter are many stories of what we have been doing, We’d love to see you, as well, so please call or stop by for a visit. We also need your ideas and your support!

Jo Cooper, Executive Director
MEET OUR STAFF:

Aleta Fusco, Administrative Assistant

Aleta Fusco moved to Maine from what she euphemistically refers to as “The Garden State”. She has an extensive background in banking and office management. Aleta’s hobbies include cooking and gardening and her daschund, “Guiness”. She lives in Gouldsboro with her husband, Paul, a retired state trooper.

Paula Perry, Senior Center Program Coordinator

Paula Perry took on the new position of Friends in Action Senior Center Program Coordinator at the beginning of February. She has genuine enthusiasm for working with older adults. The Senior Center is already blossoming with her many new ideas. In her first two months she has already helped start our new senior meal program and coordinated our successful Senior Resource Fair! She lives in Cherryfield with her husband, near their children and grandchildren.

Kathy Spencer, Volunteer Transportation Coordinator

Kathy Spencer was hired in March to replace Janet Bunker, who retired in January. Kathy has worked as a dispatcher and administrator. She grew up in Ellsworth and knows the region well, which is essential when trying to coordinate rides all over the County. She is eager to get to know our volunteers and those whom we assist. She lives in Sullivan with her husband and grandson.

Machelle LaHaye, Fitness Program Director

Machelle LaHaye is our Fitness Program Director. This is also a new position at FIA, and Machelle’s positive spirit is ideal for this program and will inspire those who are looking to improve their level of fitness and physical and spiritual health. The senior fitness center is meant to welcome seniors at all levels of fitness and to encourage those who are facing physical challenges. Machelle has a background as a yoga instructor and lives in Southwest Harbor with her young daughter.

Jo Cooper, Executive Director

Jo Cooper helped found Friends in Action, originally named Faith in Action Community Connection, in 2003. Prior to that she had worked as Production Supervisor in her family’s weaving business, was Program Assistant at Island Connections (also a Faith in Action program), and was Volunteer Coordinator at Hospice of Hancock County. She grew up on MDI, graduated from Wellesley College and has a Masters of Letters in Medieval Scottish History. Creating and directing a nonprofit was not her career plan but she loves her job! She lives in Lamoine with her husband Donald and four young adult children who are sometimes also at home!
Volunteers are the real heart of Friends in Action. Would you like to be involved? We need help with the Senior Center Welcome Center, our Senior Lunch program, and especially our Transportation Program. Volunteers are needed to bring seniors from housing around Ellsworth in our new van, or to provide rides for medical appointments and more in their own vehicles. Volunteer orientations are being held in April and May and individual appointments can always be scheduled. For the Volunteer Registration Form, visit our website, stop by our office or call 664-6016. We would be happy to mail it to you.

Volunteer Education Events

It is always nice to meet other volunteers and to learn something new. We will be holding periodic education events at the Center especially for our volunteers. The May event will be about “Assisted Rides”, our volunteer scheduling program. Transportation Program Volunteers who are already in our system can access our volunteer rides schedule online through this program. It allows for volunteers to look over rides or other services that have been requested and offer to volunteer for them. It is an online scheduling program that FIA subscribes to in order to improve our volunteer programs, particularly transportation. There are reporting and other features that many volunteers are not yet aware of. We will hold a lunch and training about Assisted Rides for current volunteers on Tuesday, May 5, 12:00 – 1:30 in the downstairs conference room. Please register so that we can order lunch for you!

CPR training

YMCA staff member Courtney Wood teaches FIA staff and volunteers CPR to keep the Senior Center safe!

Senior Center Volunteer Training

Senior Center volunteers help with greeting visitors and serving meals and refreshments. We are also looking for volunteers to train as Fitness Room Attendants. We will be holding orientations for new volunteers throughout April and May and can also meet individually with new volunteers, as well. Let us know what you are interested in and we would love to have you a part of our team! There are a wide variety of activities here and there is something for everyone!

TRAINING DATES:

Monday, April 13: 1:00
Tuesday, April 21 9:00
Wednesday, April 29 3:00
Monday, May 4, 9:00
Tuesday May 12 9:00
What’s new at the Senior Center!

FITNESS!

THE BIG NEWS: THE ARRIVAL OF OUR FITNESS EQUIPMENT! We will have two treadmills, a recumbent bike, an arm cycle and a seated elliptical machine, as well as free weights, resistance bands and more! Stop by for a tour and sign up for a membership soon!

Monthly membership for the fitness room is only $25 per person. A drop-in visit is $3. The room will be open approximately 20 hours a week. Fitness Program Director Machelle LaHaye will be ready to help you get started!

There will be a variety of group classes every week. “Bone Builder” will continue twice a week. Machelle will be leading two new classes: CHAIR YOGA on Tuesdays, and SENIOR STRENGTH & BALANCE on Thursdays. Eileen Dunn-Kell is offering GENTLE YOGA for all levels on Wednesdays. Melanie Zador will lead SENIOR STRENGTH TRAINING on Tuesdays. Nina Zeldin will be leading a new 8 week session of TAI CHI starting on April 30.

Pastel Painting!

Teacher Jill Donovan instructs the first class of Pastel Painting (Mondays 1:00—3:00)

Sewing Small Projects!

Senior Lunch!
The FIA Board began 2015 with our annual retreat, expertly facilitated by consultant Deb Burwell. It was a chance to appreciate what our organization has accomplished, assess our current position, and establish future goals. We celebrated the success we have had in maintaining our services during the major transition into our beautiful new space at the Moore Center. Kudos to Jo and our dedicated staff for keeping it all together! Starting a Senior Center in such a popular new building is exciting and challenging.

We are off to a great start with our partnership with the City of Ellsworth and the YMCA. All of you are a critical part of that partnership, and we hope you will continue to provide us with your ideas for structuring and programming as we move ahead. We are committed to the idea that the Center should reflect the needs and talents of its members! One goal defined during the retreat is to increase awareness of FIA. We want people to understand our mission and feel welcome to participate, both as members and volunteers. Please help us spread the word about what we do. The success of this venture depends on the wide support of the community we serve. Most families have aging members who may benefit from our services and surely may enjoy taking part in the Senior Center. We need to help them learn about Friends in Action.

Our upcoming event is our second Muddy Mother's Day Run/Walk along the lovely trails at Woodlawn on Saturday, May 9. You can run or walk for your mom, with your mom, with your kids, or by yourself! Yes, the snow will be gone, we hope... and we hope to see you there!

Candy Gammelin
Board Chair

The Friends Campaign

NEARING THE GOAL!

Just $15,000 to go!

Help our little red car get up the hill!

Contact: Lynda Tadema-Wielandt (incagirl@roadrunner.com)

Or the Friends in Action office (664-6016)
COMING EVENTS!

Save the date!

SATURDAY, MAY 9: Muddy Mother’s Day Trail Run
AT WOODLAWN, Fun Run @ 9:30, Trail Run @ 10:00

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 5:00 pm: FIA ANNUAL MEETING; Moore Community Center.

Community News:

Ellsworth Community Music Institute

The new ECMI (Ellsworth Community Music Institute) is up and running at the Moore Center. Music lessons (piano, violin, viola, cello, voice, classical guitar & percussion) are offered three afternoons per week on Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays. The next ten-week session begins March 31 and breaks for the summer in mid-June. Music lessons will resume in September.

In addition, ECMI sponsors free monthly public concerts at the Moore Center from noon to 1:00 pm:

Thursday, April 16  Phillip Silver, piano; Richard Hsu, violin; Noreen Silver, cello
Thursday, May 14  Nancy Colter, piano; Aija Kante-Cahn, cello
Thursday, June 11  Trio Cleonice from Boston: piano, violin and cello

Remember, we offer lessons to everyone from ages 5 to 105! For more information, go to our website at www.ellsworthcommunitymusic.org or call 664-9258