

COMBATING LONELINESS & SOCIAL ISOLATION

Social isolation and loneliness are associated with dementia, higher risk for hospital readmissions and falls, and depression. A study by the AARP



Foundation equates the health risks of prolonged isolation to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.¹

SASH proactively addresses social isolation and loneliness among older Vermonters in several ways:

- ▶ SASH wellness nurses conduct two different social-isolation screens every year on each participant.
- ▶ SASH staff form personal connections with participants, making it easy to recognize



when someone may need a friendly check-in.

- ▶ Throughout Vermont, SASH sponsors a variety of programs and activities that



conform to the “most effective interventions for loneliness and isolation” cited at left.

Thanks to these practices, older adults who otherwise might remain lonely and closed off from others are forming meaningful relationships with their neighbors and with SASH staff, thereby improving their health and overall quality of life.



▲ SASH coordinator and Tai Chi instructor Suzanne Lemire leads a class at the Heineberg Community Senior Center in Burlington.

◀ Participants in Shelburne enjoy the fruits of their labor following a SASH-led class on making spring rolls.

WHAT SASH PARTICIPANTS SAY³

“It’s good to get out and meet other people...and when you don’t show up to something they wonder where you are, and it’s really a great thing. It’s improved my health immensely.”

“There are social activities if you want them. It’s not that you’re pressured, you know. That’s what I like. I don’t like to be pressured to do things.”

“I didn’t have any support group before I came.... The biggest thing is knowing that there’s someone out there that cares. Before I felt like I was in limbo, you know?”

1) <https://connect2affect.org/> 2) Preventing social isolation and loneliness among older people: a systematic review of health promotion interventions. *Ageing and Society*, 25, pp 41-67. 3) Qualitative Evaluation of SASH, Vermont Department of Health, 2017