

## The Value of Village Membership: A Case Study for Washington Park Cares

May 30, 2011  
by Arnie Snyder

How much is an “age-in-community” village membership worth? A recent newsletter for Denver’s Washington Park Cares pointed out that many WPC members have saved from \$300 to \$500 per year, just by using volunteers’ services – for transportation, minor home repairs, computer/electronics help, and so on.

Simply taking advantage of village member benefits, one may easily recover the modest investment in annual dues. Plus, you gain the value of being able to live independently in your own home, supported by a network of your friends and neighbors. But wait – there’s more!

1. Your “big picture” savings can be much greater, even if you have to pay some out-of-pocket costs for in-home care services. A study by MetLife shows that in 2010, the average U.S. cost of an assisted living facility was \$39,500 per year, and for nursing homes, \$83,000. Meals are included, but not much living space. Senior independent housing can likewise be expensive, not to mention, cramped. Living safely in your own home means tens of thousands of dollars per year that you don’t have to spend.
2. A village’s volunteer services can make your life easier and *safer*. You’ll make new friends, too. It’s easy to overlook the cost and discomfort you did not incur because of an accident that *didn’t happen*: The fall you didn’t take; the bones you didn’t break; the ER trip you didn’t make. Why climb a ladder to change a light bulb or clean your roof gutter, when all you need to do is make a phone call? Why drive when you can ride?
3. A village enriches the lives of all who join. For example, Washington Park Cares has more than 60 volunteers, eager to be of service. Many members are also volunteers, because they relish the privilege of helping others. Indeed, the positive impact we can all have on each other’s lives is the reason for having a village in the first place. Enjoy your community!

If you have an “age-in-community” village in your area and if you’re eligible for village membership (typically age 55 and up), you’ll find it’s a great way to empower you to remain in your own home as you grow older. Plus there are many opportunities to make friends and to volunteer your own skills. Check out [www.vtvnetwork.org](http://www.vtvnetwork.org) for a current list of U.S. villages.

*Arnie Snyder is owner of Elder Life Advisors, and co-founder of Washington Park Cares, a Denver village which opened in 2008. He serves on the Advisory Council for Village to Village Network and was a panel speaker at the 2010 National Village Gathering in Philadelphia.*  
[www.elderlifeadvisors.com](http://www.elderlifeadvisors.com)