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We are cutting down the issues of VIM Voices from 4 to 3 per year. We will also publish an e-newsletter frequently to keep you in touch with what is happening at VIM and this e-newsletter will reflect the look of our new website. We will probably unveil our new look during the winter 2012.

Catherine Mandel, Newsletter Editor

Chairman's Corner

by Arthur Peisner

To Be or Not to Be

I recently attended a seminar, hosted by the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, along with more than a hundred others representing a broad cross section of non-profits in the Berkshires. The speaker, a highly regarded expert on fundraising, had many valuable ideas, and you will no doubt see lots of them implemented in the coming months among the organizations that you support. But one of his recommendations is particularly germane to ongoing discussions we have been having at VIM for the past several months.

After asking the audience "How many of you produce a quarterly newsletter?" and getting an almost universal show of hands, he informed us that "Nobody reads them." Of course, if we were convinced that was true, we would certainly save the effort and cost involved in producing and distributing VIM Voices each quarter. In fact, we have had a continuing conversation about the possibility of converting to an electronic version to save the printing and distribution cost, not to

mention the trees. Unfortunately, the expert was not high on email either, maintaining that it is too fleeting and readily deleted.

So what do you think? Should we keep doing this? Electronic only? Not at all? Do you read our newsletter? What parts do you like best (other than my wonderful columns)? Least? Would you miss it if we stopped sending it out? How would you know what's going on at VIM if we dropped it? After all, apart from contribution solicitations, this is the only regular contact we have with a broad audience (nearly 3,000 people). If we switched to an electronic version, would you share your email address with us?

Of course, if you're one of those who don't read it, you won't have gotten this far. But if you have, we would really like to hear from you. If you were sitting on our Board, how would you vote...print, electronic, both, neither? Let us hear from you. Email me directly at ampeisner@vimberkshires.org. I promise not to hit the "delete" key.

Medical Corner

by Carol Reife, MD

Women and Heart Disease

Many people think that heart disease is a disease of men, not a disease that affects women. But more women die from heart disease than from all forms of cancer combined. Heart disease is the number one killer of women in the United States; one in four women dies of heart disease while one in thirty dies of breast cancer. Twenty-three percent of women die within a year of having a heart attack.

Though women over age 55 have a greater risk of heart disease, women of any age or background can be affected. Heart disease is most common in women who have one or more cardiac "risk factors". These are characteristics or traits that predict a person's chances of developing heart disease. The good news is that there are many things we can do to control this risk and by reducing the number and severity of these risk factors, we can lower our chance of ever developing heart disease.

Heart disease refers to several different types of heart conditions; coronary artery disease is the most common. As we age, cholesterol-rich plaques (fatty deposits in the wall of a blood vessel) can accumulate in arteries, causing them to narrow and block the flow of blood to the heart. At times, an area of plaque may rupture inside an artery causing a blood clot to form. If



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The Many Faces of VIM

An Interview with Arthur Peisner, Chairman of VIM's Board of Trustees



Q: Our readers only know you from reading your regular column in this newsletter. It would be great for them to get to know who you are, so let's start by telling us what kind of family did you grow up in?

A: I come from a family that was very involved in charitable work and community causes. Both of my parents were basically out every evening at one meeting or another, whether it was at the high-school Dads' Club or the Jewish Community Center or United Way. They always stressed the importance of doing volunteer work. My father was an insurance agent and, while I was growing up, my mother worked on and off, mostly in secretarial or administrative roles. She worked in a psychiatrist's office for about ten years.

I grew up in New Jersey, went to public schools there, then to Syracuse University for my undergraduate studies, and later to Harvard Business School. I spent 25 years working in the toy/hobby industry, the last 10 of which as part owner and CEO of Lionel Trains.

Q: Was playing with trains a lifelong hobby of yours?

A: No, I never played with trains very much. It was a great business, but not a hobby. Our children, of course, had a great train set but quickly got bored with them and we eventually took it down. They really did not develop that hobby either.

Q What happened after your 10 years with Lionel?

A: After I sold Lionel, I created my own management consulting business. I was doing strategic planning, marketing

consulting and coaching of CEOs and small businesses. I did this for a dozen years or so, and in 2002, we relocated full time to the Berkshires after having lived for about 20 years in Michigan. We had known this area for many years. My wife had gone to camp here - I won't say how long ago! - so did our 4 kids for a span of 15 years. We were coming here every summer to visit them during those years. We got to know the Berkshires quite well, so when we began thinking of a retirement home, this is the first place we thought of.

Q: What were you doing before your involvement with VIM?

A: Not a lot really, just learning how to be retired! Doing a lot of reading, going to events. For a little more than a year, I was still doing some consulting back in Michigan, so traveling there about a week a month. I gradually gave up most of that. I am still involved with one organization and go out there once a quarter for a Board meeting. I did a little bit of consulting here for a few firms in the early days, but have given that up.

Q: Is that how you became involved with VIM?

A: In early 2003, a very good friend of ours and one of the VIM founders, Len Simon, asked me to facilitate a retreat with a group of people with whom he and his wife Marion were working to develop a free healthcare clinic. This was the kind of work I had been doing for a dozen years and Len felt I could help them plan how they were going to get the idea off the ground. We worked for 2 days and developed a mission, a vision and core values, all things that are important to establish before a new organization moves forward. As a result, I became very interested in what they were doing and, more than that, I became very interested in this group of people. I felt they were all very remarkable, very bright, very energetic, all highly committed to doing something to benefit the community and I guess I just got sucked right into the group. I have been involved ever since, first on the original founding Board, then I became the Treasurer, and later the Chair of the Board.

Q: Before you became the Chair

of the Board, I believe you 'wore many hats' at VIM including being the office manager for a while, am I right?

A: That is true. In the early days, when I was Treasurer, we did not have an office manager. We had someone who was serving as both an office manager and a dental assistant, Barbara Postel, and we were both learning the job at the same time. I was keeping the books, and doing what were then fairly simple tasks (it has become a much more complicated job as the clinic got larger) and we shared whatever had to be done around the place. Eventually, as the clinic grew, we hired a part-time office manager and Barbara devoted all her time to the dental clinic. When that office manager left, we had no one, so I stepped in and, for a period of about 4 months, I took over until we found a replacement. As the clinic has continued to grow and become more complex, it has developed into a full time job for Robert Olsen, our current office manager.

Since we do not have an Executive Director, I have kind of acted - at least somewhat - in that role and tried to keep the organization together, move it forward, set some goals. We operate with a very active Board and many of the members fill many pieces of what would normally be an Executive Director's role.

Q: What are the differences between running a business and a charity or, for that matter, a health clinic?

A: Not having had time to do much volunteer work during my active life and when we were raising our family, this is the first really heavy involvement I have had as a volunteer. Not only is it my first in a charitable organization, but it is also my first involvement in healthcare. I knew virtually nothing and learning about it was very new to me and was very challenging. Running a business was fun and, at times, exciting. But this is very much about passion! Mine, and all the others who work and volunteer here. Of course I really, really like what I am doing here and obviously, I feel the mission we are involved in delivering is critical. But doing this and giving back as a VOLUNTEER is among the most rewarding things I have ever done.

Medical Corner

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the clot becomes large enough, it can block the flow of oxygen rich blood to the heart muscle. Without oxygen, this section of heart muscle will die, causing a heart attack (or "myocardial infarction"). Healthy heart tissue is permanently replaced by scar tissue and depending on the location and extent of damage, the heart can lose some of its ability to carry out its vital functions.

Symptoms of a heart attack are variable, especially in women. Most frequently, there is chest discomfort but it may be mild and may feel like a pressure, squeezing or even indigestion. Symptoms may radiate to the arms, upper back, neck or jaw. Women often experience warning signs of heart disease a month or even more before a heart attack occurs. The most common symptoms are unusual fatigue, new sleep disturbance, and shortness of breath. Many women tend to ignore these symptoms, having experienced them in milder form at one time or another in the past. If you notice a change in the way you feel, it is important to see a health care provider

for an evaluation. Acting quickly at the first sign of heart attack symptoms can limit heart damage and save your life. If you or someone else is having severe or prolonged symptoms and you think it may be a heart attack, call 911 right away.

You have tremendous power to prevent heart disease. You CAN make a difference in your health by paying attention to the following advice:

- See your healthcare provider regularly. Ask questions and work with him or her to manage any medical conditions you have. Follow instructions and take your medications as directed.
- Know your blood pressure and keep it under control.
- Get tested for diabetes and if you have it, keep it under control.
- Know your cholesterol and triglyceride levels and keep them under control.
- Eat fruits and vegetables, whole grains, high fiber foods and lean

sources of protein; limit foods high in saturated fat.

- Maintain a healthy weight. Keep portions small.
- Include physical activity in your daily routine. Try to engage in moderate intensity exercise 30-60 minutes most days of the week.
- Don't smoke; If you do smoke, speak with your healthcare provider for suggestions to help you quit.
- Take steps to reduce stress and to manage stress in healthy ways.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol.

Some women believe that doing one of these things is enough. That is wrong! To protect your heart, you must address all of your risk factors for heart disease. You can make the changes gradually and you can get help, but you can't ignore the difficult ones.

Address your risk for heart disease now. Later may be too late.

Volunteer Corner

by Susan Minnich

Winter is just about upon us, snowbirds have mostly headed south and the clinic is a bit quieter.

Happily, there are several new volunteers to welcome to VIM.

They include two new receptionists, Katherine Carlton and Jeani Parsons. Jeani can be found at VIM every Monday morning greeting and registering patients during that busy clinic, while Katherine has been at the reception desk during our Friday morning dental clinics.

Mingming Zhao has taken on the challenging project of helping us to make more efficient use of our electronic medical records system.

VIM's dental team welcomes two retired dentists: Gerry Goldberg, who is here all day every Monday, is greatly increasing the clinic's dental capacity to treat patients. Charles Liebowitz is developing Quality Assurance studies for the dental department, and formalizing that program.

Similarly, Ross Reife is working with the medical team on Quality Assurance studies. Certified Nurse Midwife Frayda Diamond has been seeing patients since last summer, so this is a bit of a tardy thank you to her! The medical department also welcomes three new nurses: Jacki Smith, who began volunteering in November, Jennifer Rubino and Maria Gennari, who should be credentialed and seeing patients by the time this newsletter is in your mailboxes. Finally, David Lippman and Anne Fribourg have recently joined the mental health team.

Pat Molholt-Levine and Carol Whitcomb have joined our development team, and Lauren Spitz, Vicki Kay and Lauren Cavanaugh joined the gala committee this past summer. Their efforts along with our other fundraising volunteers bring in those critical dollars that allow VIM to continue treating patients.

We need volunteers to join the effort to sell our Discount Coupon Book. This \$25.00 booklet provides a true win-win situation: the buyer gains substantial savings at local businesses; local business owners gain new customers and VIM gains a goodly percentage of its budget. Please join the committee that makes this fundraising booklet a success! If many volunteers each sell a few books it will add up to a big difference. If you are comfortable with sales, if you could sell books to your friends or neighbors, if you know a local business or corporation who might be able to buy in bulk, or if you can join an outreach table with other VIM volunteers, please drop me an email at sminnich@vimberkshires.org or call me at the clinic, 528-4014. In this difficult economic environment, this is an especially good fundraiser and one that is of critical importance to the clinic. If you have even a few hours to spare, please let us know. You can find out more about the Discount Coupon Book at our website www.vimberkshires.org.

Finally, a big thanks to Dr. Richard Evans. Richard has led the mental health team since its inception in the spring of 2005. He has been instrumental in developing the program and we will miss him when he retires on November 22nd. Thanks, Richard!

Development Corner

Local Hero David Grover's Close Call



Hopefully you've received VIM's year-end appeal in the mail, which includes a letter from David Grover. We were deeply honored by David's moving story, and thank him for allowing us to share it.

For those of you who aren't familiar with David, he's one of the most beloved musicians in the Berkshires, who first became widely known as a member of Arlo Guthrie's band, and then as a supremely talented singer/songwriter in his own right. He is particularly known for his wonderful music for children, which he performs regularly in family shows at venues and events throughout the area. He also contributes a tremendous amount to the community through countless benefit performances.

David's experience at VIM perfectly encapsulates what we do and why we do it. Here are some excerpts from his letter:

"I knew for a long time that my gums were in bad shape, but could never afford to fix the problem properly. It kept getting worse, eventually impacting my ability to sing and speak properly. Finally, last spring I couldn't put it off any longer. But as my work had almost completely dried up in the wake of the financial meltdown in 2008, I was flat broke, and I had no insurance coverage. Luckily, a friend suggested I go to VIM to see if they could help.

"From the minute I walked in, I knew I'd found the miracle I needed. The staff made me feel comfortable right away, and not at all embarrassed about the dismal situation in which I found myself. I was treated by two wonderful volunteer dentists, who removed all of my remaining teeth and fit me with a new set of dentures.

"It was a long process, and I can't really say it was a lot of fun, but it literally saved my life. My career as a musician would have been over. And my music is my life.

"I can honestly say that if VIM had not been there for me, or had made it difficult for me to get the care I so desperately needed, I would have given up. I simply didn't have the energy to keep going. But the folks at VIM made it incredibly easy for me.

"I'm just one example of hundreds of people -- our Berkshire neighbors, all -- for whom VIM provides a life-saving safety net.

"Today, thanks to VIM, I'm back in the saddle, entertaining families and children with my music, as I hope to keep doing for a long time to come. It's hard to express how wonderful I think this organization is, and how thankful I am for the care I received. For me it truly was a miracle, and I say that without hyperbole. I believe the health care system could learn a lot from VIM about

how to treat people in need with dignity."

We can only add that there are several pressing needs at the clinic that make this year's annual appeal more urgent.

Most critical is the need to upgrade our computers -- currently a hodgepodge of donated, out-of-date machines that can't run the latest versions of the software our medical volunteers and staff rely upon. We also need to reconfigure the clinic's physical space to improve flow and enhance patient confidentiality.

Your help is crucial to accomplishing these improvements, and to continuing to provide free health care for the uninsured and underinsured in our community. As our late co-founder Len Simon said, "What raises the quality of life for one of us raises the quality of life for all." Please support VIM today with a tax-deductible donation. Donating is a quick and easy process on our website, www.vimberkshires.org.



David Grover with VIM Dental Assistant Margot Rockefeller.

Thank you!

You can make this holiday season brighter - and healthier - for the uninsured in our community.

Please use the enclosed envelope to make a tax-deductible donation to VIM today, or donate online at www.vimberkshires.org.

Thank you!

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2012 VIM DISCOUNT COUPON BOOK

We are proud to announce our **NEW 2012 VIM DISCOUNT COUPON BOOK**. For only \$25 you can get savings totaling up to a \$2,000.

VIM thanks the committee of volunteers who has worked tirelessly to bring you this wonderful book: Lesley Rubinger, Laurie Lindner, Richard Lindner, Jane Glaser, Roz Forman, Molly Sheriff, Paul Johansen, Turbi Smilow and Michael Richman.

We would also like to give a special thank you to our generous sponsors for making this book possible: Lee Bank, Greyllock Federal Credit Union, Zabian's Jewelers.

Our VIM Discount Book is even bigger this year and provides value savings at 184 participants/vendors; 147 are returning and 37 are new this year. They include restaurants, arts and recreation, markets, salons or spas, home, auto and clothing retailers, and many personal services from Pittsfield to Sheffield and Egremont to Mill River and other locations in between.

The Book will be sold at VIM and at the following establishments: The Bookloft, Evergreen, Wild Birds, Great Barrington Visitors Bureau, Rose's Restaurant, Zabian's Jewelers, Steve Valenti, Cranwell Spa, The Mill River General Store, The Berkshire Food CO-OP (list as of November 21, 2011.)

VIM is offering a very SPECIAL DEAL during this holiday season:

Buy one book for \$25 and each additional book you want to purchase will be reduced to \$20 thru December 31, 2011.

So please call VIM at 413 528-4014 to place your order.



Tributes

VIM is pleased to accept contributions recognizing special occasions in the lives of family, friends, and colleagues.

In Honor of Matt & Catherine Mandel
Phyllis & Harvey Klein

In Honor of All The Volunteers
Teresa & Martin Monas

In Honor of Dr. Frank Sessa
Bruno & Patrice M. Francois

In Honor of Dr. Paul & Turbi Smilow
Gilbert & Arlene Katz

**In Honor of Steve Picheny's
70th Birthday**

Linda Greenwald
Catherine & Matt Mandel
Fern Portnoy & Roger Goldman

In Honor of Mildred Quain
Molly Sheriff

In Memory of Ida Calzalaio
Rebecca Friedman

In Memory of Len Simon
Jeffrey Charles Larkins

In Memory of Mollie & Eli Cooper
Diane Cooper Bridges

In Memory of Molly Verebay
Stephan & Barbara D'Alessio
Len & Dianne Salamon
Marion Simon

If you would like to honor someone by making a gift to VIM Berkshires, please call the Clinic at 413-528-4014.

