



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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**“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.”**

– Henry Ford –



**MISSION:** The mission of the Friends Of Newtown Seniors Inc (FONS) is to provide advocacy and services to Newtown seniors (those 55+ who reside in Newtown). This will be accomplished in two complementary ways: through new initiatives conceived and developed by its Board of Directors and by partnering with various non-profit, for-profit, governmental, political, and religious organizations serving the Newtown senior population.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Membership in FONS is free to anyone interested in advancing the interests of seniors in the community, through volunteerism, financial support or contribution as a resource specialist.

**Join our email list at our website:** [FriendsOfNewtownSeniors.org](http://FriendsOfNewtownSeniors.org).

FONS  
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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Reflecting on 2024, I am proud of the progress FONS has made in improving the lives of seniors in Newtown. The highlight of the year was the recognition of Beverly Bennett Schaedler as the AARP Connecticut volunteer of the year, a very well-deserved honor for the work Beverly and her team have done expanding the reach of **Chore Services**.



2024 was a year of firsts, including the launch of **Newtown Rides**, a much-needed service we are looking to expand in 2025. We also held our first annual membership meeting, an event that was community building, a fun celebration, and a form of outreach to the community. Through this event and other efforts, we have grown our email list to over 850 and continue to add new members with each new recruitment effort. In another first, we debuted new machinery for a woodshop at the Senior Center; early indications are that this space will provide an ongoing venue for creativity and socialization.

Although grant funds are becoming less and less available, FONS was able to secure grants to both install the woodshop at the Senior Center and to expand **Chore Services** during 2024. We have gratefully still been able to sustain other programs and services through the generosity of our Board of Directors, our membership, and support from local businesses and organizations, along with our fundraising activities.

Looking ahead to 2025, please review our goals and objectives, which reflect our aspirations for another productive year of impact and expansion. Among our goals, you will see our upcoming initiative, entitled **Timeless Newtown: Embracing Every Generation**, which was designed in service of our broader mission and beliefs. This program is intended to promote an intergenerational mindset that will reverse ageist stereotypes and bring together a broad spectrum of Newtown community members in productive and thoughtful dialogue. We hope that all of you will help us in making this endeavor and each of our goals successful and look forward to working for you, and with you, in the coming year.

As always, I hope that you will continue to reach out with suggestions and comments to help us in our work. Thank you all for your efforts in supporting the important work of FONS.

Sincerely,  
John S. Boccuzzi, Sr.  
President

## FONS 2024 FINANCIAL UPDATE

On 12/31/2024, FONS had a cash balance in excess of \$15,000, which provides a strong base for us to recognize community issues and contribute to matters that affect our senior citizens in the coming year. Of that balance, \$3,000 is specifically reserved for the **Chore Services** program, and \$500 for the **Timeless Newtown: Embracing Every Generation** program. In 2024, FONS spent more than \$6,000 on its programs.

Our 2024 Annual Donation Appeal, with a goal of \$3,000 in donations, was both met and exceeded.

Our 2024 Membership Meeting was a huge success, due to the generous donations from so many area businesses.

We have added a new and convenient feature to our website to allow on-line donor contributions and on-line purchases of tickets for FONS events. We hope that you will consider using this platform to support our organization in the future.

Our sincere thanks to our members, community partners, donors, local supporters, the numerous area businesses who sponsored or supported our Membership Meeting, the FONS Board of Directors, the FONS Advisory Council, and all who give so much of their time and funds to advance our mission of providing advocacy and services to Newtown seniors.



# FONS 2025 GOALS .....

## DIRECT AND COLLABORATIVE SERVICES

1. **FONS Chore Services:** Develop and implement new methods of identifying and reaching potential clients (e.g., wider community word of mouth, partner w/new organizations, more direct communication) to increase unique individuals served by 50%.
2. **FONS Newtown Rides:** Clarify/raise awareness of the service to increase ridership by 100%.
3. Ensure new **FONS Caregiver Respite Service** is successful; identify learnings to scale service.
4. Continue cooperating with Newtown Human Services (NHS), Commission on Aging (COA), Newtown Senior Center (NSC), and others serving the senior community to provide and support senior services/programs.
5. Pursue one targeted collaboration with the Newtown Prevention Council in the area of mental health.

## COMMUNITY SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS — COMPLEMENTING THE SENIOR CENTER

1. Host varied monthly FONS Socials (30 - 50 participants); attract and welcome new participants.
2. Hold Spring Annual Membership Meeting and two other innovative and broadly appealing social events that will attract members and non-members of various ages (> 100 participants).
3. Stay aware of and communicate to membership about all Newtown cultural events so we can continue to support community events (with volunteers, attendance, art, tables, etc.).

## ADVOCACY — LONG-TERM, LARGE-SCALE IMPACT

1. Conduct the **Timeless Newtown Embracing Every Generation** program in collaboration with the CH Booth Library, COA, and other organizations.
2. Exert advocacy by bringing needs, issues, and opportunities to Town Officials, elected and appointed Town bodies particularly in the area of Transportation and Housing:
  - a. Transportation services useful to seniors including public transportation, ride services, sidewalks, and bike lanes
    - i. Work with NHS, local, regional, and state authorities to implement transportation strategy in Newtown.
    - ii. Continue to seek out funding sources for transportation.
    - iii. Lobby for additional position at NSC, i.e., transportation coordinator role.
    - iv. Continue to campaign for bus loop to connect Newtown to regional network – Danbury, Brookfield, Bethel, New Milford.
  - b. Advocate for more and broader housing options in Newtown.
3. Seek to understand what is important to Newtown seniors through FONS Roundtable discussions, surveys, and other means.
4. Review/renew the Livable Community Plan, noting progress made and identifying specific next steps.

## OPERATIONS — NEXT GENERATION FONS

1. Pursue grants and fundraising to enable the expansion of programs and goals; with grants shrinking and services expanding, cultivate new methods of fundraising.
2. Enable online payments/signups. Automate/update all processes and technology.
3. Work with ProBono Partnership to complete enhancement of the FONS governance documents; update organization structure and create specific leadership succession plan.



# 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## SERVICE

### CHORE SERVICES PROGRAM

Over **100 calls** were received from seniors requesting assistance. Calls included requests for referrals to trustworthy businesses and contractors. **FONS Chore Services** was able to provide new windows for a senior whose windows not only leaked but were rotted beyond repair. Our volunteers were able to install Wi-Fi for ring door bells, help with referrals of those tentatively homebound, install grab bars, move furniture to improve safety within homes, remove air conditioners, and replace a front door lock. Two homeowners experiencing financial hardship qualified for financial help and are currently living in a safer environment, due to this program. **FONS Chore Services** was also available to fulfill a request to walk with an adult to see what the Fairfield Hills Campus looked like, since it had been years since he visited. A request to accompany a spouse when visiting Old Glory Days was accommodated and truly appreciated.

### NEWTOWN RIDES PROGRAM

The **Newtown Rides** program was launched with the goal of providing Newtown homebound age 55+ seniors with free rides to Newtown locations and businesses during the hours of 10 am – 2 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The program was such a success that we were able to increase our travel days to include Wednesdays, and also to expand our travel hours to 9:30 am - 2:30 pm. Currently, **Newtown Rides** has **33 active drivers** eager to take our senior population anywhere in Newtown that they would like to go - banking, shopping, pharmacy, post office, library, hair or nail salons, or a visit to the Community Center, Senior Center, physical therapy, doctor, or dentist.

Since its launch in May, the program has provided over **77 free rides** and looks forward to doubling that number in 2025. Our volunteer drivers are amazing and are looking forward to a busy 2025! The **Newtown Rides** program was recognized by the CT Agewell Foundation for its service to seniors.

### COLLABORATION

FONS maintained a strong working relationship with the NSC, NHS and the COA. FONS sponsored a table at the Lions Club Duck Race, the Newtown Arts Festival, and the Newtown Health Fair, marched in the Labor Day Parade, and participated in both the July and December Salvation Army Kettle Bell Drives.

Partnering with these and other groups has bolstered its efforts to promote overall awareness and improvement of services for Newtown seniors. In addition to these organizations, FONS supports and promotes the activities of the Newtown Historical Society, Newtown Youth & Family Services, the C.H. Booth Library, and other service groups. This collaboration fosters a livable community for all of Newtown.

### AARP ANDRUS AWARD

FONS Board Member Beverly Bennett Schaedler was named the recipient of the 2024 AARP Andrus Award for the state of Connecticut in recognition of her volunteer services to the Newtown community.

This prestigious award is granted to only one volunteer per state! Congratulations and thank you to Bev for all she has done for our Newtown seniors.



**“Aging is an extraordinary process where you become the person you always should have been.”**

– David Bowie –



## SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

FONS continued its robust communications strategy through weekly emails to over **850 recipients** (an increase of over 100 from 2023!) announcing activities of interest to seniors in Newtown, sponsored by FONS and other organizations. These include volunteer opportunities and town wide special events.

FONS implemented a monthly birthday mailing to those celebrating age 65 during the year. Along with a birthday card, recipients received an informational flyer on FONS. Over **360 birthday cards** were mailed.

### ACTIVITIES

The FONS Social Committee organized monthly dinner socials at local restaurants, on the last Wednesday of each month.

The FONS Events Committee organized excursions to local vineyards, breweries, theaters, and events at Edmond Town Hall, including performances at the Newtown Little Theater, the Summer Soirée at Aquila’s Nest Vineyards and the Oktoberfest at NewSylum Brewing Company.

The FONS Senior Salon Program distributed **120 coupons** for free haircuts to seniors, performed by students at Ricci’s Academy in Newtown.

### OUTREACH

The FONS Sunshine Committee sent **103 cards and messages of support** to seniors experiencing medical issues, family losses, or celebrating a special anniversary or event. FONS also kept close contact with other organizations to partner with them on activities relevant to seniors.

FONS “adopted” **23 seniors** for the holiday season and provided them with gifts and holiday cheer.

### MEMBERSHIP MEETING

FONS hosted a Membership Meeting at the Newtown Community Center. The meeting included presentations by FONS Board members on the FONS mission and goals, a slideshow on the FONS organization, an interactive audience Q&A session, and a survey on issues important to our senior population. The 110 members who attended enjoyed a complimentary dinner, as well as an extensive raffle drawing, based on the generous donations from area businesses. Feedback received during the meeting allowed FONS to identify and focus on new programs/initiatives to assist our senior population. **Special thanks to Meghan Rice for all her time and effort in obtaining all the donations from area businesses.**

## ADVOCACY

### FONS ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS

Based on feedback received from the Membership Meeting, FONS created a monthly gathering of seniors, the FONS Roundtable, to discuss various topics of interest to Newtown seniors. The Roundtable Meetings occur on the last Tuesday of each month at 3:30 pm at the Senior Center. All are welcome. Discussions in 2024 have included transportation, housing, and isolation. Answers to questions raised at a Roundtable always get follow-up from subject matter experts.

### HANDICAPPED PARKING ACCESS

FONS was approached by a concerned citizen regarding the poor location of handicapped parking at the Newtown Municipal Center. She was concerned about the distance from the door and the incline of the area of the parking spots. FONS approached the COA requesting their support in asking the town to relocate the handicapped parking spaces to a more accessible area.

In December 2024, some of the existing parking spaces located in the front of the building were moved to allow the handicapped parking spots to be relocated to a flat area, with the distance from the door reduced by half.

## OPERATIONS

### FONS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The FONS Advisory Council was established to provide guidance and support to the President of FONS and the Board of Directors. The purpose of the Council is to act as a sounding board as new initiatives are contemplated and to provide advice and counsel. The Council reviews and makes suggestions on goals and objectives for the year and provides impartial reactions to ideas and projects suggested by the Board. The Council is also another way for the FONS Board of Directors to interface with the general public, civic leaders, and local business representatives.

# SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR LOCAL PARTNERS, SPONSORS & DONORS

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- C.H.Booth Library
- **Church Hill Village\***
- **Durant's Party Rentals\***
- Friends of the C.H. Booth Library
- Hilltop Kitchen
- **Hollandia Nurseries\***
- Jeniam Foundation
- Maplewood at Newtown
- Newtown Commission on Aging
- **Newtown Community Center\***
- Newtown High School Basketball Team
- Newtown High School Football Team
- Newtown Human Services
- **Newtown Little Theater\***
- Newtown Parks & Recreation
- **Newtown Savings Bank\***
- Newtown Senior Center
- Newtown Youth & Family Services
- Old Glory Days Adult Day Care
- Ricci's Salon
- Stone Bridge Center for Health & Rehabilitation
- Waterbury Symphony Orchestra
- **Yankee Wine & Spirits\***

### \*Membership Meeting Sponsor

**Additional Membership Meeting Sponsors:** AMC Theatres Danbury, Barnwood Grill, BD Provisions, Big Y, Blue Colony Diner, Buffalo Wild Wings, Caraluzzi's, Chick-fil-A, Costco, Helene Cote, Cover Two Restaurant, Cosmic Coffee, Danny's Barber Shop, Dodgingtown Market & Deli, Dunkin, Edmond Town Hall Movie Theater, Famalia Bleeker Street Pizza, Fusion 25, LongHorn Steakhouse, Lowe's, Market Place Kitchen & Bar, Marygold's on Main, Mercato Italian Kitchen & Bar Southbury, Mitchell's Westport, My Place Restaurant, Newtown Car Care Center, Newtown Nail Spa, Newtown Pizza Palace, Newtown Power Equipment, Pepsi, Rob Rozz Plumbing, Sal E Pepe Italian Bistro, Shoprite, Staples of Danbury, Starbucks, Stop & Shop, Stew Leonard's, Sugo Gastrobar, Tambascio's Italian Grill, Tractor Supply, Tory Burch, Village Barber Shop, Villarina Pasta Shop, Eileen Olifiers Whalen, and Zesto Organic Vegan Market & Juicery.

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