



ISLAND
COMMONS



Lending a hand is second nature on Chebeague.

MISSION

Island Commons provides residential and personal care for elders so they can remain on the island they call home, enabling families and communities to stay together.

VALUES

Chebeague's elders are an integral part of our community. They deserve the care and support necessary for them to remain here.

VISION

Island Commons will continue its leadership in delivering compassionate care for aging in place.

Hauling that extra bag of groceries from the ferry; making a casserole for a potluck supper; offering a ride to the Stone Wharf. This is a community that looks out for one another. We see a need and we work to fill it.

More than two decades ago, a handful of islanders set out to fill a need: to provide care for aging Chebeaguers, to ensure that they could safely and comfortably remain in the place they knew and loved, close to families and friends. It was an ambitious mission, but they succeeded.

In the years since the Island Commons opened its doors, we have provided direct care and comfort to more than 100 people. Like a ripple effect, our impact extends outward to encompass an entire community. Families and life-long friends remain close. Old and young generations share the joys of this island. We contribute to Chebeague's economy by offering good jobs. We provide peace of mind to many.

That's possible because of the support of those who believe this is a valued and essential service. We all are the beneficiaries.



An aging state, an aging island

Maine is the oldest state in the nation. It is aging faster than any other. Nineteen percent of the state is aged 65 or older. By 2030, more than a quarter of Mainers will be 65 years or older, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Almost two-thirds of adults 65 and above will need long-term services and support in their lives. Research also suggests that those services should be directed toward enabling elders to “age in place,” defined as “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.”

Maine’s demographics drive the urgency to find solutions to meet the needs of our aging and disabled populations. Non-profit organizations, and the

communities that support them, must step up to meet the challenge.

The need is particularly acute in rural areas, including the coastal islands. The population of Maine’s islands is aging at an even faster pace than the state as a whole. Chebeague is the oldest of the state’s unbridged islands, with an average age of just over 60. Chebeague’s small size and location compound the difficulty of delivering essential services to the elderly, many of whom are low-income and have few options.

For two decades, the Island Commons has led the way in providing an “aging in place” model for islanders and their families. We have made a difference in many lives.



20 minutes, for a lifetime

Bob Dyer is a sixth-generation Chebeaguer, born on Coleman’s Cove. Beverly Calder Dyer was born on Firehouse Road. Married for 68 years, the island is their home. Their children and many of their grandchildren were raised on Chebeague and live here today.

When Bob and Beverly needed care beyond what their family could provide, the Commons welcomed them, even finding a prominent spot for the iconic sign that adorned Bob’s machine shop (and island hangout) for

years, warning of his love of conversation: “If you don’t have 20 minutes, then don’t stop.” Bob continues to hold court for his friends who stop by.

The Dyer family ties remain strong. Nearby children drop in regularly. During breaks from college, granddaughter Genevieve “Genny” Dyer worked as a valued member of the Commons staff.



“When the Commons came into being, it was one of the best things that ever happened to Chebeague. I thought then it was a great idea - but I didn’t realize how important it would become to this island.”

~ Lindy Smith, whose mother Victoria Smith, a life-long Chebeaguer, was a Commons resident for three years, able to remain close to three generations of her family and her friends.



A history of caring

In the mid-1990s, the founders of the Island Commons knew exactly what they wanted to create for Chebeague: “a homey, congenial place where friends, relatives (including children), neighbors, and caregivers can drop in, lend a hand, or share a quiet moment.”

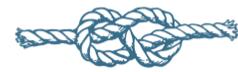
How they could achieve that ambitious goal was another matter.

If there were any doubts about support from the Chebeague community for the idea, however, they soon faded. Led by islander Pommy Hatfield and a small group of like-minded volunteers, the pieces began to fall in place. A historic farmhouse was generously donated by Ray and Gladie Gilmartin, and fundraising began in earnest. A yard sale (soon to become an island tradition), raffles, bake sales and a

golf tournament were organized; a loan from the Maine State Housing Authority (forgivable in 2018), and additional grants from nonprofit foundations helped underwrite renovations. Groundbreaking occurred in the spring of 1998. A joyous Hatfield summed it up: “Together, we have built a very special affordable assisted living home for some very special people.”

In January 1999, the first resident of the Island Commons moved in. The Commons was unique: The first adult family care home in the state developed by a non-profit, supported by the community for its own use, and the first such facility on a Maine island.

Today, with twenty years of operating experience, the Island Commons continues to be a model for other islands and rural communities seeking to address the needs of their growing elderly populations.



An integral part of island life

Sustainability is a topic often debated on Chebeague. How can this island thrive and prosper? How can a small community work together to deliver jobs, education and social services? How can a treasured culture and way of life be preserved? How can so few people accomplish so much?

Chebeague draws its strength and character from being home to multiple generations. Young families won't move here without a good school and employment opportunities. Equally, if elders must leave for lack of care, the fabric of the island is irreparably altered.

The challenge of providing for everyone is daunting. Time and again, however, islanders have seen our sustainability threatened and rallied to tackle the problem. Chebeague's core belief is simple: we succeed if *all* succeed.

The Island Commons is a key part of that creed. It is a charitable social service provider, independent of the town's tax dollars, functioning in a stringent regulatory environment. We operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We are dependent on fluctuating reimbursement rates from Maine's Medicaid program (MaineCare), which fall short of actual costs of care, necessitating ongoing fundraising efforts.

The need is real and growing. We have been at capacity for nearly three years and maintain a waiting list. In addition to caring for seven residents, the Commons also offers in-home assistance through Chebeague Cares. We provide adult day care and respite care.

Like much of Chebeague, the Commons thrives on mixing up the generations. The school bus is often parked outside our door. Island school kids are regular visitors, and our residents occasionally travel to the school to share lunch there.



While compassionate care flows from the Commons, so do economic benefits to the island. We are the largest on-island employer, with 23 full-time, part-time and seasonal workers. These are good jobs, with an annual payroll in excess of \$300,000. Many of our

workers are islanders who are raising young children here. (They alone account for six of the 27 students in the island school.) We provide an opportunity for families to work here, close to home - and for them to contribute to this island in so many ways.

ISLAND COMMONS RESOURCE CENTER

- Housing and 24/7 care for elders requiring assistance with activities of daily living
- Level IV (7-bed), licensed Residential Care Facility where residents have private rooms and share common spaces

CHEBEAGUE CARES

- Registered, Personal In-Home Care program that allows island elders to live independently in their homes for as long as possible
- Intergenerational Social Programs: Year-round events that bring generations together
- Community Medical Loan Closet: Medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, etc. available to the community at no charge



NOW WE ARE ASKING FOR YOU TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE FUTURE OF THE ISLAND COMMONS—THE FUTURE OF CHEBEAGUE.

We are driven to provide care for all who need it, regardless of ability to pay. But relying on MaineCare for those who do not have the ability to pay means that even with stringent expense management, there is a significant annual revenue gap that must be filled by the generosity of the community. Without that, most families cannot afford assisted living care they need and deserve.

Your donation will be deposited in a Sustainability Fund which will be added to our existing reserve fund,

managed by Maine Community Foundation. With that reserve and ongoing fundraising activities, the Commons will have sufficient operating resources to continue to serve Chebeague's elderly.

They need us. We need you.

The Commons stands at a critical juncture – a time when action can lead to continued service to the community and inaction could threaten its very existence. We thank you for your generous support.



**Supported by the community,
supported by you**

Gifts from the Chebeague community come in many forms, from garden harvests of fresh vegetables to impromptu concerts on the lawn. All come from the heart. Consider the hugely successful Jenny Wren Run.

The event is organized by the Hamilton family in memory of Jeanette Hamilton, lovingly known to her husband Ken as “Jenny Wren.” In its first year, nearly 100 people joined in, with donations and pledges from friends, friends of friends and others who love Chebeague and the families who make it what it is.

The ties of the Hamilton family to the Island Commons – and Chebeague – run deep and long. One of the first residents of the Commons was Ellen Hamilton, Ken’s mother. A generation later, Ken and Jeanette Hamilton settled in, their families and friends nearby just as they’ve always been. Hamilton grandchildren and great-grandchildren were frequent visitors, and granddaughter Vicki Todd serves as the Commons’ resident care manager.

The gratitude for the care that Ken and Jeannette received was eloquently expressed by their granddaughter, Kate Emery McCarthy:

“Every person in this world deserves an end-of-life with attention, compassion, and respect. The Island Commons gave my grandparents just that. If this model of aging within one’s own community could be replicated across the country, there would be so much less hurt and worry and fear around aging.”

Support for the Commons comes from many others, in many forms. Jen Belesca donates the proceeds from gallery events at the Niblic in memory of her grandmother, Victoria Smith. The Red Studio, the Commons’ resale shop, is now a popular destination. Spring cleanup day draws large crowds of all ages, as do several community socials throughout the year. Board members and dedicated volunteers donate hundreds of hours annually to fundraisers, social events, and resident activities.





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