

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Thrive, Connect & Engage

By Kristin Davidson

Atul Gawande was inspired by many stories to write *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*. The most personal was that of his parents, both physicians, as his father faced frailty and illness. At their home in Ohio, they were reassured by the option to join the Athens Village, an organization founded by neighbors to provide support systems for those with chronic illness or infirmities in the familiar surroundings of their own homes.

Gawande's book, which chronicles the stories of many families and individuals as they confront debilitating illness, is a *New York Times* bestseller. In the course of the book he outlines the important role so-called Villages can play in giving members the independence they treasure while also providing a sense of purpose, so important at every age.

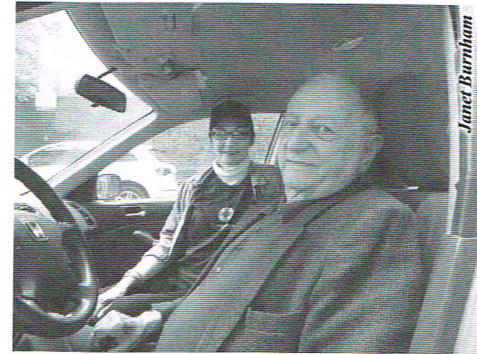
The Village—a traditional concept—is an innovative solution for a U.S. population that is growing older, as Gawande discovered. In addition, *CBS Sunday Morning*, *AARP*, *Forbes Magazine*, *The New York Times* and *Consumer Reports* are among the many leading media outlets that have presented an in-depth look at this flourishing movement.

Penn's Village, a non-profit network of neighbors serving residents of Central

Philadelphia, is one of 150 such villages across the globe. This network includes four categories of membership. "Neighbors"—fundamental to the vibrancy of our community—participate in the wide variety of educational, cultural and social programs, and donate to Penn's Village. "Villagers" need some assistance to maintain their independence. *Volunteers* donate their time and compassion. *Local businesses* support the Penn's Village mission in a variety of ways. All are vital to the organization, and sometimes their roles are interchangeable.

Penn's Village is a volunteer-first organization: We offer a long list of support services including, but not limited to, driving members to medical appointments or the grocery store, running errands, making friendly visits, carrying boxes up stairs, and setting up computers or lamps.

Our newest program, Health Pals, pairs specially trained volunteers with members to help them navigate the healthcare system. A Health Pal volunteer will work with a member to formulate questions, fill out forms, be a "second set of ears" and assist with follow-up instructions such as scheduling appointments and picking up prescriptions. Penn's Village is also partnering with Centennial Health Services,



Penn's Village member and volunteer driver on their way to a medical appointment

an independent pharmacy, to offer one-on-one medication counseling by a registered pharmacist, home delivery of prescriptions, and other health-related services.

Penn's Village members and volunteers appreciate the powerful sense of community that builds as we learn, have fun and help one another, developing strong personal connections along the way.

To learn more about Penn's Village, check out the website <http://www.pennsvillage.org/>, call the office at 215-925-7333, or email info@pennsvillage.org. (See Penn's Village article in June 2014 issue of CCQ, p. 25.)

CCStreetwise

Feet First Philly Puts Pedestrians' Best Foot Forward

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

One of Center City's greatest attributes, according to residents and visitors alike, is the ease of its accessibility on foot. But while Philadelphia is almost universally praised for its human scale and its "walkability," the popularity of walking in the city means there are challenges and issues for pedestrians. **Feet First Philly** is a pedestrian advocacy group sponsored by the Clean Air Council. The organization works on various initiatives to raise awareness of issues facing pedestrians, to improve the pedestrian environment, to protect the rights of pedestrians, and to encourage walking as a mode of transportation, exercise and recreation.

In 2012, Feet First Philly conducted an online survey of pedestrians, and received over 400 responses. Among respondents' concerns were: cars failing to yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk; vehicles running red lights; drivers with cell phones and other distractions; construction sites taking over sidewalks; damaged sidewalks and sidewalk obstructions; and conflicts with bicyclists. Most respondents walk to work or school, to do errands, and for recreation. Other reasons for walking include getting to doctors' appointments, walking dogs or babies, and getting to the many cultural, culinary and social destinations nearby. Many in Center City do not have cars, and use a mix of

walking and public transit. According to the survey, the four streets that presented the greatest difficulty were the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Market Street, Broad Street, and JFK Boulevard.

There are many ways to help Feet First Philly succeed: by participating in organized walks or walk audits to gather data and document walking conditions; volunteering at events; representing Feet First Philly at community meetings; and documenting obstacles with your camera phone. <http://feetfirstphilly.org/>