

TRANSPORTATION MEANS FOOD SECURITY IN MADISON

A pilot program with Kennebec Valley Community Action Program

Cheyenne Stevens



In 2023, the [Living Well in Madison Committee](#) began discussing one of the greatest needs for its aging residents - transportation. A trip to the grocery store, pharmacy, or the town office can be a struggle for anyone in a rural area without bus service. Some organizations offer medical appointment transportation but not other basic transportation.

One of the Living Well in Madison committee members, Laurie Manzer, is the manager of a housing development in Madison. Many of the residents are older adults. Laurie talked with the Committee and described the situation where some of her residents do not have reliable transportation or a family member to help. They must walk to get their groceries. The local Hannaford is less than a mile from the complex but is a hard walk for someone who is older or may have a disability – or who is carrying grocery bags.

Some residents were walking to the nearby Irving gas station to purchase food because they could not make it to the grocery store, especially in the winter. One day, one of the residents was pushing a grocery cart and was approached by someone who said, “This is not a good look for our town” and offered to purchase the resident a wagon. The resident explained that this is what he had to do to get the necessities and pulling a wagon up the hill to the complex would be difficult for him. Stories like this were heard from many people. A change was needed.

And the Committee worked hard to make that happen.

In August of 2023, the [Kennebec Valley Community Action Program](#) (KVCAP), who had long-established transportation programs in the area agreed to do a pilot program with Madison to offer regular shopping trips to Hannaford. The 3-month pilot was designed to demonstrate that sufficient residents would participate to justify this as an established route. 6-8 residents per trip used the service (an average of over 20% of the residents in the complex.)

When the pilot ended, the residents were back where they started. KVCAP was dealing with funding cuts and could not offer a continuation of the pilot at that time. Volunteer drivers stepped forward. Living Well in Madison Committee member, Randy Bliss, offered rides and Jodi Waterhouse, local coordinator of [SEARCH/RSVP](#) with Catholic Charities,

offered a presentation for individuals who may be interested in a volunteer match to help with transportation.

In June of 2024, KVCAP agreed to a continuation of the program until January 2025. The same residents participated in the program – happy to see it resume. Currently, the Committee and KVCAP are working out the details of how to make this a permanent route in Madison.

Resident Cathy Farnham stated “It is a necessity to be able to get our basic necessities.”

The Living Well in Madison Committee continues to move forward and advocate to help residents like Cathy continue to have access to the necessities that they need.

Cheyenne Stevens,
Living Well Coordinator