



Some Helpful TIPS

New non-profit organization targets senior citizens looking to remain home in their golden years.

By [Derek B. Johnson](#)

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"As I get older, I find that I cannot do a lot of things that I used to be able to do," said Clifton resident Fran McWhorter. "I find that frustrating and sometimes depressing. What I think is that, there are probably other people in the area that have that same experience. TIPS will be able to fill that void."

"TIPS" is short for the Clifton/Fairfax Station-Transition in Place Services (CFS-TIPS), a new organization dedicated to helping and facilitating senior citizens to help keep them in their homes. Having just recently attained 501(c)3 non-profit status, the group is ready to start recruiting and will be kicking off its inaugural meeting Sunday, Sept. 14. The meeting, set to take place at 7 p.m. at the Clifton Presbyterian Church off Main Street in Clifton, will introduce TIPS to the community, aiming to snag enough volunteers and potential members to provide limited services by January 2009. Those services will include coordinating phone calls from senior citizens looking for safe, reliable contractors for hire, rides to the grocery store or doctor's office and information about local clubs, organizations or programs that might be helpful to senior citizens looking to avoid moving into a retirement home. The goal, according to TIPS Secretary/Treasurer Bill Cole, is to use the limited services they do offer to build up enough membership to grab the attention of businesses and companies looking to make charitable donations.

"I think that's why we decided to start in phases," said McWhorter, president of TIPS.

"We can be more credible [to businesses] once we build up members," said Cole.

MODELED AFTER a transition in place program in Boston called Beacon Hill, TIPS will require an annual membership fee of less than \$200, which will be used to fund the organization's services as they get off the ground. E-mails to Clifton and Fairfax Station homeowner's associations have been sent out and a one page advertisement was placed in the Clifton town newsletter. Cole also said the organization was looking for volunteers.

"We're going to be soliciting, from out in this area, volunteers who would be willing to assist in [the] program as we move forward into phase two," he said.

Phase two will include expanded services, using volunteers and partnerships with local taxi services to provide regular transportation, handyman, cleaning and home repairs and help paying medical and other bills. The idea is to become a concierge service for senior citizens, somewhere they can go for help no matter what it is they need. As the services expand, so too will the annual membership fee. Cost of membership once TIPS begins providing its full range of advertised services in phase three is expected to be in the neighborhood of \$800-\$1,000. Cole and McWhorter said they were exploring ways to subsidize services from some of their less affluent potential members, possibly through charitable donations.

"There are some people who have lived here most of their life who today are kind of house rich and cash low," said Cole.

The organization, which includes Vice President David Smith, hopes to use the meeting Sunday to introduce the program to potential members, answer questions and refer already existing services to senior citizens looking to remain in their homes.

The group is looking to cover both Clifton and Fairfax Station south of Braddock Road and north of the Occoquan, between Union Mill Road and Ox Road. Both McWhorter, 62, and Cole, 77, say they got involved in the organization to help others their age who were having more difficulty getting around their communities. The relative isolation of residents in Clifton area and Fairfax Station make it more difficult to run errands and take advantage of events and services in their communities. The lower density level of Fairfax Station, with one house per 5-acre lot, has caused residents to be spaced out and therefore somewhat cut off from next door neighbors who might otherwise be available for help. McWhorter said her age, along with a decade spent on the Fairfax County Aging Commission has helped her understand the needs of the senior community as their bodies get older.

"You have an experience of a loss of control. [With TIPS], I know I can call one number and ask someone to help me. I can call that number and feel safe, feel I will get a safe contractor, somebody that's been checked out," said McWhorter.

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