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Re: Curbside Recycling

To the Mayor and Board of Trustees:

When I read of the proposal to require all residents to bring recyclables to the curb rather than to continue with pick up as currently provided, I had this thought: Scarsdale does not value its older and less able bodied residents. I would like to go into details, moving from my resident status with a chronically ill husband, to my professional one as an occupational therapist with more than 35 years' experience, some in Geriatrics and Rehabilitation.

The single most life changing event for a senior citizen, frail or not, is a fall. Successful Ageing in Place requires an assessment of the risks for falls in the home and remediation of those, loose carpets, grab bars, and many other details only professionals are aware of. Balance abilities and strength decline with aging and many do not keep up with the rigorous exercise needed to slow this decline. Carrying any heavy or slightly heavy object shifts the center of gravity and challenges balance. It also obscures the visual field if the object is as large as a recycling container. It puts additional stress on the core muscles which weaken in age and support the back. Many adults, particularly older adults, suffer from back problems. Dragging an object also strains muscles not typically used in everyday activities and, additionally, removes monitoring of the visual surround, another component of balance. That's why it's harder to stand with your eyes closed, part of a typical neurological screening.

So, an older adult falls, then what? The incidence of hip fracture or fracture of the femur is high. Some older adults never recover sufficiently to return to independent living. Many suffer diminished quality of life with some activities now prohibited or impossible. I hope this is a wakeup call that will result in a "hand off" this service that is a critical component to successful Ageing in Place.

Now to my particular situation, not so unique: a spouse becoming the caregiver to the other who has become chronically ill. As fit as I am, I am stretched thin to take care of so much of the physical demands of home ownership that were once shared. I carefully watch the stairs when I carry the newspaper filled cartons to the curb, acutely aware of the dangers of a fall. We have subsidized the schools for decades as empty nesters and now, what may seem like a trivial reduction is a really big deal to some of us.

Just thought I would share what is on my mind and hoped to find a compassionate ear or two.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Finkelstein