

First resident of Scotts Ridge at Pound Ridge

By CARI DELAHANTY

Ruth Newell said that what she missed most after having to sell her home in 2007 and move from Pound Ridge were her friends. She said, "I always wanted to go back to Pound Ridge because I felt at home there." Right now Ms. Newell is renting in South Salem, but beginning this November she will be moving into A-HOME's hybrid shared living property, Scotts Ridge at Pound Ridge, as its first approved resident. If she had not been accepted as a resident of the project, currently completing construction, she might well have had to move in with her son, Thomas Tyler, and daughter-in-law in Pawling and permanently leave behind the familiarity of friends and community built over more than 50 years' residency in Pound Ridge.

The Rev. David Johnson, pastor of

'I've been watching it develop. All my friends are in Pound Ridge, all my activities.'

— RUTH NEWELL

Pound Ridge Community Church, of which Ms. Newell has been a member since 1965, took a strong position in favor of the A-HOME facility. "I was extremely pleased when they got the final planning board approval and ground was broken," said Mr. Johnson, "I think that's been a fairly major change here. The change in the psychology, the idea that moved from a position of I am not really sure we even need it here to actually embracing it."

Ms. Newell, who worked in the medical field until she retired at 70, served in the Navy Hospital Corps during World War II and the Korean War. She finally settled in Pound Ridge in the 1950s and lived in what was her parent's home on West Lane, where she raised her son, Thomas. Her brother, Harmon Newell, shared her home, and his death in 2005 left her in a financial posi-

continued on page 22



CARI DELAHANTY PHOTO

Joan Arnold, executive director of A-HOME, and Ruth Newell.

tion that forced her to sell. Ms. Newell, who is 87 years old, volunteered to make bedrolls for Midnight Run through the Community Church and delivers meals or drives those unable to medical appointments through the local volunteer organization Neighbor to Neighbor.

Two or three years ago when the process of planning first began, Ms. Newell said she applied for residency in the Pound Ridge A-HOME property. "I went to their meetings before they even got started," she said, "I've been watching it develop. All my friends are in Pound Ridge, all my activities." While Ms. Newell likes the space she is renting in South Salem, she said, "I feel sort of isolated, I miss my friends and it gets kind of lonesome."

Joan Arnold, executive director of A-HOME, was inspired to take on the issue of affordable housing for elders, in part, by her own mother's struggle with that challenge at retirement. The stress of dealing with the financial limitations of a fixed income in a community that lacked diverse housing options contributed to a stroke, which left her mother in a nursing home.

In addition to two properties including combinations of apartments targeting single-parent families and

09/20/08



CARI DELAHANTY PHOTO

Scotts Ridge at Pound Ridge, under construction, with A-HOME target completion date of November 1.

shared living space, A-HOME has developed seven shared independent living projects. Scotts Ridge at Pound Ridge is A-HOME's first hybrid of shared living including private living rooms, bedrooms and baths as well as a shared common area. Ms. New-

ell, who likes the idea of the common space, said, "I think it's nice because you can always get help from people and you have somebody to talk to." The Pound Ridge property includes six rental units in each of two buildings, and a sidewalk will connect the

homes to Scotts Corners, just a short walk away.

According to Ms. Arnold, this is just scratching the surface of need. A-HOME polled about 30 Pound Ridge seniors, most of whom wanted to stay in their own HOME although they were house poor. Indicating that A-HOME has applied for a grant to explore options for retrofitting accessory apartments, Ms. Arnold said, "Retrofitting an apartment within their house would make a lot of sense. They would have an income-producing property, so that would help them with the maintenance and some of the taxes."

Of the elderly, Ms. Arnold said, "I think they become the history of the town, the fabric, the backbone, the grandparents. If you have only new people, you lose the soul of the community."

For now, Ms. Newell walks most days near Truesdale Lake, but on Mondays she drives to Pound Ridge, where she, Carol Powers, Janet Heisel and a few other friends she has made over more than 50 years of living in Pound Ridge, meet at the Pound Ridge Town Park and walk to Scotts Corners and back. Once she moves to her new home at Scotts Ridge, she can meet her friends just a short walk from her front door.