



## **Dr. Gawande to talk on 'Village Movement'**

*By Ellen Waldman*

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The organization known as The "Village Movement" began in Boston in 1999. The intention of this group of friends was to address their wish for more freedom and control over their lives as they aged. They also wanted to be active, taking care of themselves and each other. They enrolled their first members by forming Beacon Hill Village in February 2002, and were soon deluged with requests for help from other groups wanting to form their own Villages.

Here, our own Ashland At Home (AAH), ([info@ashlandathome.org](mailto:info@ashlandathome.org); [www.ashlandathome.org](http://www.ashlandathome.org)) was started in 2012 and has grown to 130 members and volunteers. It is a nonprofit, membership organization dedicated to improving the experience of aging for residents of Ashland and Talent.

Choice and community are concepts honored throughout the Village Movement. In 2010, the Village to Village Network was formed to ensure the success of individual Villages through expert guidance, resources and support. Ashland at Home is one of more than 200 current Villages, with more than 150 in development in 45 states and the District of Columbia. It serve 40,000-plus members who benefit from their services, just like those provided by AAH.

As a member of this Village to Village Network, AAH has been invited to participate in an exciting "virtual" event celebrating 15 years of the Village Movement. Featuring Dr. Atul Gawande, M.D., MPH, renowned surgeon, public health researcher and author of the best-selling book, "Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End," this event will be live-streamed to Villages across the United States.

AAH will broadcast the one-hour interview with Dr. Gawande on Monday, Feb. 13, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Carpenter Hall, (44 S. Pioneer St., Ashland). His conversation, entitled "Being Mortal's Villages: The Value of Community and Choice as we Grow Older," will feature a discussion on aging, living life with purpose, and how we can transform the possibilities for the later chapters in everyone's lives.

Dr. Gawande will also answer questions sent in earlier from Villages around the country. There will be a discussion following the viewing, which I am honored to help facilitate. The doors open to this free event at 1:30. The program begins at 2 and ends at 3:30. This information has been provided by Katharine Danner, executive director of Ashland at Home. For more info on this event, contact David Florian, AAH outreach co-chair, by email at [djflor2@gmail.com](mailto:djflor2@gmail.com) or call 541-201-2027.

While Dr. Gawande's book title alludes to death, the stories in it are actually about life. He describes people's efforts to maintain autonomy as they age in the face of ingrained habits, cultural expectations and the current corporate offerings. He includes Beacon Hill Village and the Village model as an option for assisting older adults in their efforts to remain in their homes. This often means providing services and extending community to engage the older adult population. This Village model allows them to enjoy the richness of activities, attributes and attitudes of others in their age range.

One of the great issues worldwide today is how to support and care for aging populations. By 2030, 20 percent of our nation's population will be over 65, an estimated 83 million people. The Village concept, and Dr. Gawande's profound understanding of the importance of choice and community, offers valuable insights and solutions for this challenging phenomenon.

Finding ways to stay connected and involved with community is critical for well-being and remaining vital. Look at these statistics quoted by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.: "For countless generations, humans lived in small groups, made up of 40-150 people, most of whom were closely related to each other and lived communally. As late as 1500, the average family group in Europe consisted of roughly 20 people whose lives were intimately connected on a daily basis. But by 1850, that number was down to 10 living in close proximity, and in 1960, the number was just five. In 2000, the average size of a household was less than four, and a shocking 26 percent of Americans lived alone."

Any of the various positive ways in which we can restore and reinvigorate our sense of community should be considered worthwhile. Plan to attend this event, perhaps with a friend, and call AAH to get connected with our growing local Village as well.