

Growing to serve

Tri-Valley gets spacious new digs

By John Dignam TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF
jdignam@telegram.com

DUDLEY— Tri-Valley Elder Services starts its 30th year with a new name and a new home.

The new name — Tri-Valley Inc. — reflects the fact that the organization now works with people younger than 60 with disabilities, according to Executive Director Marilyn L. Travinski. But she said the agency's focus "has always been and remains on the elderly, who are our core (clientele)."

The organization has moved from a three-floor office on Main Street in Webster to a modern, larger, one-floor office in restored mill space.

"It's beautiful. It's much more efficient, and we have room to grow," Ms. Travinski said.

About 75 full-time employees and five to 15 volunteers work daily at the headquarters of the private, nonprofit agency.

The agency provides information, referrals and care management services, which include in-home services, congregate housing and area Meals-on-Wheels programs.



Marilyn L. Travinski, executive director of Tri-Valley Inc., shows off the agency's new, larger office in Dudley. Tri-Valley, which serves 25 area communities, moved to the restored mill space from downtown Webster nearly three months ago.

In a \$1.5 million project, the third floor of a former Stevens Linen Mill building at 10 Mill St. was torn apart and reborn as modern office space, according to Ms. Travinski.

Because the agency designed the facility, she said, it was able to lay out offices, work spaces, meeting rooms, the library and the lunchroom for greatest efficiency.

She said the facility's 20,000 square feet is 33 percent larger than the former office in downtown Webster, and said the actual increase is even greater because the former office was interrupted by hallways and stairways.

And with a large parking lot behind the building, employees no longer are plagued with the "parking violation" notices they received in downtown Webster, she said.

Tri-Valley has a five-year lease with an option to purchase with American Mills Realty of Westboro, which bought the former Stevens Mills property in 2004

Ms. Travinski said the company has offered the agency the option of buying the building now and that the agency's board of directors yesterday decided to negotiate with the property owner.

"We can't make a decision yet because we don't have a price, but it would be good for the long-term financial health of the agency," she said.

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Secretary of State William F. Galvin approved the name change in late December. The agency moved to its new facility at the end of October.

Ms. Travinski said the agency, incorporated in 1976, began looking six years ago for a solution to its office and parking problems.

"We were squeezed," she said.

She said all available office space in the area was viewed and a deposit was put on land in Oxford when the agency considered constructing a new building.

She said James E. Levin of American Mills Realty approached Tri-Valley in 2004 about leasing space at the former linen mill. Construction was started in the fall of 2004. Ramon Hovsepian of Dudley was the architect. R.H. White Construction Co. was the contractor.

The decor includes walls of soft blue and green for their calming effects, although the lunch room is a raspberry sherbet "to help people get re-energized," Ms. Travinski said.

Finishing touches are still being applied. Signs have not been erected in the front yet, there are no clocks or artwork on the walls and the library lacks books.

Highlights of the new facility include:

- A lunchroom that can hold 60 people; a third of the space is used mornings for preparation of Meals-on-Wheels for Webster and Dudley.

The former lunchroom held four people, "six in a pinch," Ms. Travinski said.

- Four meeting and conference rooms, one of which can hold 100 people. The agency now is able to hold annual meetings here.

- A security system and private rooms for the protection of abused, neglected or financially exploited elderly people. The agency is designated as a Protective Services Agency and last year served 669 elderly under that designation.

The agency has expanded its programs as well as space, and in the past year added three new programs. The Caring Homes pilot program increases the level of services to frail and more severely disabled elders so that more can stay in their homes, rather than go into nursing homes.

The Personal Care Attendant program provides training and support for attendants to disabled persons younger than 60.

A third program works to identify elderly people in nursing homes who might want to leave and could be sustained outside by services.

All Tri-Valley services are provided to Bellingham, Blackstone, Brookfield, Charlton, Douglas, Dudley, East Brookfield, Franklin, Hopedale, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Millville, Northbridge, North Brookfield, Oxford, Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, Warren, Webster and West Brookfield

Adult family care is provided in Auburn, Barre, Boylston, Grafton, Hardwick, Holden, Holliston, Hopkinton, Leicester, Marlboro, Millbury, New Braintree, Northboro, Oakham, Paxton, Rutland, Shrewsbury, Westboro, West Boylston and Worcester. That program offers a Medicaid-funded recuperative care program and a private pay respite program in host homes.