

STORIES OF HEALTH

In early 2015, ReThink Health: UCRV teamed up with United Valley Interfaith Project (UVIP) to amplify and expand UVIP's work of using the power of storytelling to create community change. UVIP gathered stories in two areas: aging with dignity and life in Claremont. Over time, the myriad stories and rich qualitative data drawn from each story accumulate to give us an accurate picture of the challenges and assets that exist in the Upper Connecticut River Valley. Our shared hope is that the data and vibrant stories collected from the Stories Project can be leveraged to bring about significant, positive change in the organizations and systems that shape our local healthcare, social, and economic systems.

UVIP, with assistance from ReThink, has trained more than 50 volunteer "Listeners," who are then paired with individuals who want to share their experiences. As the lead partner, UVIP recruits the Listeners and coordinates with community organizations, such as social service providers, congregations, and town Aging in Place groups, to identify individuals who are willing to tell their stories. Each storytelling session lasts about an hour and the stories are recorded by Listeners. ReThink's Stories team then transcribes and analyzes each of the stories to uncover patterns in the data and capture common themes. Listeners and Re Think staff follow strict confidentiality procedures to ensure that the privacy of each story sharer is protected.

UVIP, ReThink, Listeners, and other stakeholders will be working together in the coming months to review and disseminate the findings from this project enabling partners in the social sector, healthcare system, and our towns to take action on some of the key issues uncovered.

An exciting offshoot of the Stories Project is the Take Another Look exhibit, a multi-media exhibit designed to bring these experiences of area seniors to a wider audience. Partners for this project include Community Access Television (CATV) in White River Junction, high-school aged documentary filmmakers trained by CATV. AVA Gallery in Lebanon, Thompson Senior Center in Woodstock, and many others. Several public showings of the Take Another Look took place throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 2016.

Senior Stories Project

In 2015, UVIP partnered with ReThink Health: UCRV to amplify effectiveness – **turn stories into data!** Together, they captured and analyzed seniors' stories and used information gleaned from stories to create recommendations and best practices that are reflective of the senior experience. To collect stories, the organizations built a team of "**Listeners**" – volunteers from the community who listen to and record the stories. These listeners are trained in active listening and interviewing techniques, and come together on monthly basis to share experiences, problem-solve challenges, and discuss emerging themes.

Last spring, we partnered with Community Access Television (CATV 8/10), Thompson Senior Center, local youth, and artists to produce the *Take Another Look* exhibit. The exhibit consisted of multi-media art, including short films, photos, and written quotations. Visit this site to view

the films: <https://vimeo.com/album/3883699>. We also invited community members to bear witness to our common community landscape of aging. In July, we held our second *Take Another Look* exhibit at the AVA Gallery in Lebanon, NH which followed a similar format to the first event. We are continuing to collect and analyze stories to contribute to our database of information. See below for some other information regarding the Senior Stories Project.

Claremont Stories Project

Nearly 100 residents told their stories to help paint a picture of what life is like in Claremont, NH. We met with local stakeholders, including the Claremont School District, Valley Regional Hospital, and the City of Claremont, to understand how the data may be most useful to them so that we could create reports tailored to each of their needs. We have submitted a report on education to the Claremont School District to help to inform their strategic planning process and the report on economic development will be submitted to UVIP for their campaigns, as well as the City of Claremont to inform their Master Plan. We are also creating reports on housing, transportation, and community life in Claremont.