

## Year of Volunteer Service Changes Lives: Commonwealth Corps Members Reflect

**D**iana Martinez began volunteering as her way of jump-starting the spirit. Having recently suffered the loss of a loved one, she felt that helping others was a kind of therapy. She had many opportunities for “therapy” during the year – whether through dashing to the nearby Dunkin Donuts to get an orange juice for a diabetic elder; buying a Christmas tree for a blind, wheelchair-bound man who needed a way to celebrate the season; or helping a Spanish-speaking couple who are both blind to

navigate the difficult process of prolonged hospital stays.

Diana is one of five volunteers who recently finished a year of

Aisha Boykin, Carlos Suarez, Mina Jimenez, and Patrick Aranda to give either 10 or 20 hours a week of volunteer service. They provided medical escorts, short-term assistance, ongoing advocacy, and friendship to 150 Latino elders and adults with

disabilities. Here, they share their experiences, and their thoughts on a life-changing year of service:

Initially wary of her ability to connect with men and women who are elderly or who have disabilities,

*Continued on page 3*



The 2010 Commonwealth Corps Members

service with FriendshipWorks’ La Cadena de Amistad neighborhood chapter in Jamaica Plain. Through the state-sponsored Commonwealth Corps program (see sidebar page 3), she joined

## Volunteers Organize a Memorable “First” Birthday

**F**orty-eight is not often considered to be a milestone birthday, but for one La Cadena de Amistad recipient and the volunteers who assist him, it was a year to remember. Juan, a Latino man who is blind and uses a wheelchair, was receiving medical escorts and friendly visits from



La Cadena de Amistad volunteers with Juan and his mother Ana

Commonwealth Corps volunteer Diana Martinez. One day, Diana called to ask how he was doing after a recent doctor’s appointment. Juan replied, “I would like for you to celebrate my birthday.” Initially surprised, Diana soon learned that Juan, at 48 years old, had never, in all his life, had a birthday

*Continued on page 2*



*From the Desk of Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, Executive Director*

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As I write this, my mother is struggling with pancreatic cancer. It is a painful disease. She knows that due to its aggressiveness, she does not have much time left on this earth.

And yet today my mother told me how lucky she is that she is able to see how much people care for and love her. She said, "...not everyone gets that chance." And I am sure that I speak for all of our family, her friends and acquaintances, when I say that we feel lucky and blessed to spend time with her, and blessed by the love, fun, and meaning that she imbues in our lives.

Each day my mother receives phone calls, visits, or cards from people who know and care about her. It has been that way for much of her later adult life, though perhaps more frequent now.

There is one of us or another making a meal, shopping, playing Scrabble, driving her to a bridge game, helping with medications, translating memoirs, telling her about our day, listening, laughing, philosophizing and trying now, perhaps more than ever, to make sense of the meaning of life.

Through the good and through the very difficult times, the fact that we are involved in each others lives gives my mother, and each of us who love and care about her, manifold blessings.

Many of our neighbors here in the community do not have the network of loving family and friends that my mother has. We at FriendshipWorks cannot replicate a family with years of memories and experiences, but we and our volunteers can, and

do, become good and close friends for many. For some, we become their family.

New friends, memories and experiences can begin at any time of life. Through friendship we can also be the person who gives the gift of listening so that our friends can tell their stories. By being there for others we imbue both the lives of those we befriend and our own lives with meaning and purpose.

Our new name, FriendshipWorks, is both our name and our message. I hope you will share our name and our message with others. It is a priceless gift.

Sincerely,

Janet Seckel-Cerrotti  
Executive Director

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## Volunteers Organize a Memorable "First" Birthday *continued from page 1*

party. He had called on Diana in the past for medical escorts, for companionship, and for ongoing advocacy. Now, he was relying on her to help him celebrate his birthday for the first time.

Diana took the unusual request in a stride and put the party planning in motion. Juan gave Diana some money so she could go

out and buy party essentials like balloons, a cake, and decorations. When the date of the party finally came, it was the event of the day in Juan's building. Residents who knew Juan, along with FriendshipWorks' La Cadena de Amistad volunteers, came together to celebrate his "first" birthday, 48 years overdue.

Diana read a special poem aloud for Juan, and this dedicated volunteer made a dream come true for a man who otherwise might have gone a lifetime having never blown out the candles on his own birthday cake.

# Year of Volunteer Service Changes Lives *continued from page 1*

Diana came to see them as close friends, visiting with them for hours and braving long walks on winter nights in order to get to their apartments. She explains, “you feel so good with them and you don’t want to leave.”

**Mina** was impacted by folks who were receiving necessary services in their homes because of their disabilities, but who still suffered from a serious lack of social contact. She was shocked at how isolated some of her community members were: “they were not receiving love – the isolation was in their hearts.” For one particular elderly woman, Mina acted as both a friend and advocate. Sonia (not her real name) was living in a nursing home and needed a more accessible apartment. Mina helped Sonia through this complicated process, coordinating with Sonia’s previous employers in Miami in order to get necessary documents and even helping her to fill out the apartment applications.

After providing countless medical escorts, where he acted as the “eyes and ears” for elders who had difficulty in fully understanding their health care, **Patrick** knows the great impact of his support. Patrick communicated with one woman’s doctor to help her verify which procedures and check ups she’d had. Patrick spoke up for another woman who was left waiting for an eye exam for hours. He escorted a woman in a wheelchair who tipped over during the ride because her wheelchair was not properly secured. Patrick

## What is Commonwealth Corps?

Initiated in 2008, the Commonwealth Corps is a state-funded program which aims to engage Massachusetts residents of all ages and backgrounds in direct service to rebuild communities and address unmet needs. In August 2008, FriendshipWorks was honored to be chosen as one of the flagship sites for the Commonwealth Corps. We have since been chosen for renewed funding in 2009 and 2010. Our 2009-2010 Corps members, Aisha Boykin, Carlos Suarez, Diana Martinez, Mina Jimenez, and Patrick Aranda, served part time through our Jamaica Plain Chapter, providing medical escorts, short-term assistance, ongoing advocacy, and friendship to 150 Latino elders and adults with disabilities.

was there to help and to report the incident. Patrick was there when a man needed dentures but didn’t understand his health insurance. Patrick went back and forth between the dental clinic and the man’s residence to find out what health insurance he had, and coordinate with the dentist to make sure the man got his dentures. Imagine what would have happened to all of these people without a Patrick in the picture.

For **Aisha** and **Carlos**, the real surprise came in how much the elderly men and women whom they helped wanted to give back to their volunteers. After completing a medical escort one day, Aisha was surprised when the 90 year-old lady she was escorting asked if she wanted to join her for a pizza. Aisha recalls another woman she

visited teaching her how to cook plantains. Countless other times, she would visit an elderly man or woman and arrive to a table of food ready for her, the guest of honor. As a male Latino, Carlos was able to share a special bond with the elderly Hispanic men he visited and accompanied on medical escorts. They would joke together, and reminisce about their youth. Carlos explains, “I don’t think I appreciated the fullness of their lives.”

Aisha, Carlos, Patrick, Mina, and Diana all had an eye-opening year of service. They learned about their neighbors in the community and what they need. They learned that by simply lending a helping hand they can each make an enormously positive impact on another’s life.

# Special Announcements

## Meet Our New Staff Members



CarolAnn Yancey joined FriendshipWorks in May as the new Friendly Visiting Coordinator. CarolAnn brings extensive experience in both volunteer management and elder services to the position. Her goal is to make many more Friendly

Visiting matches and increase the staff support provided to volunteers. She will also be leading the Volunteer Leadership Council.



Beatrice Greene joined FriendshipWorks in June as the new La Cadena de Amistad Coordinator at our neighborhood chapter in Jamaica Plain. Beatrice is a longtime Jamaica Plain resident, and brings her extensive knowledge of the neighborhood and commitment to social services to the position. Her goal is to grow the Jamaica Plain program through recruiting more volunteers. Beatrice will also co-chair the JP Eldercare Network.

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Eldridge Steptoe joined FriendshipWorks in August as our new AmeriCorps VISTA in Web, Database, and Development. Eldridge has a BA in English from Cornell University. Eldridge's goal is to increase the efficiency of

our database and improve our communications.

Look at all of the great work we did in Fiscal Year 2010!

FriendshipWorks served 1343 individuals with 17,616 hours of direct, personalized services.

288 elders and adults with disabilities enjoyed one-on-one visitation from friendly visitors.

5 exercise groups offered movement and fun for 130 elders.

Over 56 people were visited in nursing homes by La Cadena de Amistad volunteers

907 medical escorts were completed (188 one-way escorts and 719 round-trip escorts for a total of 1626 rides).

464 one-time and short-term assists were provided.

Over 600 elders in long-term care facilities were visited weekly by our PetPals human-animal teams.

FriendshipWorks'

 *Wish List*

We are always happy to accept in-kind gifts!

Laptops  
Paper shredder  
Digital camera  
Small microwave  
Fax machine  
Printed materials

We also gratefully accept auction or raffle items.

# FriendshipWorks' Community Impact

FriendshipWorks is proud to spread our mission to the community. We work hard to make our volunteers, recipients, and supporters feel appreciated. We take a leadership role sharing our expertise and helping others create successful volunteer programs. We seek to tell our stories and share our experiences. Here's what we've been up to!

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## Upcoming

Join FriendshipWorks at Old South Church on Saturday, October 30th at 7:30 PM for Scared For Good!, a free Halloween benefit concert. A goodwill offering will be collected to support several organizations including FriendshipWorks.

## Recent Events

### May 2010

- Over 50 friends and supporters gathered at Sherrill House in Jamaica Plain for FriendshipWorks' Annual Meeting. The evening included a wine and cheese reception, and highlighted FriendshipWorks' La Cadena de Amistad bilingual chapter and PetPals program, both of which bring volunteers to elders at Sherrill House. Thanks to Sherrill House for their ongoing support!
- FriendshipWorks volunteers and their families enjoyed a Volunteer Appreciation picnic and swan boat ride in the Boston Public Gardens.

### June 2010

- The PetPals Sixth Annual Dog Show (and Cat & Bird Photo Show) took place on June 5th at Epoch Senior Health Care of Chestnut Hill with 30 residents and their families in attendance. Many thanks to Trader Joe's in Brookline, Polka Dog Bakery, Stop & Shop, and Petco Unleashed for their wonderful in-kind donations!

## FriendshipWorks Leadership

- FriendshipWorks staff led "Overcoming Isolation and Loneliness: What the Senior Center Can Do", a workshop at the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging annual conference.
- The Boston Public Health Commission and the JP Elder Care Network, co-chaired by FriendshipWorks' La Cadena de Amistad and Arbol de Vida (Tree of Life), gathered over 60 older adults at the "Aging Well in Jamaica Plain: How Can We Do It?" workshop. The Boston Public Health Commission's will publish a report of the workshop in September 2010.

- FriendshipWorks met with staff of Roxbury Senior Care, part of the Charles Street AME Roxbury Renaissance Center, to provide consultation and an evening of education and training for the Center's volunteers to help them increase volunteer visitation and assistance for isolated older adults in Roxbury and Dorchester.
- FriendshipWorks is collaborating with Neighbors in Deed, a program of South Dorchester parishes St. Ann, St. Brendan, St. Gregory and St. Mark, to share expertise on effectively assisting older adults, and share referrals and professional assessments of recipients.

## FriendshipWorks in the Media

- The PetPals program was one of several programs featured in "Reaching the Senior Community," an article in the Humane Society of the United States' *Animal Sheltering* magazine. The article included pictures of our PetPal kitty Krowka and PetPal doggie Jesse.
- La Cadena de Amistad volunteer Quinin Velez was interviewed by Karma Kitaj on "Alivelihood", a Brookline Access Television show that features people who have started "new adventures" later in life. Quinin shared how volunteering has changed her life. The interview is available on YouTube.
- The *Italian Post Gazette* featured a story on a North End Walking Buddies match.
- The *West Roxbury-Roslindale Bulletin* featured a story on a long-time Friendly Visiting match.
- The *Back Bay Sun* featured a story on Strong for Life exercise groups.
- The Administration on Aging featured short stories on a Friendly Visiting match and a Medical Escort match on their website.
- The *Somerville Journal* featured a story on a Friendly Visiting match on their website.
- The *Dorchester Argus Citizen* featured a story on a Friendly Visiting match.
- The *Brookline TAB* featured a story on a Friendly Visiting match.

*FriendshipWorks is grateful to receive Gifts in Memory and Gifts in Honor to remember a loved one or honor an individual. Please include your wishes with your donation. Note the name of the individual, the occasion, your contact information and the contact information of anyone who should be notified of your kind gesture.*

### ***Thank You for Gifts in Memory...***

from CarolAnn Yancey

from Gayle and Robert Golden

from Susan Soergel

from Katherine Concilio

from Kathy Berlin

from Janet Ruboy

In memory of her mother, Odessa F. Smith

In memory of Stanley Zelermyer

In memory of her dog, Murphy

In memory of her mother, Mary Myers

In memory of Donna Curran

In memory of Mildred Kruger, mother of Brooke Lipsitt

### ***Thank You for Gifts in Honor...***

from Nina Avergun

from Sandie & Neil Bernstein

from Eleanor & Carl Packer

from Marva Serotkin

from Ellen Zellner

In honor of her mother Stella Avergun's 90th birthday

In honor of Ilana Fitzpatrick's graduation from middle school

In honor of Jane Weiss

In honor of Ruth Grabel

In honor of Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, Jacqueline Gallagher, Zipora Ostroy, all staff and volunteers at FriendshipWorks, Ilse Leeser, Connie Warshawsky, Jewel Chin, Margaret Gardner, Paula Kates-Veeder in honor of her birthday, Dr. Amy Wecker in honor of her birthday, Carol Wilson, & Paula Anderson for her thoughtfulness and caring.

# So Many Ways to Give: *Planned Giving*

Please consider including FriendshipWorks in your planned giving. Planned giving may include bequests to FriendshipWorks in a will or living trust; the naming of FriendshipWorks as the beneficiary of a retirement plan or life insurance policy; or a tax-free charitable gift to FriendshipWorks from an IRA. The easiest way to do this is with a bequest. By including FriendshipWorks in your will, you can enjoy the benefits of your assets during your lifetime while ensuring that FriendshipWorks will receive your support in the future. Plus, the contribution will allow your estate to take a charitable deduction for the amount contributed. Here are some FAQs about planned giving:



## **Q: What is “planned giving?”**

A: “Planned giving” (sometimes called “charitable gift planning”) refers to the process of making a charitable gift of one’s estate assets to a nonprofit. Planned gifts are usually arranged now and fulfilled later. For example, a person could include a provision in their will to make a bequest to FriendshipWorks. That arrangement would be considered a “planned” gift.

## **Q: Why should I consider a bequest gift to FriendshipWorks, and how would I go about this?**

A: For some donors, giving to FriendshipWorks through their will is a way of leaving a lasting legacy. It can also reduce the size of a taxable estate. And setting up a bequest gift is fairly simple. A donor can make a bequest by including the following language in their will:

“I give and devise to FriendshipWorks (state a percentage or exact amount) of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, both real and personal, to be held, administered, and used by the Board of Directors for the unrestricted support of FriendshipWorks.”

## **Q: Are retirement assets ever considered in planned giving?**

A: Yes. Retirement account assets, if

left to anyone other than a spouse, may be subject to very high taxation; the entire amount is subject to income tax when received by heirs. Since qualified retirement plans are included in a decedent’s taxable estate, this could actually expose the assets of a qualified retirement plan

**If you have already included FriendshipWorks in your will, please let us know. We would like to thank you, and add you to our newly-formed Bequest Society. And of course, you may always choose to make an anonymous gift.**

to both estate and income taxes, potentially reducing the bequest. By designating FriendshipWorks as the recipient of any benefits remaining in a qualified retirement plan, these assets are removed from the taxable estate, and of course, are not exposed to income tax.

## **Q: What are “income-producing” gifts?**

A: Many donors seek gift arrangements that enable them to give to FriendshipWorks while providing ongoing financial support for themselves or others. There are many gift options of this type. The Charitable Remainder Trust is one of the most popular and it has the advantage of transforming low-yielding assets into a steady stream of secure income during your life. You also benefit by

avoiding capital gains on the sale of the asset, as the trust accomplishes the sale. And since the trust is irrevocably designated to benefit FriendshipWorks, the donor receives a partial charitable tax deduction upon the establishment and funding of the trust. A donor may create a Charitable Remainder Trust by transferring cash, securities, and/or property to a trust for FriendshipWorks’ benefit.

## **Q: How do I set up a planned gift for FriendshipWorks?**

A: **Please consult your financial advisor.** If you do not have a financial advisor, we would be happy to refer you. FriendshipWorks does not render legal or tax advisory service. There are many planned giving arrangements available. The examples here are intended to provide general information only. For advice and assistance in specific cases, please contact a qualified financial advisor or attorney. State law governs wills, trusts, and estates and charitable gifts made in a contractual agreement. Advice from legal counsel should be sought when considering these types of contracts. If you need further information or a referral, please contact Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, Executive Director.



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**Formerly Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers**

*You're Invited To:*

***Scared For Good!***

*A Halloween Benefit Concert*

***Saturday, October 30th at 7:30 PM***

**Old South Church**

**645 Boylston Street, on the corner of Dartmouth  
 and Boylston Streets, at the Copley T stop.**

**Free admission. Costumes optional.  
 Handicap accessible.**

Come to a spine-chilling presentation of all your favorite  
 ghoulish tunes performed by candlelight in the Gothic  
 splendor of Old South Church.

A goodwill offering will be collected to support several  
 organizations including FriendshipWorks.

**Inside this Issue**

Year of Volunteer Service  
 Changes Lives.....1  
 A Special Birthday.....1  
 From the ED's Desk.....2  
 Special Announcements...4  
 News Briefs.....5  
 In Honor\In Memory.....6  
 Many Ways Of Giving.....7