

# Creating Connections



This Friendship is a Slam Dunk - Pg. 3

*FriendshipWorks is celebrating 40 years of bringing joy and companionship into the lives of older adults in Greater Boston through our five core programs.*

*Here's an update on the work we're doing together to create connections and reduce elder isolation.*

Phone: (617) 482-1510

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[www.fw4elders.org](http://www.fw4elders.org)

## A Message from Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, FriendshipWorks' Executive Director



Dear Friend,

Spring is a fitting time to reflect on the blossoming connections we've nurtured for over 40 years at FriendshipWorks. Since our inception in 1984, our unwavering commitment to reducing social isolation in Greater Boston has woven a tapestry of compassion, friendship, and care, enriching the lives of over 40,000 elders.



A lot has changed since that time (just look at my photo!) yet one thing remains true: each elder and volunteer has their unique perspectives, stories, and experiences. In this newsletter, we're delighted to share a few of them, and highlight their mutual gifts of enriched human connection.

With each passing year, the number of older adults grows, as does the diversity of their needs. In the heart of a bustling metropolis with over 600,000 residents, we stand firm in our belief that no one should travel through the journey of aging alone. The data speaks volumes, underscoring the urgency of our mission. We are undeterred in our resolve, and hopeful in our belief, that every neighborhood possesses the inherent capacity to embrace and uplift its elders.

As we embark on another 40 years and a more connected future, we invite you to join hands with FriendshipWorks and mobilize our collective resources, harnessing the power of community to ensure that no elder is left behind. Whether through volunteering, advocacy, or philanthropy, your partnership is critical in realizing our shared vision of a more compassionate and connected society. Together, we can create a world where aging is synonymous with dignity, belonging, and joy. Thank you for believing in our important work!

In Friendship,

## In the News -

Since the U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness, several media outlets have sought the expertise and thought leadership of FriendshipWorks.



You'll find these stories and more at:  
[fw4elders.org/newsroom](http://fw4elders.org/newsroom)

**Boston Herald**

**BOSTON.COM**

**KLOVE**

**WBZ NEWS**

Have you seen our new  
Public Service Announcement  
(PSA) video?



Use the camera on your  
phone and scan the  
code to watch, or visit:  
[fw4elders.org](http://fw4elders.org)



## In Your Inbox -

Make sure you are registered  
to receive updates from  
FriendshipWorks!

Go to:  
[www.fw4elders.org](http://www.fw4elders.org)  
and click on  
"Be Informed".



*FriendshipWorks' Friendly Visiting program matches elders with caring volunteers based on interests, hobbies, culture, language, and activity level, while honoring each person's multifaceted identity. These weekly visits take place at home or wherever the older adult is most comfortable.*

## This Friendship is a Slam Dunk!

Chris Teal is an esteemed violin virtuoso and an Army veteran who spent 42 years teaching at Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music in Nashville. After retiring and relocating to Cambridge in 2014 when he and his wife Allison got married, he found himself missing the vibrant network of friends and colleagues he had cultivated over the years. Sensing he could benefit from more social connection, Allison reached out to FriendshipWorks after learning about it from a social worker.

*No need for any fierce competition here, it's all about the one-on-one conversation while taking aim at the hoop.*

FriendshipWorks was able to match Chris with Evan Powell, a Friendly Visiting volunteer who had recently moved to Cambridge after graduating from the University of Connecticut. During the pandemic, Evan says, "I recognized the importance of social connection." In his current position as an actuary, he works from home 60 percent of the time. He was looking for a way to connect to his community while giving back at the same time. Now, Evan and his new friend Chris like to stay active and share their love of music.

Chris says, "I look forward to seeing Evan. I enjoy talking about our lives, career choices, travel, and stories of growing up." During the warmer weather, you can often find Chris and Evan outdoors on the basketball court at a local park. No need for any fierce competition



*Volunteer Evan Powell (L) and Program Participant Chris Teal love staying active by shooting hoops at a local park.*

here: it's all about the one-on-one conversation while taking aim at the hoop. Explains Chris, "Staying active is important to me. I walk over two miles a day. It's great to be with someone who loves to walk like I do."

Evan enjoys the simple pleasure of Chris's company. "We don't do anything too exciting; we just hang out like any friends would – shooting hoops, grabbing a coffee, or something to eat." But the more time Evan spends with Chris, the more he learns about his older friend. "He is a fascinating guy. When he played violin with the Army Strings he got to play at the White House for the President and other foreign dignitaries!!" The experience has made a deep impression on Evan. "It made me respect older people more than I already did. I appreciate and value their wisdom."

*With your continued support, hundreds more older adults will be able to reap the health benefits of strong social connection through programs like Friendly Visiting.*



## The Power of PetPals

Research shows that the unconditional love and companionship of a pet can directly impact health by decreasing stress, lowering blood pressure, reducing loneliness, increasing feelings of social support, and boosting mood. And that's exactly why in 2003, with the love, passion, and tireless effort of Ellen Kirchheimer, FriendshipWorks launched its PetPals program – offering older adults living in facilities the chance to once again touch, cuddle, and bond with pets.



Fast forward to 2024, Emily Lewis is the PetPals Coordinator at FriendshipWorks. Drawing from her personal experience of bringing her German Shepherd to visit her grandparents who had Alzheimer's, Emily loves helping older adults experience the joy of pets. Recalls Emily, "When I brought Smudge to visit, there was an awakening in them, sparking memories and stories."

Emily recruits pets and their owners from the community for PetPals, then invites them to meet with an animal behaviorist to assess their temperament. Once they "graduate," Emily assigns the teams to visit nursing homes, assisted living residences, and senior centers in Greater Boston. "The visits bring residents out of their rooms, and they connect with each other in a group. It is also amazing to see people who are nonverbal visibly react through their facial expressions and body language," Emily says.

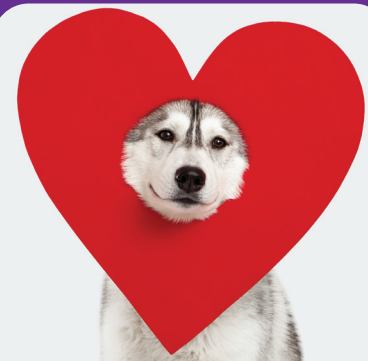
At Springhouse Senior Living in West Roxbury, Activities Director Karen Prest has witnessed these uplifting pet interactions among residents. "As soon as a PetPals pet arrives, there are instant smiles, and calm and happiness in the moment." She finds the visits most beneficial to those in memory care. "If a resident is not having a good day", Karen says, "a visit smooths things over or diffuses conflict. A resident can hang on to a positive emotion for 24-48 hours after a visit. They might not know why, but they just carry that positive mood with them."



Volunteer Laurie Arnone (L) and PetPals Coordinator, Emily Lewis with "Mr. Bean".

Volunteers like Laurie Arnone also reap the benefits of sharing their pets with others; she makes visits with her cat, Mr. Bean. "Once I retired from my medical career, I looked for a way to give back," she says. "Realizing I am owned by the most 'chill' cat ever, I chose to enroll him as a PetPals cat. I enjoy the [Springhouse] residents' response to him as well as my interactions with them. It is a win-win for all involved!"

**Over 30 Petpals' volunteer teams bring the comfort of pets to 250 elders each month. The PetPals program is offered at over 25 locations around Boston.**



**Is your pet's heart as big as yours?  
They could be our next Philanthropet!**

You're invited to join FriendshipWorks' *Philanthropets Society*, where a passion for pets meets a mission that matters – creating social connections and putting an end to elder isolation in Greater Boston. It's a new way to support our programs that bring joy and companionship to older adults and keep them connected and thriving in their communities.

### ***Don't have a pet?***

We invite you to share this opportunity with family, friends, and co-workers.

### ***Do you want to honor a beloved pet who's crossed the rainbow bridge?***

You can enroll them as a *Philanthropets Eternal Companion*.



**Scan here to learn more or visit:**  
[fw4elders.org/philanthropets](http://fw4elders.org/philanthropets)

## Bringing friendship and connection through the joy of music.

Watch our new video capturing the essence of the MusicWorks program at FriendshipWorks. Thanks to Goddard House Community Initiatives, the program is in over a dozen residential buildings in Boston. Candace Cramer of Goddard House says, *“That whole creative side of your being has to be a part of the formula to age well.”*

Scan here or visit:  
[fw4elders.org/musicworks](http://fw4elders.org/musicworks)



## Medical Escorts Make a Difference

Bonnie Astroff hadn't been to a doctor since last spring. Due to a medical condition that made her afraid of falling, she was too nervous to go alone. Searching for options, she was ecstatic to learn of FriendshipWorks. Bonnie shared, *“I was so impressed with my Medical Escort, Lia. Her goodness and sweetness made me feel calm. If I had a granddaughter, I would want her to be just like her.”*

Many older adults across Greater Boston still need help getting to their medical appointments. Contact our Medical Escort Coordinator at

(617) 482-1510  
X 126.



Lia Gowri (L) with Bonnie Astroff.

## Volunteering... It's All in the Shah Family

Ashika Shah was looking to do more in the community while she was working in Boston and applying to grad school to study occupational therapy. After searching online, she came across FriendshipWorks' Friendly Visiting program. This seemed like the perfect opportunity for Ashika and marked the beginning of the Shah family's involvement with FriendshipWorks. Ashika says, *“Helping people is in my soul.”* She and her Friendly Visiting match Ree hit it off right away.



Ree (L) with Friendly Visitor, Ashika Shah.

Ashika's twin sister Shivani accompanied her on visits with Ree, going for walks or doing errands. For Shivani and Ashika, their time with Ree filled a void – their grandparents were back in England where they grew up. Ashika says, *“It's like we were building our own family here in the states.”* Shivani took over the visits with Ree when Ashika left for grad school, and the three of them stayed connected until Ree's passing in 2020.



Two generations of volunteers: (L to R) Ashika, Shivani, and their mom Deeta.

*“We take with two hands and always have to give back equally.”*

- Deeta Shah

Read more about the Shah family's legacy:  
[fw4elders.org/40stories](http://fw4elders.org/40stories)



## Be remembered for the friends you bring together.

Join FriendshipWorks' Legacy Society today: [fw4elders.org/legacy](http://fw4elders.org/legacy)



## Cheers to 40 Years - Oh What a Night!

Long-time supporters and new friends gathered at Boston's iconic "Cheers" at the Hampshire House in Boston on November 10, 2023 to kick off our 40th Anniversary celebration. We're not sure which part of the evening was most memorable ... the magician's bedazzling sleight-of-hand tricks, a surprise appearance and congratulatory message from David (Big Papi) Ortiz, or an entire roomful of guests singing along to "You've Got a Friend" and "Stand by Me". Here's what some folks said about the event:

*"Thank you for a great evening and for all the wonderful work you do. The videos were great, the music GLORIOUS, the entertainment on top as well. And let's not forget the positively yummy food. We are so glad to be supporters of FriendshipWorks."* - Toby Axelrod & Larry Marks



**Photo Key (Left to Right)** 1. Celina Valadao and Dean Denniston Jr. 2. Emcee Jordan Rich, Paul Dutton, and Comedian Jimmy Tingle. 3. Ann Hartstein with Toby Axelrod. 4. Executive Director, Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, Cheers/Hampshire House CEO & Founder, Tom Kershaw, and Linda Roethlisberger. 5. Guests enjoying the venue's beautiful library. 6. Musical Performers Melivn Lam and Gaby Cotter. 7. Marie McManus and Board Member, Koren Iskra. 8. Members of the FriendshipWorks Programs and Development staff with Janet Seckel-Cerrotti.

## 40 Years, 40 Stories

### What brings you to FriendshipWorks?

Have a story about how FriendshipWorks has made an impact in your life? Please share it! As part of our ongoing 40th Anniversary commemoration, we're introducing a special "40 Years, 40 Stories" series on our website.

Whether you were part of FriendshipWorks' original history from 1984, or perhaps found out about our cause more recently, we're interested in hearing your story! And just for writing to us, we'll send you a commemorative thank-you note with a few snazzy FriendshipWorks stickers to decorate your favorite water bottle, laptop, or car bumper!



To be a part of FriendshipWorks' history, send your note to [Friend@fw4elders.org](mailto:Friend@fw4elders.org) with "40 Years, 40 Stories" in the subject line.



Visit this page frequently for the latest stories: [fw4elders.org/40stories](https://fw4elders.org/40stories)

We act with integrity!

We've earned a









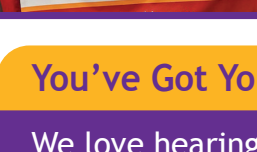
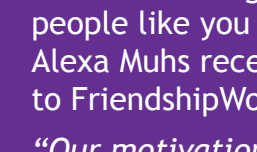
✦ **FOUR-STAR RATING** ✦

from

✦ **Charity Navigator**

# FriendshipWorks: Then and Now

Reflecting on 40 years has us feeling nostalgic and proud of all we have accomplished together. Here's a snapshot of how our nonprofit's grown and how far we've come thanks to your support!

|   | 1984  | 2024   |
|---|---|--|
|    | <b>Organization Name:</b> Match-Up Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers Program<br>1991 Incorporated as Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers | FriendshipWorks  |
|    | <b>Office location:</b> Church of the Covenant in Boston (basement office)  | 105 Chauncy Street, near Boston's Chinatown  |
|    | <b>Total Employees:</b> 2   | 14 fulltime, 2 part time   |
|   | <b>Volunteers Engaged:</b> 50   | Over 600   |
|  | <b>Neighborhoods Served:</b> Boston and Brookline   | All neighborhoods of Boston, Brookline, Newton, Somerville and Cambridge                             |
|  | <b>Number of Older Adult Program Participants:</b> 100  | Over 1,600   |
|  | <b>Programs Offered:</b> Friendly Visiting & Medical Escorts  | Friendly Visiting, Medical Escorts, Friendly Helping, Petpals, and MusicWorks                        |
|  | <b>Communications with FriendshipWorks' Supporters</b> In-person meetings, telephone (landlines) & "snail" mail                   | In-person meetings, phone & mobile phones, virtual meetings, email, texting, website, & "snail mail" |

## You've Got Your Reasons...

We love hearing about the reasons why people like you financially support our cause. Alexa Muhs recently shared what brought her to FriendshipWorks:

*"Our motivation for our donation is to support local elder care and connection. We have aging parents ourselves, and have seen how this is an area of support that is frequently overlooked. We like the services you offer, and your good reputation."*

Tell us your reasons by emailing [friend@fw4elders.org](mailto:friend@fw4elders.org)



## A Few Ways You Can Give

- Donate online at [fw4elders.org/donate](http://fw4elders.org/donate)
- Become a monthly donor (consider \$19.84 or \$40 per month to honor this special year)
- Donate your old car. For details visit, [careasy.org/nonprofit/friendshipworks](http://careasy.org/nonprofit/friendshipworks)
- Host a fundraising event
- Donate stock
- Make a gift from your will or trust

Contact **Patty Catalano, Director of Development and Communications**, to explore the best charitable giving options available to you. Call (617) 482-1510, x 124





105 Chauncy Street, Suite 801  
Boston, MA 02111



**Elderbration &  
Walk To End Elder Isolation**

**Come Elderbrate With Us on May 19!**

**Location:** Rogerson House  
434 Jamaica Way, Jamaica Plain  
9:00 a.m. - Breakfast Served  
10:00 - 12:00 p.m. Walk (optional) with  
live entertainment & raffles

**Can't be there? No worries!** You can participate by creating your own fundraising campaign for FriendshipWorks right from the convenience of your own computer, phone, or tablet!  
Need help? Contact Cody Smith at (617) 482-1510 X121.



**Scan here for details or visit: [fw4elders.org/walk](http://fw4elders.org/walk)**



**Thank you to our Sponsors:**

