

Creating Connections

Spring 2023 Newsletter

www.fw4elders.org



Carolyn & Sarah's Story - Pg. 3

Since 1984 FriendshipWorks has brought joy and companionship into the lives of older adults in greater Boston through our five core programs.

Here is an update on the work we are doing together to create connections and reduce elder isolation.

Highlights:

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Music, Minds & Hearts - Bingo! Pg. 4

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**A Message from Janet Seckel-Cerrotti
Executive Director of FriendshipWorks**



Dear Friends,

On New Year's Day, my husband Dennis and I held a brunch at our home. It was the first gathering of more than a few guests that we've had since the pandemic began. The sound of voices and laughter resounded through our small home. It was truly magnificent to feel the electricity and energy that come with being together in person - breaking bread, sharing laughter, and breathing the same air, while feeling safe.

I have had the deep pleasure of once again visiting with neighbors and friends in person. And, I hope you have too. There is no substitute for the connection you feel when you sit next to someone on the couch, take a walk with a new friend, feel a kiss on your cheek, hold someone's hand, give a hug, eat a meal, or just be quiet together in the same space. The human heart, body, and soul are created for this.

In this issue of the FriendshipWorks newsletter, we celebrate the beauty of relationships that have blossomed and deepened through in-person visits. FriendshipWorks' programming continues to create and nurture mutually beneficial friendships between older adults and volunteers all over Boston, Brookline, Newton, Somerville and Cambridge. Thanks to you, so many have the chance to get closer and find beauty, belonging, and purpose in the world.

As you, our supporters and our friends, continue to partner with us, I encourage you to cherish the human connections in your life, both old and new. May we all find nourishment in the simple joys of being together, and may our friendships continue to thrive.

Your Friend,

Janet



Janet Seckel-Cerrotti (L) and her dear friend Janet Ruboy enjoying lunch together

In the News -

The New York Times interviewed Janet, FriendshipWorks' Executive Director, highlighting the importance of medical escorts. FriendshipWorks' volunteers accompany older adults who may otherwise not get to critical appointments in hospitals or healthcare facilities all over Greater Boston. Read more at: fw4elders.org/newsroom



In the Neighborhood -



FriendshipWorks hosted Pi Day, 3.14. Attendees discussed how to further our mission and enjoyed delicious pie from Boston's Flour Bakery.



Mingling at the Friendship-On-Tap event at the Cambridge Brewing Company

In your inbox -

Make sure you are registered to receive updates from FriendshipWorks! Go to www.fw4elders.org and click on "Stay Informed".

A Healthy Dose of Friendship

On most Saturday afternoons, Carolyn Bascomb is warming up on her treadmill in her Cambridge home, waiting excitedly for her weekly visit with Sarah Klein. The two met through FriendshipWorks' Friendly Visiting program upon a recommendation from Carolyn's health counselor after Carolyn expressed that she was feeling lonely. She had been facing some health challenges, and with most of her family living in Georgia and Florida, Carolyn didn't have that support nearby. She agreed to apply, with a request to be matched with a FriendshipWorks volunteer who could help her stay more active and healthy. As luck would have it, Sarah, a health journalist and certified personal trainer, had applied as a volunteer - the perfect match!



Sarah Klein (L) and her friend Carolyn Bascomb enjoying a visit

events that are important to each of them, such as neighborhood crime, politics, and racial justice.

"I start rattling off anything that's on my mind. I can say what I have to say, and she tells me the truth," says Carolyn. "Even if we disagree, we don't get upset. We find we have a lot in common!"

And the feeling is mutual. Sarah learns from Carolyn's wisdom and life experiences. "She has gone through so many situations in her life that I haven't lived yet," Sarah shares. "Carolyn is truly a friend. From visit to visit, it feels like one big conversation."

The FriendshipWorks Friendly Visiting program is able to create meaningful friendships that enrich the lives of both volunteers and recipients. With your help, hundreds more will reap the health benefits of strong social connections.



"Sarah is just a sweet young lady. She's like a ray of sunshine I look forward to seeing every week."

- Carolyn Bascomb

When Sarah moved back to Boston to be closer to family in 2020 during the pandemic, she too found herself feeling isolated. Becoming a Friendly Visitor with FriendshipWorks, she says, gave her the opportunity to

reconnect with others and get involved in the community. "From my family and upbringing, I was taught that we should all leave the world better than we found it," Sarah explains. "I wanted to use my knowledge of health to improve the life experience of others in my community, especially those feeling isolated in different ways."

Their friendship goes beyond just exercising. They enjoy coloring together, and share meaningful conversations about issues and

MusicWorks is good for the mind, body, and soul.

Research has shown that listening to music can reduce anxiety, blood pressure, and pain. It can also improve sleep quality, mood, mental alertness, and memory. But you don't have to be a scientist to see the positive impact music has on older adults when they experience the MusicWorks program from FriendshipWorks.



Moving to the music

Presented in partnership with Goddard House Community Initiatives, MusicWorks' "participatory" approach helps older adults socialize, move, and engage with their neighbors through music, singing, dancing, and playing instruments. The group sessions held in elder residential buildings in Boston feature guest musicians who

offer vibrant and diverse musical performances reflective of the residents' culture, bringing a sense of comfort, trust, and community.

One participant says that taking part in a MusicWorks session is an opportunity to make authentic and meaningful human-to-human connections. "I wouldn't even come out of my apartment if it wasn't for MusicWorks. I feel a difference in myself when I attend a program, and I even sleep better that night."

As Program Manager, Safiya Leslie is always looking for ways to evolve MusicWorks and create activities that foster togetherness and fun. She recently introduced "music bingo", a

spinoff of the classic game where players listen to music clips and mark off the corresponding song titles (instead of Bingo numbers) on their cards. Says Safiya, "I love when I see participants get a boost in confidence when they recall the title of an old song. It helps them overcome doubts they had about their own memory."

Research suggests that playing music or singing together brings about social closeness through the release of endorphins too, and thanks to MusicWorks, residents all over Boston are enjoying numerous benefits to the mind, body, and soul.

While playing a round of love-song-themed music bingo on Valentine's Day, a participant tells Safiya, "I might not know the song by the title, but I love listening and singing along to the tunes of my early years and learning new songs at the same time."

To learn more about MusicWorks visit: fw4elders.org/musicworks



Enjoying music bingo



Congratulations to MusicWorks' Manager, Safiya Leslie, City of Boston's Extraordinary Women 2023 honoree!

The Pure Joy of PetPals

"The residents of Hale House thoroughly enjoy their PetPal visits. The dogs provide a unique opportunity for the older adults to give and receive affection. The love of a dog is ageless, timeless, and always brightens their day".

- Catherine Logan, Activities Director, Hale Barnard

Learn more about our PetPals program: fw4elders.org/petpals



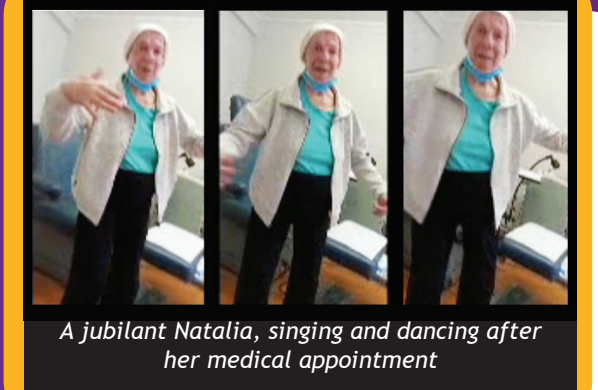
Hale House Resident Elizabeth Leavitt with "Ollie"

Photo Credit: John Deputy

Medical Escorts Make a Difference

Natalia Turbino is singing and dancing with joy because FriendshipWorks' Medical Escort, Kelley, made getting to and from her medical appointment easy and fun. For Natalia's daughter Elena, who lives a great distance away, she is comforted to know that FriendshipWorks is there to assist her mother when needed.

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.



A jubilant Natalia, singing and dancing after her medical appointment

Friendly Helping: Bridging the Gap Between Generations

Isabella Hayes has always enjoyed socializing with older adults but never anticipated making such a strong connection with a stranger so quickly - until she met Diane Daria. As a Friendly Helping volunteer with FriendshipWorks, Isabella was assigned to assist with a few simple tasks around Diane's apartment such as organizing her closet, and decluttering that hard-to-reach space on top of the refrigerator.

On one visit, the two sat down together to sort, count, and roll coins, which Diane planned to later donate to a local animal shelter. As their conversation turned to animals, including the many over the years Diane had rescued, it was clear they shared a love of pets. Isabella felt an even deeper appreciation for Diane upon learning that she adopted her beloved dog, "Peanut", from a neighbor who could no longer care for him.

Isabella loves learning from Diane's stories and life experiences, admiring her "go-getter" personality, and how she stays active and engaged. Though there are 55 years between the two, the age gap seems to disappear. "We have a tendency to connect with people our own age," says Isabella. "There is so much value in getting to know an older person. We have more in common than we think."



Friendly Helping volunteer Isabella (L) with Diane and "Peanut"

"There is so much value in getting to know an older person. We have more in common than we think."

- Isabella Hayes

Isabella was matched with FriendshipWorks through the College of Social Innovation fellowship program and the University of Vermont where she is pursuing a degree in public health. "I want to learn how a nonprofit works. FriendshipWorks is the perfect fit. I am very close to my grandparents, and seeing so many older people in the hospital where I work, I feel connected to the mission."

With the Friendly Helping tasks completed, Diane and Isabella are still in touch - they attended a talent show together and are planning a game night soon. "I treasure this experience," Isabella says of her connection with Diane. "It will stay with me forever."

Feeling the Pinch? Here's how you can still give generously to FriendshipWorks!

You don't have to be wealthy to be charitable. Philanthropy means making a difference with what you have presently and in the future. Here are ways you can give generously to FriendshipWorks no matter your net worth.

Give monthly: If you're used to making an annual gift of \$1,000 but don't want to part with the funds all at once, consider setting up a recurring gift (monthly) through FriendshipWorks' Best Funding Friend (BFF) program. Giving a smaller amount each month will feel more palatable, allowing you to "set it and forget it." Select "Make This a Monthly Payment" at check-out when you visit fw4elders.org/donate

Donate your old car: FriendshipWorks now offers a vehicle donation program through a third-party company called CARS Partners. You make the call, and they arrange the tow at your convenience with no charge to you! The company then sells the car at auction, and FriendshipWorks receives a donation based on your car's value (less the costs of towing, etc.) Visit careasy.org/nonprofit/friendshipworks

Fundraise for us: Looking to host a golf tournament, bingo night, pet fashion show, or just a casual gathering with friends to raise funds for our mission? We're happy to help you get started with a customized website page! With the click of a button, you can easily invite your family, friends, coworkers, college alum etc. to attend or make an online donation. For more information, contact our Development Associate at (617) 482-1510 X 121.

Donate stock: Did you know that you can donate appreciated stock that you have held for more than one year to FriendshipWorks and:

- Avoid Capital Gains Tax (usually 18.8% - 40%)
- Deduct the fair market value (FMV) no matter your cost basis
- Make a bigger impact to our bottom line since the IRS won't be keeping any of the proceeds

Make a gift from your will or trust: These gifts are known as "planned gifts" or "legacy gifts", and allow you to shape the future of FriendshipWorks through your charitable wishes. (Don't let the commonly used term "estate giving" throw you off; it simply refers to the division and inheritance of your personal assets.) Everyone can benefit from having a will to carry out their wishes, and designating a planned gift "bequest" to FriendshipWorks takes just minutes. And when you do, you'll automatically become a member of our **Legacy Society**. Visit fw4elders.org/legacy to learn more.

Ask Your Employer

Many companies offer corporate giving programs and often match their employees' charitable donations. Samantha Ghika recommended FriendshipWorks to her company during their "Season of Giving" and scored a gift from ALKU in Andover, MA.



Why FriendshipWorks Is Important To Me:

"I was lucky enough to have grandparents until I was 30 years old and wanted to give in order to help end elder isolation. Nobody deserves to be alone and the simple act of a visit, reading a book, or going for a walk, can really go a long way."

- Samantha Ghika

Kudos Corner: Aaron Weinberger, Friendly Visiting Volunteer

Aaron Weinberger is one of FriendshipWorks' Friendly Visiting volunteers and over the past several years has been matched four times with older men who each faced physical, mental, or cognitive challenges. In June 2019, Aaron was matched with Mark,* who lived alone in a tiny studio apartment in the Back Bay, without the support of family and friends in the Boston area.

When they first met, Aaron noticed that Mark was down and lonely and needed someone to talk to. He thought, "I could be that someone." Unfortunately, it soon was clear that the 78-year-old was in need of serious help. In a deep depression and at risk of losing his job, basic tasks like paying bills and getting groceries had become so overwhelming that he simply stopped doing them. At first, weekly visits felt productive, as tasks were completed: fridge stocked, bills paid, sheets changed, laundry cleaned. Then one Saturday in 2020, Aaron arrived to find Mark in complete crisis. Aaron recalls, "He'd been in bed all week. He hadn't eaten. He hadn't bathed. And he was shaking and disoriented."

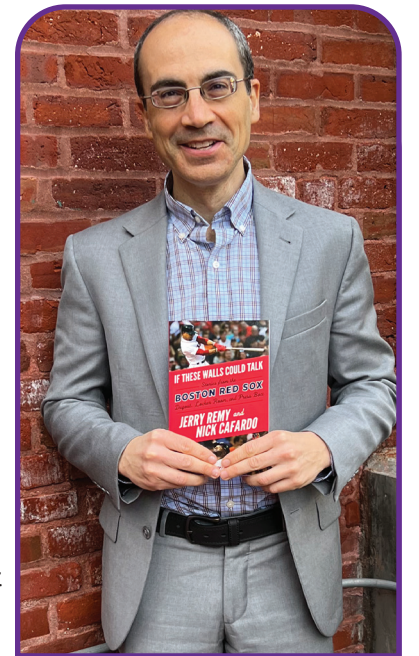
It's difficult to think about what might have happened next to Mark, without FriendshipWorks and without being matched to a caring and compassionate friend like Aaron. Over the next

two years, Aaron accompanied him on a journey. Much more than a Friendly Visitor, he became a trusted confidant and caring advocate as Mark went to Mass General Hospital for care, to the state retirement office to officially retire, into assisted living during a pandemic, and through the onset of dementia and hallucinations. When Mark eventually moved back to his hometown of Traverse City, MI to be near a childhood friend and enter memory care, it was Aaron who accompanied him.

The two friends still connect by phone. Aaron cherishes a gift Mark once gave him, a book about Aaron's beloved Red Sox. It's the inscription from Mark that means the most, "Aaron, thank you for bringing me back to life!!"

For Aaron's full story visit fw4elders.org/ourstories

* Mark is a pseudonym.



Aaron Weinberger with the gift from his friend Mark

"There are some who bring a light so great to the world that even after they're gone, their light remains."

- Unknown

In Memoriam

FriendshipWorks remembers three fabulous women who made a lasting impact through their gifts of volunteering, financial support, advocacy, and friendship.

Ellie Feldman - With FriendshipWorks since inception in 1984, organized and chaired many early fundraising events, engaging her friends as committee members and volunteers (June 2022 at age 81)

Arlene Weintraub - Friend and supporter for over 20 years (December 2022 at age 90)

Constance (Connie) White - Long time Medical Escort volunteer and friend, FriendshipWorks' 2009 David Libby Awardee (March 2023 at age 99)



FriendshipWorks

Ending Elder Isolation. Creating Connections.

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[Formal Greeting]
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[City], [State] [Zip Code]



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**Elderbration &
Walk To End Elder Isolation**

Help us raise funds to provide our critical programming that brings joy and companionship to isolated elders all over Greater Boston - FREE OF CHARGE.

Enjoy food, live music, cultural performances and fun! Join us as an individual walker or team. Breakfast starts at 9:00 a.m. Bring the family!



Scan Here
To Register

Can't be there?
You can still support us.
Donate today!

Visit: fw4elders.org/walk



**Our Biggest
Community Event
of the Year!**

**Sunday
May 21, 2023
at Jamaica Pond**