

FriendshipWorks Awarded \$175,000 Grant from Point32Health Foundation

Two-year grant will support critical programs to reduce elder isolation throughout Greater Boston



For Immediate Release:

Boston (January 20, 2023) - FriendshipWorks (www.fw4elders.org) has announced its newest strategic partnership with Point32Health Foundation, which has pledged a two-year grant of \$175,000 to the nonprofit in support of its programming aimed at reducing social isolation among older adults in Greater Boston.

“We all experienced isolation during this pandemic, but likely not as profoundly as some older adults,” said Nora Moreno Cargie, president of Point32Health Foundation and vice president of Corporate Citizenship at Point32Health. “FriendshipWorks has a vital role in connecting older adults to community volunteers to reduce social isolation, improve health and quality of life, and preserve dignity. Their programs build meaningful connections and create opportunities for older people to thrive and be included.”

Building on the legacy of service and giving, established by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation and Tufts Health Plan Foundation, Point32Health Foundation is working with communities to support, advocate and advance healthier lives for everyone. The Foundation’s grant award to FriendshipWorks follows a series of strategic investments in community organizations and nonprofits to advance systems-level change to remove barriers responsible for inequities in New England communities.

“We’re pleased that Point32Health Foundation is taking such an active role in addressing social

determinants of health at the community level and is choosing to work with FriendshipWorks to improve health outcomes for older adults all over Boston,” says Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, FriendshipWorks’ Executive Director. “The more opportunities FriendshipWorks has to create strategic partnerships with agents of the healthcare system like Point32Foundation, and other stakeholders willing to make a commitment to our cause, the closer we will be to affecting real systemic change toward ending elder isolation.”

Health Risks Associated with Social Isolation

According to the National Institute on Aging, the health risks of prolonged isolation are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Social isolation and loneliness, regarded as social determinants of health (SDoH), have even been estimated to shorten a person's life span by as many as 15 years. Loneliness affects more than one-third of American adults, with particular likelihood among individuals without a spouse, partner, or children, and those facing challenging life circumstances such as the loss of a loved one, and chronic or catastrophic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, mental illness or cancer. Its known negative effects on mental health include worsening depression, anxiety, mood disorders and cognitive decline, and on physical health, higher rates of cardiovascular impairment, chronic pain, and fatigue.

“The pandemic did not invent social isolation - however, it did underscore the costs of human loneliness, particularly for older adults, and reinforced the need for interventions like FriendshipWorks,” says Seckel-Cerrotti. “The work we do to create and foster long-term human connections between elders and volunteers in their communities has proven to be beneficial to the heart, mind, body, and soul. Beyond health and wellness, there are societal and economic benefits for all in the way of reduced hospital visits and subsequent lower healthcare costs. Aligning our mission with Point32Health Foundation is a win-win partnership all around.”

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About FriendshipWorks:

Founded in 1984, the mission of [FriendshipWorks](#) is to reduce social isolation, enhance the quality of life, and preserve the dignity of older adults in Greater Boston. FriendshipWorks accomplishes this by recruiting and training volunteers of all ages, faiths, and backgrounds who provide friendship, advocacy, education, assistance, and emotional support. In response to the growing needs of older adults, FriendshipWorks now runs five core programs: Friendly Visiting, Medical Escorts, Friendly Helpers, PetPals, and MusicWorks. All programs are offered at no cost to those over 60 years of age (or over 55 for those with vision or hearing impairments). The nonprofit “matches” and manages over 540 volunteers (ages 18-88) who speak over 20 different languages to deliver highly personalized, one-on-one programming with elders in every neighborhood of Boston, as well as Brookline, Newton, Somerville and Cambridge.

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About Point32Health Foundation

Building on values of service and giving, [Point32Health Foundation](#) works with communities to support, advocate and advance healthier lives for everyone. Point32Health Foundation, formed by the combination of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation and Tufts Health Plan Foundation, advances equity-focused solutions in healthy aging, access to healthy food and behavioral health in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. Follow us on [Facebook](#).