



Why We Volunteer and Why It Matters

Volunteering is often described as being a distinctively American social characteristic. Up to one-quarter of Americans give their time to volunteer, helping organizations to extend their reach, deliver more services, and help contribute billions of dollars to the economy each year. Of course, volunteering has a wider value, not measured in dollars, and researchers have become increasingly interested in the impact of voluntarism on individuals and communities, such as:

- Improved mental well-being that comes with volunteering, shown in the research to include higher levels of happiness, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and lower levels of depression and psychological distress.
- Beneficial effects on physical health. This is particularly true for older volunteers where voluntarism is associated with a reduced incidence of depression and risk of hypertension, a slower pace of functional and cognitive decline, as well as delayed mortality.
- There are a variety of reasons why people decide to volunteer, and while the personal benefits may be appreciated, they are not necessarily at the top of the list! For the most part, volunteers express a desire to help other people or to “give something back.”



- The impact on people receiving volunteer charitable services depends to a large extent on the type of service being received, but here again:
- Research has shown a range of potential benefits at the individual level, including increased social contact and enhanced feelings of mental and physical well-being and health.

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High Tech/High Touch Proposal Wins Award

On December 17 at MIT, a group of industry, academic and government partners affiliated with Governor Baker’s Council to Address Aging announced the winners of the “In Good Company: The 2018 Optimal Aging Challenge.” With competition from 11 different countries, FriendshipWorks was one of only four recipients! The award came as the result of a global competition designed to identify breakthrough solutions to social isolation and loneliness among older adults. Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti received the award for our proposal, “High Tech/High Touch,” combining the idea of using technically skilled volunteers to assist elders make life-enhancing connections through technology.



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From Janet Seckel-Cerrotti

Executive Director

In the News

In this issue, we give honor and recognition to all of our volunteers — without whom

new friendships would not blossom, medical procedures would not occur, tasks would not be completed, and music would not be heard or played. In truth, we honor and recognize our volunteers because, without them, there would be no FriendshipWorks.

To not be alone is exactly why FriendshipWorks was founded 35 years ago, and why it is important that we remain strong today and for tomorrow. When the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation piloted 25 interfaith coalitions 35 years ago, they wanted to see if volunteers could play a role similar to that of family and friends for persons who were aging in place alone or with very few social connections. Society was becoming more mobile, and while parents and grandparents were generally staying in place, young adults were moving away from home neighborhoods due to opportunities elsewhere in the country and abroad.

For thousands of older adults over the last 35 years, FriendshipWorks volunteers have been life-affirming and, literally, sometimes life-saving. And, of course, the volunteers — men and women of all ages and backgrounds — have had their lives enriched as well. If you volunteer, with us or anywhere, we salute you; by sharing a bit of yourself, you are changing lives — including your own.

Over the last three decades it has become clear that FriendshipWorks volunteers bring connection and meaning to older adults. With their friendship and sometimes that of a pet, they bring the hope of possibilities through physical, emotional, technological, and informational support. Our volunteers inspire us to be our best selves, to give and receive, to connect to our humanity and to that of another. Through visits and an array of support, FriendshipWorks volunteers bring caring, love, hope, and joy. They remind us that we are not alone, and they help us to rediscover ourselves.

We all need people in our lives, throughout our lives, but finding the right match becomes more difficult due to the challenges of ageism, illness, mobility, or sensory loss. So it is through you, strangers who become friends and true neighbors, that FriendshipWorks helps change the lives of others and thus changes the world.

In Friendship,

Janet Seckel-Cerrotti

- Appeared on *New England Cable News* with Sue O'Donnell, addressing elder isolation in Greater Boston.
- Interviewed about elder isolation on the nationally syndicated radio program the *Radio Health Journal* with Reed Pence.
- Participated in a closed-door strategy session entitled *The Global Future of the Ageing R&D and Innovation Ecosystem 2019*, by invitation of the UK Science & Innovation Network. She was the only invitee not from a government agency, academic institution, or the business community.
- Presented at the *American Society on Aging* conference in New Orleans, entitled: *Aging Alone in America*.
- Interviewed by Channel 5 anchor and *5 For Good* reporter Erika Tarantal for a program on social isolation among elders in Boston. Ms. Tarantal also interviewed volunteer Ashika Shah and her match Ree Clarke.
- Interviewed by *Fenway News* reporter Mary Ann Brogan who wrote an article entitled *Volunteer-Driven FriendshipWorks Supports Seniors, Enriches Lives*.
- A keynote speaker at a seminar in Pennsylvania speaking on elder isolation and FriendshipWorks to help social service agencies develop strategies for reducing elder isolation, including expanding a Friendly Visiting program. While there, she was interviewed on *WLTV, PBS39, Bethlehem, PA*.
- Interviewed by Jordan Rich on *WBZ NewsRadio*.

Why We Volunteer and Why It Matters *continued*

- Volunteers are strengthening communities by creating opportunities for positive social exchanges, social integration, connections, and networks of social support, particularly important for older individuals who are at greater risk of losing critical parts of their social ties as they age.
- Volunteering reduces social isolation and loneliness, which are well established as a significant threat to the mental and physical health of the elderly, leading to low

self-esteem and depression, risk of malnutrition, higher levels of cognitive and physical disability, and increased mortality.

To all who volunteer for FriendshipWorks, you are the heart and soul of our organization! Please encourage your friends and family to volunteer with you. You will not only be helping an elder, you will be helping your loved ones live a happier and healthier life.

~ Sarah Metcalf

Researched references to the above information can be obtained by writing cwaybright@fw4elders.org

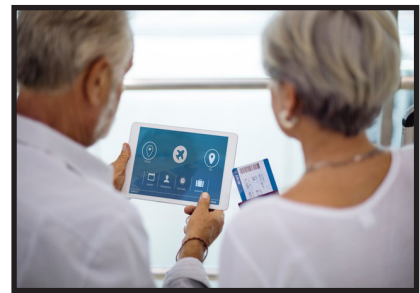
FriendshipWorks Wins Award *continued*

High Tech/High Touch offers many possibilities for increasing social connectedness such as learning to Skype with family, face chatting with friends, recording life stories for posterity, or taking online courses — all with the aid of a volunteer. Assistive technology, built into computers and tablets, can also help reduce social isolation for people with low vision.

Volunteers can help create the trust and confidence for older adults as they learn the skills to connect with a wider community.

“Helping people in this way is just another opportunity to

reach out and to make or deepen a connection with someone,” Janet explains. “Everything we do and every service we provide is designed to connect



people and reduce isolation. For us, the High Tech is the means to creating that personal High Touch, and the High Touch is the means to the High Tech!”

Gaining Far More Than Just a Good Feeling

“Visiting with Barbara has been a great experience. Her late husband was an engineer, and I’m currently pursuing my PhD in engineering. Barbara tells me many stories from her husband’s career, so I’ve learned a lot about my own field from hearing about his experiences. She’s constantly encouraging me. Barbara is an avid reader, and has shared many books and articles with me that we can talk about together. I’m also relatively new to the Boston area, and Barbara has given me wonderful recommendations on places to go to get a sense of New England. I visited Walden Pond recently at her recommendation and loved it!”



-Peng Lin, Friendly Visiting volunteer

“When I know we are on our way to see my elder friends (I can tell the difference between a car ride to the vet and a ride to see my elder friends), I get so excited! Each person is always happy to see me; they always tell me how beautiful I am and they give the best pets and scratches, right behind my ears. There’s one lady who always tells me about the dog friend she used to have growing up, and one gentleman who doesn’t say much, but whose eyes light up when he sees me coming. I’m so glad my human mom, Diane, brings me here. She smiles the whole time, too! I feel so special when I’m visiting with my elder friends. When we leave, my mom tells me what a good job I’ve done! I feel like the best canine in town.”



-Chloe, PetPals canine volunteer and her human, Diane MacMillan

Continued on page 5

Children and Elders Find Common Voice in Brighton

Take four to five elder volunteers, fold in six to eight elementary-aged students, stir regularly for five Saturday mornings, and you have a wonderful recipe for fun, friendship, and learning.



In partnership with the Presentation School Foundation Community Center in Brighton, FriendshipWorks hosted a 5-week Intergenerational Literacy Program.

Using a curriculum provided by Bridges Together, a leader in intergenerational programming, our younger and older participants engaged in literacy activities (reading together and writing reflections in journals) and creative/artistic activities.

Many students in our local community do not have older adults in their lives with whom to build relationships. By participating in this program, the older adult volunteers helped make an impact on the life of each student, not only related to literacy, but also in helping the students build more positive views of older adults and of aging in general. New friendships were also forged between the volunteers, therein addressing the heart of the FriendshipWorks mission: preventing social isolation for older adults.

“The older adult volunteers helped make an impact on the life of each student”

At the conclusion of our final group, it was clear that strong bonds had been formed within the group.

Departing students said they wanted their new elder friends to join their families, and the volunteers beamed with pride, cherishing these new connections and their ability to make a difference.

FriendshipWorks and Newton Partner on Program

Last year, representatives from the town of Newton approached FriendshipWorks for assistance, acknowledging the need to address the town’s growing problem of elder isolation and its negative effects. Twenty percent of Newton’s population is over 60, with nearly 19% of them aged 85 or older.

As the result, in January FriendshipWorks initiated a pilot program with the city of Newton with the goal of matching an initial ten elders with volunteers for Friendly Visits.



Samantha Cowan, FriendshipWorks Allston/Brighton Program Director & Newton Senior Center Volunteer Coordinator, Julie Joy.

Samantha Cowan, FriendshipWorks Allston/Brighton Program Director, teamed up with Newton Senior Center Volunteer Coordinator Julie Joy to begin recruiting volunteer visitors and reviewing referrals for potential matches.

They have also collaborated on creating outreach flyers for the Senior Center. The initial program goal was to create ten matches by the end of June.

So successful were the first six months that the program has been extended.

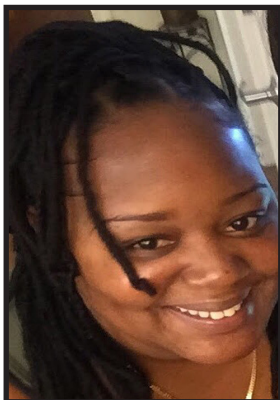
“We were delighted when Newton asked us to be their partner,” commented Janet Seckel-Cerrotti. “Newton’s request signaled to us that there is growing recognition of this problem in communities beyond Boston, and we are eager to help,” she added.

There’s been a great response both from individuals interested in volunteering and those who would like someone to visit with them. “Folks really seem to be having a great time together so far,” says Cowan.

“We were delighted when Newton asked us to be their partner”

“Each match is a little different. Some are reading together and sharing about family histories; some go on walks or visit a local store together; others are finding connection simply in sharing about how their weeks have been. These seem like the start of some great friendships!”

Gaining Far More Than Just a Good Feeling *continued*



“When I started volunteering with FriendshipWorks years ago, working with elders in a professional capacity was simply not on my radar. However, as Natalie and I got to know each other through Friendly Visiting, I found myself really inspired.

I now have a Masters in Mental Health Counseling, and my volunteering experience has really opened me up to the idea of working with older adults as

a part of my professional career. Not to mention, Natalie is always finding ways to encourage me. There were lots of times that I felt discouraged in my degree program, and Natalie (who has a background as a school teacher) always knew what to say to help keep me going!”

-Stephanie Gray, Friendly Visiting volunteer

“I had a Medical Escort situation where absolutely everything went wrong. It was clear to me that I just had to figure out how to best get through the experience. Realizing at one point that my elder friend could not possibly have managed on her own helped recognize how vulnerable people can be, and how impersonal and unhelpful institutions and services can be. I knew it was important I had been there. I felt like a warrior for my elder!”

-Barbara Simkowski, Medical Escort volunteer



“My normal coffee hour gets about 10-12 residents, MusicWorks gets close to 30! Those additional folks are people who do not come down for any activity— except for MusicWorks. This program has a profound impact on their lives. People talk to other residents they would never interact with otherwise; we are creating deep connections through this program.”

-Patricia Probst | Resident Services Coordinator, Council Tower participating in MusicWorks

“I knew it was important I had been there. I felt like a warrior for my elder!”

The gift of time, talent, and energy is always needed at FriendshipWorks — becoming a volunteer is one of the most rewarding things you can do.



How do **YOU** want to **help an elder** in need?

Become a:

Friendly Visitor

Medical Escort

Friendly Helper

La Cadena de Amistad Spanish-speaking Volunteer

Committee or Board Member

PetPals Volunteer

MusicWorks Performer

For more information, please visit: www.fw4elders.org or call 617-482-1510.

FriendshipWorks' Fourth Annual Walk

*Photographers: Rachel Liberty,
Emma Weizenbaum, David
Helm, and Greg A. Ciccarelli*



The Walk to End Elder Isolation

Hundreds of Bostonians raised funds and awareness about social isolation among Boston's elders at May's Walk to End Elder Isolation in Jamaica Plain. In fact, to date the 4th annual Walk has raised \$76,000 and counting! Serenaded by the JP Honk Band, the Walk was attended by a record 200 people and 24 pets, too!

Boston City Councilor Matt O'Malley, and MA Acting Secretary of Elder Affairs Robin Lipson kicked off the Walk. This purpose of the Walk is to bring together a diverse group of people of all ages, backgrounds, and faiths to elevate the issue of elder social isolation. The critical mission of FriendshipWorks makes a difference in the lives of Elders who may not have a strong support system in their lives.

Be sure to **SAVE THE DATE** for next year's 5th annual Walk to End Elder Isolation on **Sunday, May 17, 2020**.

The David Libby Award in Service to Elders

Commissioner Emily Shea, Age Strong Commission opened the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon following the Walk. David Libby was a FriendshipWorks volunteer who dedicated thousands of hours to assisting elders from 1988 until his death in 1995. His namesake award is given annually to honor an extraordinary volunteer who exemplifies his selflessness, passion, and concern for elders.



Manuel Gomez, David Libby Award recipient, smiles with (left to right) Director of Programs Caity Axelrod-McLeod; Program Director, La Cadena de Amistad, Miriam Feliciano; and Bilingual Program Coordinator Carolina Martinez.

Mr. Gomez received his award during the well-attended Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon that immediately followed the Walk.

Thanking Our Walk Sponsors



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Our Journey with FriendshipWorks



Ruth & Arvin Grabel reflect on their journey with FriendshipWorks

Ruth and Arvin Grabel recently shared their thoughts about the impact FriendshipWorks has had on their participation and charitable giving decisions.

How did you learn about FriendshipWorks and what about the mission captured your interest?

Ruth: I learned about FriendshipWorks through my work in a variety of elder service programs. In the course of that work, I met Janet and began to both understand the true extent of the problems older people face when socially isolated and how the programs of FriendshipWorks successfully address those problems. This understanding only increased when as I served on the Board.

Arvin: As Ruth became more involved, I became an enthusiastic supporter as well. I continually gained a better understanding of how social isolation affects older people and the impact these programs have.

"I continually gained a better understanding of how social isolation affects older people and the impact these programs have."

Your interest in FriendshipWorks deepened into a serious financial commitment. What transpired?

As our involvement has grown over the years, we have also noted the growth of research on social isolation in older adults, research that has reinforced our commitment as the FriendshipWorks staff and volunteers develop and carry out the organization's varied programs. We have also seen how the organization has been in the forefront of services combating social isolation and the national recognition earned for this leadership role. This, in turn, has strengthened our desire to support FriendshipWorks financially and to help promote it wherever possible.

How has FriendshipWorks grown as a community resource, and to what would you attribute that?

Under Janet's thoughtful and caring leadership, we have watched FriendshipWorks grow tremendously over the years, including a doubling in staff, the establishment of Boston neighborhood offices and beyond, and the growth in both local and national recognition. We have also seen growth in the numbers of matches and the addition of programs, like the Low-Vision initiative and MusicWorks. During that growth, however, commitment and dedication to the mission and to the older adults we serve has not wavered.

How has your involvement with FriendshipWorks changed or enhanced your life?

Ruth: My board service has been a highpoint of my life; it has been such a pleasure to work with such a dedicated group of Board, staff, volunteers, and older adults for so many years — and to see that commitment sustained over those years. It has also been a pleasure to promote FriendshipWorks whenever I can and to tell the story of what we do and its importance. Social isolation is currently receiving more attention, but its devastating impact is still not widely understood — which in turn affects FriendshipWorks' fundraising capacity.

Arvin: Over these years, I too have felt it to be a special part of my life and one that has enhanced my understanding of the complexity of social isolation in older adults and the range of programs needed to address it.

Helping Hand Giving Day

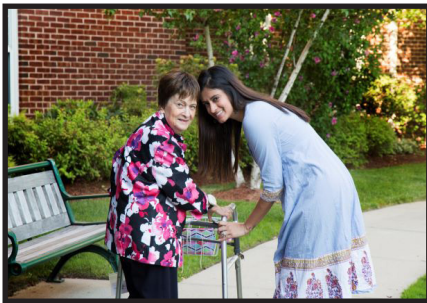
Friday, June 28, 2019

One-Day Goal: \$5,000

FriendshipWorks offers one-on-one friendly visits, escorts to medical appointments, pet visits, and other individual and group initiatives designed to provide the personal touch that isolated elders need. We are able to offer all of these important and live-saving programs free of charge because of your financial support.

Before our fiscal year ends on *June 30, 2019*, please sustain our efforts to end elder isolation with a special "Helping Hand" gift. Your generosity on this special day will help train and match new volunteers with elders needing a friend. Many people make a gift in honor or in memory of someone special; who would you like to honor through your "Helping Hand" gift this year?

Please visit www.fw4elders.org and click **DONATE**



Recurring Giving Program

Join FriendshipWorks' effort to end elder isolation and create community connections by supporting the programs and initiatives focused on caring for the generations that cared for us.

Best Funding Friend (BFF) combines the ease of donating (monthly or quarterly) with the satisfaction of making a meaningful impact in our service to elders!

Become a FriendshipWorks BFF at our website, www.fw4elders.org or call 617-482-1510 x145.

Giving Options That Benefit You and FriendshipWorks

You can make an impact on FriendshipWorks' mission to end elder isolation through any of these easy and tax-efficient giving options:

* Donor-Advised Funds (DAF)

Maximize your impact on enhancing the quality of lives of elders — your institutional fund sponsor handles all record-keeping, disbursements, and tax receipts.

* Publicly Traded Stock and Securities

Make a gift of publicly traded securities, such as stock, bonds, and mutual funds, to support FriendshipWorks. You can avoid capital gains tax on the appreciation of your stock, as well as receive an income tax deduction.

* Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs)

Make a tax-free gift to FriendshipWorks using your qualified IRA retirement fund. If you or a family member are age 70½ or older with an IRA, you can transfer a life-changing gift directly to FriendshipWorks without incurring tax consequences. This gift may also satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD).

Have Touched Our Lives

life-changing support to isolated elders. We wholeheartedly thank our generous donors who make this possible.

From

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Maureen Timmons	Tim Rupert
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Serena Hartz	Howard Lockwood
Alma Berson and Bob Malster	Carl Kanter
Suzanne Kinsman	Dorothy McGrath
Laurena Lyons	Lawrence & Bernadette MacDougall
Brenda Gonzalez	Nanny & Grampy
Ellie Feldman	George Nemetz's brother
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Daniela Velasquez	My grandmother Ruby
Scott Rutledge	Paul Rutledge Sr. & Bob & Irene Simington
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Songdahl III, of Norwell and Rockland-"Jay"	
The Cambridge Homes	Laura Steinman's pet
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Curtis Smith	Walter
Clare Wohlgermuth	Thomas J Wohlgermuth
Clare Wohlgermuth	Thomas J Wohlgermuth

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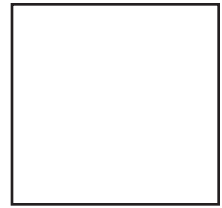
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Helen and Tom Daley	Olga & Michael Daley
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Julie and John Lindstedt	our beloved Doty

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