



## A Vital No-Cost Service That Can Extend Lives

For an older adult, the inability to keep a medical appointment can be a matter of life and death. Unassisted, it can also be a tiring, confusing, and frightening experience for an elder to navigate the necessary travel and decision-making without a helping hand. An essential service of FriendshipWorks is our Medical Escort program, which provides trained volunteers to accompany elders to medical appointments and back. These special volunteers provide companionship, direction, and other personalized support, vital for the safe and timely arrival at all appointments.

Age-related impairments, such as vision loss, hearing loss, cognitive decline, or mobility issues can make it difficult for elders to access healthcare. In one study,



Photographer: Gail Rothenberg

elderly patients missed 30% of scheduled appointments.<sup>1</sup> These missed appointments are costly for medical institutions, and can lead to disease progression and a lack of care for elders.

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## Opening a Door to Understanding

*By Barbara Simkowski, Medical Escort Volunteer*

Recently, I was asked to do a medical escort for a lady living in an assisted living facility in Roxbury. Arriving two hours early, I checked in at the front desk, said I was headed out to breakfast and would return, when they grabbed me back. “Your elder is waiting already, since she has an earlier appointment that we just heard about,” they said.



Photographer: Meri Bond

I turned around and saw her waiting patiently, and I joined her. The car company never came in time for that earlier appointment. We wound up at the hospital 90 minutes too early for the second one.

The car company was only one of many problems that day, which turned out to be both the most difficult and the most instructive escort I have had thus far at FriendshipWorks. After waiting for cars that didn't come, and doctors who were hopelessly behind, upon realizing that my elder could not negotiate any of these problems on her own, I was full of thoughts about what this entire experience had meant.

**The importance of someone being there with her came through very clearly. My job, that day, was keeping her moving past the hitches we faced, keeping her calm, and passing the time with her in some manner that seemed relatively normal.**

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

We are in the season of abundance in a land of abundance, full of theaters and schools, medical facilities, people of all nationalities, vibrant crisp energy and air. We are in the season of fall harvests, colors and foods, and are inching towards the gift-giving season soon to come. There is so much to be thankful for.

For those who are blessed with financial, physical and emotional health there are so many choices – whether to stay cozy at home or go out for a walk, to read a book or watch a movie, to be alone or with friends and family, or to eat out.

But for those whose health, mobility, hearing and/or vision are compromised, these simple choices may not exist, especially if they are alone. They often do not have access to the abundance.

Without the mobility to get around it's hard to meet new people, access the arts, stores, and nature.

*As this newsletter highlights, the challenge of navigating medical care can be daunting even in this renowned medical mecca.*

The reasons vary but are mostly due to a lack of foresight in creating a society that works for us as we age. Physical or emotional frailty, be it mobility, hearing or vision issues, and/or fear and anxiety, can make one very alone in the midst of abundance.

It is really only because of you, our donors and volunteers, that many elders are able to access the healthcare system.

*Having someone by their side for physical, emotional, and logistical support makes a major difference in receiving care.*

As you read this newsletter, I hope you feel proud of the difference you are making for elders in our community. Because of you and your generosity, many elders have the opportunity to make a new friend, get out and take walks, see the sights, listen to and make music, have pets to visit with them, have someone to share a meal, and even participate in the arts.

This fall, some of FriendshipWorks' matches will get outside and see the beautiful foliage that is so special in New England. They may have a holiday meal together, exchange gifts, and participate in some way – small or large – in the abundant fall harvest.

*We bring the world in when someone can't go out.*

Be it inside or out, because of you, access to share in the harvest is possible, bringing many elders a fuller and more connected life.

With much gratitude,

## Seeing Beyond Isolation: Elder Low Vision Forum

Vision loss for seniors increases the risk of social isolation. An older adult may self-isolate or not know what resources exist that can help them stay socially connected, safe, and independent. Our Low Vision Forum highlights technological and human resources that can support individuals and organizations serving low vision elders. How can elders with vision loss maintain connections and create new ones? When the doctor cannot fix your vision, there are a variety of organizations and people who can support you to live your life fully.

**Seeing Beyond Isolation:  
Elder Low Vision Forum**

**Event Details:**  
Oct. 17, 2018  
9:00am - 12:30pm

The Starr Center  
185 Cambridge St., Boston

## Butter Pecan, Anyone?

At the heart of it, ending elder isolation happens when people come together. And what better way than to throw an ice cream party! Organized by Samantha Cowan, Allston/Brighton Neighborhood Director, thirty area seniors and their Friendly Visitors gathered at the PSF Community Center in Brighton on September 9th to mix and mingle over bowls of the delicious cold treats. Yum!



Grace Yu and Peter McIntyre have been matched together as Friendly Visiting companions for three years.



FriendshipWorks welcomes a more recent Friendly Visiting match, Annie Mazzola and Bob Kiley



# Making the Right Match Starts with the Right Team

What is it about the relationship between people and their pets? Their unconditional love and companionship touches the human spirit and warms the heart. *These loving animals and their owners also brighten the day of elders matched through our PetPals Program, which would not exist without the dedicated human and animal volunteer teams that make visits.*

Before they get matched with a senior living residence, every prospective team attends a pet screening to make sure that the dogs or cats meet the requirements of PetPals. A certified animal trainer volunteers her time with PetPals, conducting screenings to make sure the fit is right for the pets and people. Screenings take place about every three months, and if you think this might be a good “job” for you and your pet, please fill out an application on our Website [www.fw4elders.org](http://www.fw4elders.org) – we’d love to meet you both!



*Krowka the cat makes an elder smile*



*Lindsay and Pope Joan*



*Nancy, Mordi & Janet Hirsch, PetPals Coordinator*



*Karma and Cooper. Dogs that perform exceptionally well during screening are named a Good Canine Citizen by the American Kennel Club.*

# A Vital No-Cost Service That Can Extend Lives...

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FriendshipWorks volunteers make sure elders are able to keep their appointments. In fact, 80% of elders who receive a medical escort tell us they would not have been able to attend their appointment without this service. Still, volunteers do more than just get elders to their appointments. Volunteers can help *navigate* the medical building to ensure the patient arrives at the appointment on time, clarify provider instructions, explain prescription information, or help pick up prescriptions, depending on the specific needs of the individual.



*Photographer: Meri Bond*

Further, our Medical Escorts often help with communication between providers and patients. Studies focusing on communication between doctors and elders indicate that nearly 50% of elders experience communication barriers.<sup>2</sup> For instance, older adults often feel rushed, unclear about doctor

instructions, and unable to get their questions fully answered. The majority of these patients believe that having a companion present would help them to effectively communicate with their provider.<sup>3</sup> **FriendshipWorks’ Medical Escort program provides a vital service, supporting patients to actively engage in their care.**

**Currently, FriendshipWorks has 40 medical escort volunteers providing escorts to an average of 1,276 elders per year.** Matt Betts, our Medical Escort Coordinator, works to make sure every person is appropriately matched with a suitable volunteer, making the often stressful experience of a doctor’s visit more enjoyable. We are committed to helping elders navigate the healthcare system safely, effectively, and efficiently, increasing a sense of well-being and possibly even making a friend in the process. Please visit our website at [www.fw4elders.org](http://www.fw4elders.org) or call **617-482-1510** to volunteer or to refer someone who may want our services.

<sup>1</sup> Moore CG, Wilson-Witherspoon P, Probst JC. Time and money: effects of no-shows at a family practice residency clinic. *Fam Med.* 2001 Aug;33(7):522-7.

<sup>2</sup> Henselmans I, Heijmans M, Rademakers J, van Dulmen S. Participation of chronic patients in medical consultations: patients’ perceived efficacy, barriers and interest in support. *Health Expect Int J Public Particip Health Care Health Policy.* 2015 Dec;18(6):2375-88.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

# Opening a Door to Understanding

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We drank a lot of coffee, shared conversation both funny and sad, and maybe even nodded off at times while we waited.

Elders might need only a sympathetic shoulder or maybe an unflappable negotiator, perhaps a creative thinker, maybe just a good conversationalist to get through what for most of us is an ordinary trip to the doctor. It can be essential (as in having the required escort home from a medical procedure); it can be reassuring (as in having someone who can figure out what button to press on which elevator to get you to the correct doctor); or it can be practical (as in having

someone who can figure out how to call Uber to get home). But ultimately, it is contributing to the elder’s ability to obtain care.

My training with Matt Betts, FriendshipWorks Medical Escort Coordinator, armed me with the tools I needed to understand how it all worked. But understanding really what it meant to the elders I escorted came from the experiences I had with people whose situations range from those blessed with health, to those who are frail and confused. No matter what the physical condition of the person, it means so much—when you live alone—to have a friend sitting beside you.



# Doing “a Good Turn Every Day”



Russell McNaught

*An interview with Volunteer & Donor, Russell McNaught*

For four decades Russ McNaught has lived by himself in his small apartment at the YMCA on Huntington Avenue, but one could hardly say he is alone. A FriendshipWorks volunteer for twenty years, Russ enjoyed his role as a Medical Escort and a Friendly Visitor. An artist, he has also blended his love of color and form with his computer skills into an artistic style, resulting in unique abstract pieces that have been exhibited at the Gateway Gallery in Brookline. Eclectic and captivating, Russ gave us an hour of his time sharing his perspective on life that was a lesson for how to remain connected and engaged.

Volunteering has been a centerpiece of Russ’s life and a value he holds dear. “When I was young, I was an Eagle Scout and volunteering was an important part of what we did. I’ve always been a volunteer, as a Scout leader, through the Navy, as a Big Brother in the Big Brother Big Sister program, and after hearing about FriendshipWorks through the YMCA. “The Eagle Scout motto was to do ‘a good turn each day’, and it always made me feel happy being able

to help others.” As a FriendshipWorks Medical Escort, he vividly recalled escorting a frail older woman who lived in Beacon Hill to her appointments at Mass General.

*“The hospital required someone to escort her, and I was happy to help. I don’t know how she could have gotten there otherwise.”*

Russ has enjoyed a full life, one of responsibility and service by living the Scout motto every day. Wherever he has lived, he has made his community a better place. While attending Rindge High School in Cambridge, Russ held part-time jobs at Harvard and MIT, working in their chemical engineering departments. He also worked at Harvard’s Fogg Museum where he developed his interest in art, which covers the walls of his apartment. During the Vietnam War, Russ was part of a carrier group and maintained a back-up AWACs system to track aircraft. In his career, Russ was a computer engineer at Raytheon and at Honeywell, where he evaluated computer designs. He has learned much that he has brought to volunteering, just as he has learned much from the elders he has served.

Though Russ is no longer able to volunteer, he has nevertheless maintained his interest in FriendshipWorks and continues his active lifestyle. He visits the VA three times a week, the Webster House in Roslindale, and takes art lessons in Brookline. In lieu of his volunteer time as a medical escort, Russ has become a loyal and generous donor to FriendshipWorks.

*“I hope my giving can help bring generations together to learn from each other.”*

From a man who has spent his years connecting with others, we couldn’t ask for a better prescription for living a meaningful life.



If you would like to learn more about ending elder isolation by becoming a FriendshipWorks Medical Escort volunteer, please contact **Matt Betts** at 617-482-1510 x126. If you would like to support our mission, you can make your gift at our website Donate page at <https://www.fw4elders.org/donate/>

## Your Legacy Can End Elder Isolation and Create Connections NOW AND IN THE FUTURE



You can make an impact providing assistance to seniors, enhancing quality of life, and preserving the dignity of older adults through these easy and tax-efficient giving options. Consider one of these methods:

### WAYS TO GIVE



Name FriendshipWorks as a beneficiary of your will or trust



Make a gift of appreciated stock or securities and avoid capital gains taxes on the appreciation of your stock, as well as receive an income tax deduction



Name FriendshipWorks as a beneficiary (or partial beneficiary) of your retirement plan, insurance policy, or donor-advised fund. No attorney is required to make this simple, convenient gift. FriendshipWorks' tax ID number is: 04-3140541

Through your thoughtful planning today, you can strengthen FriendshipWorks' mission for years to come. Please let us know so we can welcome you into The FriendshipWorks Legacy Circle. Thank you!

To learn more, contact **Barry Burlingham**, Director of Development at 617-482-1510 x145 or at [bburlingham@fw4elders.org](mailto:bburlingham@fw4elders.org)



## Celebrating Those Who Have Touched Our Lives

Your generosity in honoring those you love helps FriendshipWorks bring meaningful connections and life-changing support to isolated elders. We wholeheartedly thank our generous donors who make this possible.

### Gifts In Honor Of

### From

Catherine Case.....	Emily Kadehjian
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### Gifts In Memory Of

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*Formerly Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers*

**GRAB YOUR WALKING SHOES!**

Join us for our  
**Fourth Annual**  
*Walk to End Elder Isolation*

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2019**



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