



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHTS:

Beyond the Grant



Introduction

Community Care Corps (C3) is a national initiative fostering innovative local programs that enlist volunteers to provide nonmedical assistance to older adults, adults with disabilities, and family caregivers to help them remain at home in their communities.

Community Care Corps, administered by the Oasis Institute with support from USAging, Caregiver Action Network, and Altarum, receives funding through a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Administration for Community Living.

In these Success Stories, Community Care Corps grantees share details of their C3 programs, the needs being addressed in their communities, the keys to success, and lessons learned along the way.



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Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut

North Haven, Connecticut | aoascc.org

2020-2021
GRANTEE

2021-2022
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Overview

The Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut (AOASCC) is an independent nonprofit organization serving older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. AOASCC's mission is to champion and support these individuals so that they can remain independent and engaged within their communities.

Services include supporting living at home safely, caregiver support, health and wellness activities, and enrollment support for benefits such as homeware, food delivery, and transportation.



Agency on Aging
OF SOUTH CENTRAL CONNECTICUT

Meeting Community Needs

Getting to medical appointments is often challenging for older adults and people with disabilities. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic these groups had lower rates of getting tested for the disease even though they were at highest risk of serious illness. This was due in part to a lack of transportation to testing sites and difficulty navigating testing locations such as stadiums, parking lots, and big box stores. AOASCC aimed to provide a valuable service that would improve health outcomes and reduce stress by assisting people with door through door transportation to appointments during the pandemic and beyond.

Community Care Corps Program: Trusted Ride-Certified Chaperone Program

AOASCC's Community Care Corps program aimed to improve the health and well-being of older adults and people with disabilities by helping to reduce missed medical appointments resulting from transportation barriers. In partnership with *Trusted Ride-Certified*, AOASCC developed a network of screened and trained volunteer chaperones to accompany older adults and people with disabilities to and from non-emergency medical appointments and outpatient procedures.

Personal connections between volunteers and clients are critical to success. The response from the community to the Trusted Ride-Certified Chaperone program has been overwhelmingly positive. AOASCC had estimated clients would request between four and six chaperoned rides per year. However, that figure was closer to 22 rides per year for clients on average.

Keys to Success

✓ Engage in partnerships.

AOASCC works with partners to enhance services including Trusted Ride-Certified and Southern Connecticut University (SCU). Through SCU, they recruited social work interns to address the needs of AOASCC clients with mental health issues in collaboration with volunteer chaperones.

✓ Ensure a positive experience for clients and volunteers.

AOASCC strives to foster positive, healthy experiences for everyone involved—not just a ride but a connection between volunteer and client.

✓ Offer volunteers a stipend.

They recruit volunteers from a range of backgrounds by offering a stipend for gas and insurance expenses allowing people to sign up who may not have been able to afford to volunteer and use their own cars otherwise.

✓ Highlight individual volunteers.

They prioritize volunteer recognition during various events to foster greater connection between volunteers and the C3 program.

Lessons Learned

✔ Social isolation improved.

The connections and friendships that develop between volunteer chaperones and the people served decrease social isolation for the clients.

✔ Caregivers also wanted chaperone services.

There is significant demand for rides from caregivers who attend appointments with loved ones but want volunteer chaperones to go with them for additional support.

✔ Apply best practices learned across the organization.

AOASCC merged their Service and Volunteer Departments into a single department called Aging Answers to share best practices across programs. AOASCC secured additional funding from a community foundation based on this new approach.

✔ Foster public awareness.

Engaging with the media is an opportunity to share pride in the success of the volunteer chaperone program, let potential clients know about available services, and build community support.



It's important to us to contact people before the appointment, to establish a relationship with the person. So, the volunteer chaperone is speaking with the person two weeks out and then the night before saying, 'I'm going to come to your house at 9 o'clock in the morning and I have a blue car when you see it out in front.' Then assist the person during the appointment, going into the house with the person when they get back to make sure they're settled. And then calling back later that night to ask, 'How are you doing?' And calling two weeks later and saying, 'When's your next appointment? Do we have you on the schedule?' It has made such a difference.

—Beverly Kidder
Vice President of Community Programs,
Agency on Aging of
South Central Connecticut

Overview

Aging Forward, formerly Shepherd's Centers of America, is a national alliance of 55 dedicated affiliate organizations serving more than 165,000 older adults across the country annually. Through an extensive network of trained volunteers, Aging Forward provides a continuum of enriching services to support older adults in living and aging with vitality in their communities. Aging Forward aims to alleviate loneliness and isolation by fostering connections between older adults and empowering programs in the community. Services include transportation, handy helpers, friendly visits, grocery shopping, respite care, and other informal support services.



Meeting Community Needs

Finding transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other necessities is challenging for many older adults who are aging at home in their communities, especially those living alone. Aging Forward saw that the demand for transportation services was only growing, as was the need for innovations in volunteer transportation services for older adults.

Community Care Corps Program: Volunteer Care Companion Program

Aging Forward's Volunteer Care Companion program expanded and enhanced its existing volunteer driver companion program for older adults needing transportation to and from non-emergency medical appointments with compassionate, personalized door-through-door support.

Aging Forward has reached more older adults in need and engaged with new groups of volunteers. More than 80 new volunteers have been trained as driver companions who in turn have helped an estimated 200 older adults age in place with dignity. Volunteers are typically retirees themselves, and many have volunteered for more than 15 years. But Aging Forward has been able to offer additional training and recruit new volunteers, including college students through a formal structure for service learning, as well as social workers and nurses.

Keys to Success

- ✓ **Engage in partnerships.**
Aging Forward collaborates with varied partners to reach older adults and engage volunteers in meaningful ways including other nonprofits, congregations, businesses, schools, and hospitals.
- ✓ **Stay focused on mission.**
Aging Forward works to make a difference in people's lives and volunteers participate because they also want to make a difference. The Volunteer Care Companion program is successful because it has stayed true to that mission.
- ✓ **Invest in continuous community outreach.**
One-time outreach is not enough. Sustaining awareness and recruiting volunteers means regularly investing in both paid and unpaid promotion, nurturing partnerships with healthcare providers, and maintaining a visible community presence.
- ✓ **Leverage technology for impact.**
Aging Forward utilizes user-friendly digital platforms for managing volunteer scheduling, tracking program metrics, and facilitating communication. This streamlines operations, making the program more efficient and accessible.
- ✓ **Gather feedback for continuous improvement.**
Aging Forward follows a universal feedback system to collect input from participants, volunteers, and community partners. Regularly reviewing this feedback allows for data-driven decisions and adaptive improvements to the program. Transparent communication about how feedback is used strengthens trust and engagement among stakeholders.

Lessons Learned

✓ **Remain adaptable.**

One size does not fit all when it comes to volunteer-driven transportation services for older adults. While the program has a clear structure with defined goals, it is flexible to adapt to the unique needs and circumstances of both volunteers and those they help.

✓ **Invest in marketing.**

Aging Forward invested in tailored marketing for the Volunteer Care Companion program that helped to nearly quadruple their volunteer pool. For example, in one community they spent approximately \$2,500 for flyers, car magnets, and umbrellas for drivers. In another location, they ran newspaper ads for volunteers, recruiting 15-20 from a single ad.

✓ **Embrace flexibility for long-term success.**

Aging Forward remains open to change and responsive to the unique needs of local communities or evolving circumstances. By adapting strategies to meet both participant and volunteer needs, the program remains relevant, responsive, and rooted in the realities of each community.

✓ **Coordinate across programs to deepen participation.**

Providing compassionate, nonmedical support to and from appointments becomes even more impactful when interwoven with other programs. Well-trained volunteers can serve in a variety of roles from drivers to friendly callers and visitors, all of which helps to create a more holistic and seamless experience for older adults. This integrated approach not only broadens the scope of services but also deepens the overall impact.



Our trained volunteers may bring someone home from a doctor's appointment and then help them prepare lunch afterward. Or a volunteer may go into the doctor's visit at the older adult's request to be a second pair of eyes and ears or take notes. Which medication did they say to stop? Which one am I supposed to reduce? The volunteer can act as a scribe jotting that down. A taxi or bus service is not going to be able to provide that kind of important service.

—Sarah Cheney
Executive Director, Aging Forward

Overview

DOROT is a nonprofit organization addressing the challenges of an aging population. DOROT's mission is to alleviate social isolation among older adults and provide services that help them live independently as valued members of their community. To achieve this, DOROT fosters mutually beneficial intergenerational partnerships through multifaceted volunteer programs designed to meet the ongoing and immediate needs of isolated older adults. Services include one-on-one support for daily nonmedical tasks and social engagement.



Meeting Community Needs

Many older adults live alone, are on a fixed income, do not have family nearby, have a difficult time leaving home, and are socially isolated. DOROT's strategic analysis indicated that there was a large pool of unserved older adults in their service area who would benefit from nonmedical assistance at home and increased social connection.

Community Care Corps Program: The Response Team and Caring Callers

DOROT's Community Care Program built on their existing programs engaging with almost 300 volunteers to serve more than 800 older adults through Caring Calls, the Manhattan Response Team and a Westchester Response Team Pilot. Caring Calls matches volunteers and older adults for weekly friendly phone calls. The minimum commitment is eight weeks, though many matches last longer. Through the Response Team, volunteers provide one-time or short-term services such as birthday visits and calls and help with errands and household tasks such as returning library books, organizing paperwork, and taking neighborhood walks. This helps to decrease reported social isolation while offering concrete assistance.

Through these interactions, when volunteers express concern about an older adult they visited, DOROT social work staff will follow up to assess the situation, provide professional support as needed, and connect the older adult with appropriate resources to help ensure they can continue aging in place.

Keys to Success

✔ Engage in partnerships.

DOROT relies on a network of partners to recruit volunteers and older adults in need, including nonprofit and faith-based organizations and local housing for older adults where DOROT brings programs to residents.

✔ Recruit multigenerational volunteers.

They work with volunteers of all ages, including nearly 2,000 who are under age 18 as well as close to 4,500 adult volunteers. This sparks positive intergenerational social connections between volunteers and clients.

✔ Utilize project management platforms.

They use a volunteer and call management system, MonAmi, to help manage, track, and communicate with volunteers and older adults for Caring Calls and the Response Team programs.

✔ Provide volunteer guidelines.

They created manuals for volunteers with clear guidelines and expectations.

✔ Seek participant feedback.

They regularly conduct impact surveys for clients and volunteers to learn about their experiences/perceived benefits and incorporate findings into best practices and planning.

Lessons Learned

✓ **Remain adaptable.**

DOROT makes adjustments based on participant feedback. For example, the Caring Calls program was initially designed as a four-week program. They found that most of the volunteer-older adult matches were continuing much longer, so they increased the minimum commitment to eight weeks.

✓ **Ensure benefit to all involved.**

Their Caring Calls and Response Team programs make the lives of older adults better by helping them feel supported and less alone. DOROT finds that volunteers also benefit from the social engagement in their work with clients.

✓ **Take advantage of support from Community Care Corps (C3).**

The support of C3 and program managers has been beneficial in several ways, including technical support from C3 staff, enabling DOROT to pursue additional funding opportunities, and learning from experiences of other C3 grantees.



We have a core of volunteers who receive a weekly email, and they take the task that they would like to do. It could be walking to the library with an older adult, it could be shopping for them, or it could be helping them organize their paperwork. There's a whole range of activities to support older adults. Everything that we do, any service, any program—it's about creating positive social connection to create community and a sense of belonging.

— Judith Turner

Senior Program Officer, Volunteer Services
& Intergenerational Programming, DOROT

Duet: Partners In Health & Aging

Phoenix, Arizona | duetaz.org

2021-2022
GRANTEE

2022-2024
GRANTEE

Overview

Duet is a nonprofit organization that promotes health and well-being through its vitally needed, free-of-charge services to homebound adults, family caregivers, and grandfamilies. Services include volunteer-based transportation to the doctor and grocery store, friendly visit and in-home assistance, family caregiver support groups, peer mentoring, educational workshops, and personalized guidance. Duet partners with individuals, businesses, nonprofits, municipalities, government organizations, and faith communities to make its free-of-charge services happen. Hundreds of compassionate volunteers help fulfill Duet's mission.



Duet
Partners In Health & Aging

Meeting Community Needs

Family caregivers of individuals living with dementia often experience increased stress and declining physical, mental, and emotional health. This is in part due to ambiguous loss—a little understood, complex grief experienced by family caregivers as a person with dementia declines cognitively but is still physically present.

Community Care Corps Program: Finding Meaning and Hope

Duet created the Meaning & Hope Institute to serve dementia family caregivers by offering free comprehensive wrap-around services, including monthly educational webinars, personalized guidance, support groups, and peer support. These services complement the discussion series: *Finding Meaning and Hope*. The program is based on the book *Loving Someone Who Has Dementia: How to Find Hope While Coping with Stress and Grief* by Dr. Pauline Boss. During a two-year pilot, Duet found that the impacts were very positive in lowering stress and improving resiliency.

Through *Finding Meaning and Hope*, Duet has increased recruitment and training of new volunteer facilitators in 17 states and Canada and added 20 partner organizations to support a greater number of dementia family caregivers nationwide, including Navajo and Spanish-speaking caregivers.

Keys to Success

✓ Engage in partnerships.

Duet's *Finding Meaning and Hope* program is made possible with community-based partners across the country, including faith communities and church groups, social workers and social service agencies, the University of Southern California's Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, and the Phoenix VA Medical Center.

✓ Access ongoing support from Community Care Corps.

Monthly meetings with and regular feedback from Community Care Corps are joyful experiences and have been critical to the growth and success of *Finding Meaning and Hope*.

✓ Provide volunteer guidelines.

Duet developed facilitator scripts for volunteers to ensure uniformity and the highest standards in how the program is taught whether in person or virtually.

Lesson Learned

✓ Caregiver stress declined.

Duet found that over 90% of caregivers participating in the *Finding Meaning and Hope* program have said the program reduced their stress.

✓ Recruit volunteers from a range of backgrounds.

They are open minded about who makes a good volunteer, including retirees, members of faith communities, as well as aging professionals.

✓ Seek participant feedback.

Duet regularly solicits feedback from caregivers and volunteers through surveys and conversations to keep the program relevant, accessible, and meaningful.



Caregivers came away feeling more capable and equipped to face the difficult journey of caring for a loved one with dementia. True to the name of the program, they began finding meaning and hope in their caregiving experience. When we feel hopeless, it's hard to move forward but these individuals reclaimed that sense of meaning, found peace in the present moment, and embraced the idea of a 'good enough' relationship. That kind of transformation is a beautiful thing to see.

— Ann Wheat
Executive Director,
Duet: Partners In Health and Aging

Overview

FamilyMeans is a multi-service, nonprofit organization that strengthens communities by helping individuals and families through challenges in all life stages. FamilyMeans envisions vibrant and resilient communities where everyone lives to their fullest potential. Services focus on counseling and therapy, employee assistance, financial counseling, grief counseling, youth development, caregiving, and aging.



FamilyMeans
BETTER IS POSSIBLE

Meeting Community Needs

Family and friend caregivers need time for themselves to reduce stress and isolation and maintain well-being. In addition, quality of life for people living with early stages of dementia can be maintained and improved through opportunities for social engagement.

Community Care Corps Program: Caregiving & Aging Program

FamilyMeans' Community Care Corps program enhanced its existing Caregiving & Aging program supporting caregivers and providing meaningful opportunities to volunteers through a successful and established respite model. The Caregiving & Aging program offers in-home and group respite services, including in-person, virtual, and evening options. FamilyMeans has strengthened their continuum of respite services from early stages of need to more advanced needs through their early dementia group respite opportunity. They have continued building and strengthening their volunteer infrastructure with strategic adaptations to recruitment, orientation, and incentives while evaluating their impact over time.

FamilyMeans also developed a group respite program called Community Connection in collaboration with nature centers, museums, and arts organizations to bring groups of early-stage dementia participants to these locations. They also expanded their volunteer infrastructure, infusing their programs with new energy, resources, and ideas to attract and retain volunteers and engage caregivers.

Keys to Success

✓ Engage in partnerships.

Local community partners can collaborate on programs as well as offer opportunities for community members to learn about dementia and reduce stigma.

✓ Offer options for respite care.

Offering a variety of respite services for caregivers and volunteers to choose from will appeal to caregivers with different needs and volunteers with different skills and interest levels.

Lessons Learned

✓ Remain responsive to community needs.

FamilyMeans continually assesses the needs of the community and has, in part, expanded its Community Connection program to new areas of the region as a result.



We developed what we call the 'Night Out' program. It's designed for caregivers who would like some time alone in the evening or time with a spouse if they're caring for parents or in-laws most of the day. It's also great for volunteers who are only available after work. It fills a niche for some people that is really needed, especially in the winter months, when in Minnesota it's very dark very early. That can be a difficult time of day.

—Beth Wiggins
Director of Caregiving & Aging,
FamilyMeans

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Philadelphia

Philadelphia, PA | jfcsp Philly.org

2021-2022
GRANTEE

2022-2024
GRANTEE

2023-2025
GRANTEE

Overview

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Philadelphia (JFCS) is a social services organization with a mission to strengthen families and individuals across generations and cultures. Programs address mental health, basic needs such as food and financial assistance, older adults and Holocaust survivor support, and the services for people living with disabilities.



Meeting Community Needs

To combat loneliness among people with disabilities, JFCS runs socialization programs for adults with disabilities. They believe adding volunteer support across these programs would increase community integration and socialization opportunities for everyone involved.

Community Care Corps Program: People Living With Disabilities Program

JFCS's Community Care Corps Program has allowed them to add volunteers across core program areas to better serve the broader community through intergenerational interaction, cross-disability connection, and advocacy training.

The Baking With a Mission program brings together adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and neurotypical middle school students to bake together and sell to raise funds for people facing food insecurity. The Social Justice Advocacy program brings together neurodiverse participants and volunteers to work on issues related to disability rights affecting people with disabilities and their caregivers. JFCS's Caregiver Support group for caregivers of individuals living with disabilities is an opportunity to share experiences, offer peer-to-peer support, and participate in social activities. And through Friendly Caller, trained volunteers make weekly phone calls to participants.

By investing in volunteer engagement, JFCS has fostered understanding, teamwork, and commitment between adults with disabilities and community members of all ages.

Keys to Success

- ✓ **Require training for volunteers.**
JFCS provides training and education for volunteers to foster an environment of mutual respect between volunteers and clients who are living with disabilities.
- ✓ **Build relationships between staff, clients, and volunteers.**
They foster personal connections among staff, clients with disabilities, and volunteers to create positive experiences and encourage continued commitment from volunteers.

Lessons Learned

- ✓ **Remain adaptable.**
JFCS has benefited from being able to try new things while adjusting as they discover what strategies work best.



Initially, we thought we'd have a revolving door of volunteers. But many of them have just stuck with us. And it's become something better than we expected because it's creating a real community. And people are dedicated and some now volunteer with our organization in other areas like serving on our advisory board.

—Or Ben Ari

Director of Services for People Living With Disabilities, Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Philadelphia

Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County

Ann Arbor, MI | jfsannarbor.org

2020-2021
GRANTEE

2021-2022
GRANTEE

Overview

Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County (JFS) is a private nonprofit social services agency community founded in 1993. JFS has grown into an organization that provides programs and services including older adult caregiving, career services, nutrition, health and wellness, and transportation. The mission of Jewish Family Services is to create solutions, promote dignity, and inspire humanity.



Meeting Community Needs

Many older adults and their family caregivers face barriers to in-person engagement, including mobility challenges, lack of local resources, and transportation. JFS saw a chance to expand opportunities for engagement beyond the paradigm of in-person interactions and bridge a wide technology gap to reduce social isolation for older adults and caregivers.

Community Care Corps Program: Customized e-Volunteer Platform

JFS's Community Care Corps program enabled development of an innovative e-volunteering platform to engage older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and volunteers remotely through video calls, livestreaming, and other electronic means. Volunteers are recruited from the community and trained using videos, video-based platforms, digitally-based user guides, and strategies for engagement with participants.

Because the program is virtual, it is possible for older adults in rural areas to connect with volunteers who would otherwise be too far away. And this has expanded the pool of available volunteers who preferred virtual opportunities to support older adults in need.

Strategies for Success

- ✓ **Remain adaptable.**
Stay focused on the goals of the program and grant, while remaining flexible and responsive to client and volunteer feedback, as well as ongoing research on outcomes, to best meet community needs.
- ✓ **Develop a barebones program as backup.**
With ongoing funding often uncertain and to ensure sustainability, develop a scaled-back version of your program that can be adopted as a backup option.
- ✓ **Engage in partnerships.**
JFS collaborated with several partners to develop the e-volunteer platform and address ongoing needs. These included a forward-thinking software development company; the Otsego County Commission on Aging, which helped extend the platform's reach to rural communities in northern Michigan; and the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living, which contributed to making the platform more accessible for people with disabilities.

Lessons Learned

✔ Many older adults have little to no support system.

The support system for many older adults is small, incredibly fragile, or nonexistent. JFS and like organizations have an obligation to help ensure these older adults can live a life of dignity with the highest quality of life possible.



These Friendly eVisits between volunteers and older adults or individuals with disabilities improved quality of life for care recipients but also gave some much-needed respite for caregivers, letting them take a break, and focus on other tasks or self-care.

—Christine Taylor
Senior Director of Community Assistance,
Jewish Family Services of
Washtenaw County

Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc.

Rochester, NY | lifespan-roch.org

2020-2021
GRANTEE

2022-2024
GRANTEE

Overview

Lifespan helps older adults and caregivers take on the challenges and opportunities of a longer life. As a regional nonprofit, Lifespan is a trusted source of unbiased information, guidance, and more than 30 services for older adults and family/friend caregivers. They also provide training and education for allied professionals and the community. Annually, Lifespan assists thousands of older adults and caregivers with services focused on health and wellness, transportation, financial and Medicare counseling, and caregiver navigation and planning.



Meeting Community Needs

It can be challenging for family caregivers of people living with dementia to find time for themselves away from their caregiving responsibilities. This can lead to increased stress and social isolation for caregivers. Lifespan aimed to increase its respite programs to serve more caregivers in urban, suburban, and rural communities and creatively and positively engage with caregivers and family members living with dementia.

Community Care Corps Programs: Life Conversations & Social Engagement with Virtual Reality

Lifespan received two Community Care Corps grants for two different programs. The first, "Life Conversations," centers on the power of reminiscence in improving quality of life. Lifespan developed a life review project curriculum which includes eight volunteer training modules that can be completed online or in person. The training was built around how to conduct a life review with a person living with dementia using their in-house-created Life Conversations book. Trained volunteers conduct reminiscence sessions with their matched clients who are living with dementia, asking guided questions about different phases of their lives.

Lifespan's second Community Care Corps program supports recruitment of more volunteers to provide respite for dementia caregivers. This innovative model includes training volunteers to use specialized virtual reality (VR) programming with caregivers and care recipients as part of the respite visit, formally evaluating its use and disseminating findings. Focused recruitment efforts have been carried out to expand the pool of in-home respite volunteers with varied backgrounds and lived experiences that reflect the communities they serve.

"It's been such an amazing experience for us, the volunteers, the caregivers and their care partners with dementia. Through the VR, they can play in a room full of puppies. They swim with dolphins. If they've always wanted to go to the Sydney Opera House, through the VR, they now have a chance to go. Bringing people to their wish list of travel destinations and even back to the home they grew up in all through virtual reality has brought such incredible joy to people's lives and at the same time has sparked memories and reduced social isolation." - Katy Allen, Division Leader for Caregiver Services, Lifespan

This approach fills the needs of caregivers and communities for enhanced respite services and piloted VR's use for in-home or community-based settings to enhance quality of life and reduce isolation.

Keys to Success

✓ Engage in partnerships.

Lifespan works closely with home respite and drop-in programs in the wider Rochester community.

Partnerships with faith communities, libraries, and local universities allowed us to increase connections for services and provide greater opportunities for both volunteer and family caregiver recruitment.

✓ Prioritize staff buy-in.

Lifespan ensures that their staff understands the needs the programs are addressing, the program goals and plan, and their roles.

✓ Require training for volunteers.

They developed training programs for volunteers to understand the program goals and plan and their unique roles.

Lessons Learned

✓ Remain adaptable.

They learn and adjust as they put programs into practice, such as dropping off virtual reality equipment with volunteers instead of requiring them to pick it up—a minor change that maximized the time volunteers spent with clients.

✓ Caregiver respite is critical for well-being.

The positive benefits reported by caregivers who participated in the Life Conversations project and the VR program reinforce the value of empowering caregivers to have free time.

✓ Virtual reality appeared to lessen challenges for people living with dementia.

Anecdotal reporting from participants suggests a correlation between VR usage and the lessening of behaviors such as sundowning, as well as a decrease in social isolation.

✓ New experiences are important for people living with dementia.

The people living with dementia are happy and excited to participate in Life Conversations and the VR program, where they are treated as fully active, engaged adults.



Lifespan volunteers worked with families to create life conversations booklets. The family could add photographs to the book created by the volunteer and the matched care partner with dementia over the course of their guided reminiscence. We printed out books as a gift at the end of the project for each family. We saw really great results and loved hearing families share that they learned things about their family member they had never known.

—Katy Allen
Division Leader for Caregiver Services,
Lifespan

Overview

Lori's Hands, Inc. is a nonprofit organization founded in Newark, DE that builds mutually beneficial partnerships between community members with chronic illness and college students, fostering empathy, connection, and resilience. Students provide practical assistance to support community members' independence at home. Community members share their health and life experiences to support students' learning.



Meeting Community Needs

The number of people who are aging in place without strong support systems and financial resources to pay for care is rising. As a result, Lori's Hands saw exponential growth in community demand for its services and student interest in experiential learning and community work.

Community Care Corps Program: Mutually Beneficial Service Learning

Lori's Hands Community Care Corps program expanded its program connecting college students interested in health care with community members who are managing chronic illness. During the semester, students provide weekly nonmedical help with day-to-day tasks around the house, grocery shopping, light housekeeping, exercise, tech support, and companionship. The program is free of charge for clients.

Student volunteers benefit in multiple ways by receiving course credit for their work with Lori's Hands, completing internships, developing special projects in collaboration with school faculty, gaining health care-related experience to build their resumes, and just being involved in their communities. Through its mutually beneficial Community Health Service Learning program, Lori's Hands was able to expand its service area to Baltimore and Metro Detroit.

Keys to Success

✓ Engage in partnerships.

Lori's Hands works closely with more than 20 colleges and universities to recruit student volunteers and write peer-reviewed papers on their model to demonstrate impact. They also partner with community providers, such as a home-based primary care team, to evaluate outcomes among shared clients.

✓ Create a role for clients.

Lori's Hands' older adult clients have an explicit role in educating student volunteers about their experiences and lives. This creates stronger, more balanced intergenerational connections where older adults do not feel exclusively dependent on student volunteers.

✓ Target volunteer recruitment.

They recruit college students interested in health care which helps ensure a steady source of volunteers to support community members and helps prepare the future workforce needed to care for an aging population.

✓ Require training for volunteers.

Training modules provide efficient and comprehensive guidance on chronic illness, community health issues, community resource navigation, and caregiver support, as well as best practices for volunteering with Lori's Hands.

✔ **Set client goals.**

Their clients set goals at the onset of their work with Lori's Hands to inform student services and track outcomes and to ensure services are client-centered.

✔ **Foster public awareness.**

To spotlight the experiences and stories of their clients, Lori's Hands launched a Community Voices podcast series.

✔ **Track outcomes.**

They measure results through pre- and post-service tests and evaluate the success of their work. They use a customized mobile app where volunteers log all activities and visits.

Lessons Learned

✔ **Virtual service options should be permanent.**

Lori's Hands permanently added virtual options into their program based on the success of those services during the pandemic.

✔ **Intergenerational relationships are powerful.**

They expanded their intergenerational program based on positive feedback from older adult clients, who consistently shared that student volunteers were a breath of fresh air—like sunlight coming into their homes. Students who are new to their campuses also benefit from building these community connections through clients who often become “surrogate grandparents.”



We emphasize to our clients that they're not just participants—they're also educators. They share their own lived experiences to help students understand the challenges of living with a chronic illness, aging in place, and navigating community-based health care.

—Maggie Ratnayake
Program Director, Lori's Hands

New Mexico Caregivers Coalition

Bernalillo, NM | nmdcc.org

2020-2021
GRANTEE

2021-2022
GRANTEE

Overview

The New Mexico Caregivers Coalition (NMCC) is a statewide organization created to enhance and promote family and professional direct care workers, supporting their professional development and advancing issues of importance to the field of long-term and direct care. Their mission is to train and advocate for caregivers so that they may better serve older adults and people with disabilities. Services include advocacy for direct care workers related to better wages and benefits and professional development. Services for family caregivers include training, assistance with state and federal benefits eligibility, and low-cost background checks.



NEW MEXICO
CAREGIVERS
COALITION

Meeting Community Needs

Unpaid family caregivers often experience stress and isolation which negatively affects the health of both caregivers and care recipients. Demand for services to address these challenges soared during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community Care Corps Program: Empowering Caregivers Through Education

The New Mexico Caregiver Coalition's Community Care Corps program focuses on creating new educational trainings for family caregivers to reduce stress and isolation. Topics include a variety of nonmedical courses such as infection prevention, safe transfer and mobility, stress management, communications skills, self-advocacy, recognizing opioid overdose, online safety, and, importantly, self-care. They address special challenges experienced by the Navajo Nation, which became completely isolated from the rest of the state during the pandemic.

In addition, many parts of New Mexico have little or no internet access. The New Mexico Caregivers Coalition addressed that challenge by using other funding streams to purchase tablets and Wi-Fi hotspots and pay for staff to train caregivers on how to use these resources to join their online classes.

NMCC staff and volunteers with subject matter expertise teach the 60- to 90-minute classes. Volunteer instructors also serve as resources with whom participants can connect outside of the educational sessions to receive individualized support. Since NMCC intends for classes to inform and empower participants, both care recipients and caregivers are welcome to attend.

Keys to Success

✓ Engage in partnerships.

NMCC has ongoing, positive relationships with state agencies, home care agencies, and other community organizations. As such, NMCC recruits volunteers to expand services to those most in need.

✓ Formally recognize caregivers.

NMCC recognizes caregivers at every opportunity, awarding Certificates of Completion after any type of training. Although this involves a small amount of extra paperwork, the organization views awarding these recognitions as a best practice for boosting caregiver morale.

✓ Offer caregivers a stipend.

Caregivers who attend trainings are offered small cash stipends if they also complete a pre- and post-session questionnaire each year.

✔ **Hire staff from the communities served.**

Staff who are familiar with and live within the communities of the groups served are trusted messengers and have a greater understanding of their own community's needs.

Lessons Learned

✔ **Caregiver health affects care recipient health.**

NMCC found that improved caregiver health led to improved well-being of care recipients. NMCC found that care recipients were seemingly more active and engaged in training sessions simply as a result of being invited to attend the training with their caregiver.

✔ **Take advantage of support from Community Care Corps (C3).**

The support of C3 and NMCC's program manager was invaluable to NMCC's success.



We employed an Outreach Manager who lived on the Navajo Nation. But at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Governor required us to close our office and work from home. Most of the caregivers we were working with, including those living on the Navajo Nation, had never participated in an online class. We shifted priorities to teaching caregivers how to first join an online class or support group we were hosting. While we had to troubleshoot with them, learn where WiFi was available and unavailable, teach people how to obtain an email address for the first time, it was all worthwhile. In the end, caregivers learned new technology skills in addition to joining online educational classes and support groups.

— Adrienne Smith
President and CEO, New Mexico
Caregivers Coalition

Overview

At the heart of the Hampton Roads, VA area, Peninsula Agency on Aging (PAA) provides unwavering support and empowerment for older adults. Since its establishment as a nonprofit in 1974, PAA has remained dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older adults and their families. PAA offers an array of services and programs tailored to the unique needs of older adults including home-delivered meals, personal care and caregiver education, training and support.



Meeting Community Needs

Older adults and adults with disabilities often experience social isolation due to a lack of transportation and human interaction. Nonmedical transportation and in-person visiting are either unavailable or unaffordable to many older adults and adults with disabilities in Newport News and Hampton, VA. PAA staff delivering meals to homebound individuals reported that clients were eager for longer visits and friendly chats, more than a quick meal drop-off at the door.

Community Care Corps Program: Caring Neighbors

Peninsula Agency on Aging's Community Care Corps Program provides transportation, safety check-in calls, friendly visits, canine companion visits, and light housekeeping services to people age 60 and over and individuals with a disability. The program aims to lessen social isolation, increase the ability of participants to age in place, and reduce caregiver stress. In addition, the Volunteer to Work program addresses the severe shortage of home health workers by providing stipends to volunteers as they gain the skills to be hired as paid nonmedical companion aides.

Caring Neighbors' transportation services focuses on day-to-day needs such as non-emergency medical appointments, grocery shopping, laundry, and prescription pick-up.

Keys to Success

✓ Engage in partnerships.

PAA's Volunteer to Work program focused on workforce development and was made possible through a partnership with a local home health agency that provided classroom training for program participants.

PAA's partnership with AARP Foundation allowed a Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) enrollee to be assigned to PAA to assist with the Caring Neighbors Program. SCSEP participants make safety check-in calls to dozens of older adults each month. Because it has been so hard to recruit volunteers, the SCSEP participants have been a significant part of PAA's success. PAA has fully institutionalized the Caring Neighbors Program by redirecting internal funds to allow staff to support the volunteers who continue to provide these vital services to older adults.

✓ Utilize program management software.

They use a platform called Assisted Ride, allowing volunteers to easily sign up to make friendly visits and track their calls and transportation provided.

Lessons Learned

✓ Remain adaptable.

PAA initiated a partnership with a local Homeowner Association to recruit volunteers to help within that association. While a good idea, it did not catch on with residents.

- ✔ **Access ongoing support from Community Care Corps.**
Being part of the Community Care Corps program with monthly meetings and regular feedback was critical in getting the program off the ground.
- ✔ **The Caring Neighbors program was a springboard to new initiatives.**
PAA has difficulty finding volunteers for individual services so it has expanded social engagement opportunities through “active aging pop-up centers” in different communities each week that require less staffing. Older adults and caregivers can go to a pop-up center for a meal, socialization, games, exercise, and learning opportunities.
- ✔ **Recruiting volunteers is an ongoing challenge in an aging population.**
PAA’s wider community is rapidly aging as more retirees move to the region. In addition, some volunteers have aged into needing PAA services.
- ✔ **Caring Neighbors fosters friendships.**
A number of the volunteers who started off making friendly calls ended up becoming friends with the client, taking them to lunch on a regular basis or making friendly visits with the person in their home.



We started the Volunteer to Work program so people who are interested in having a career in the home health industry could get experience and training. People selected for this program were assigned to clients of ours enrolled in the Caring Neighbor program. These volunteers were paid a stipend and worked 10 hours a week for 8 to 10 weeks. And the goal was they would have all the skills needed to be hired by local home health agency at the end of the training period.

—Diane Hartley
Vice President Care Coordination,
Peninsula Agency on Aging

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