



Spectrum Empowers Veterans for Success through Digital Literacy

Spectrum is bridging the digital divide for veterans in Tampa Bay! Their \$10,000 Digital Education Grant will provide a mobile computer lab to help our Operation: Veteran Connect members empower struggling veterans with digital education classes and online services.

For many of the veterans we serve, every day is a struggle to access basic necessities like food and shelter. Learning technology to navigate life in this digital world isn't a luxury they can afford. Vital services that could significantly improve their quality of life, like health information, VA benefits, job training, and services, require the use of technology. Unfortunately, most veterans we serve lack the digital skills to navigate these resources.



Pictured above, left to right: Joshua Wostal, Hillsborough County Commissioner of District 7, Pam Plager, Operation: Veteran Connect (OVC) Manager, Greg Duncan, OVC Coordinator, Robin Ingles, CEO Seniors in Service, Amy Manning, Outreach and Communications Manager Seniors in Service, David Garcia, Director, State Government Affairs, Joe Durkin, Director, Communications, Spectrum



We will help veterans who never learned to use computers build the digital skills needed for online banking, telehealth, email, health information, affordable housing, and locating food pantries.

Operation: Veteran Connect member Kitty Anderson provides digital literacy support for veterans at the VA Resource Center. She shared, "Access to technology strengthens veterans' sense of purpose and allows them to be more independent. It gives them a sense of accomplishment and fosters a fun learning environment, empowering them to overcome challenges and realize their full potential."

Operation: Veteran Connect engages volunteers who are also veterans to serve veterans who struggle with disabilities, PTSD, food insecurity, and homelessness. Military service creates a unique bond of camaraderie and veterans feel more comfortable sharing their struggles. Thanks to Spectrum, we now have the computers needed to give veterans a fresh start and self-sufficiency.



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CEO Corner



I am continuously inspired by the tireless dedication and unwavering commitment of volunteers who selflessly devote their time and energy to making a difference in our communities. April is Volunteer Appreciation Month which provides a timely opportunity for us to recognize and honor these remarkable individuals who are the backbone of not only our organization's success but our community's prosperity.

This month, as we celebrate, I urge you to join me in expressing our gratitude to our volunteers for their invaluable contributions. Their efforts have an impact on the lives of those we serve and are a testament to the power of collective action. So, join me in thanking a volunteer today!

But our work is far from over. As we reflect on the importance of volunteerism, we must focus on how we can further harness the power of volunteers to expand our reach and amplify our impact. Now more than ever, we need passionate individuals who are willing to step up and make a difference.

Whether your passion is fighting food insecurity, guiding veterans on their wellness journey, mentoring/tutoring children, or providing companionship to isolated seniors, we have something for everyone! Together, we can continue to make a difference and leave a lasting legacy that will inspire generations to come.

Thank you for your continued support, and happy Volunteer Appreciation Month!

-Robin Ingles, CEO

Listen Up! Volunteering Transforms Lives!

Scan the QR code to hear CEO Robin Ingles' interview with St. Pete Catalyst's Ashley Morales. You'll hear how 1500 Seniors in Service volunteers are transforming the lives of children, seniors, veterans, and families throughout Tampa Bay while positively changing their own lives through service. Robin Ingles breaks down all of our volunteer opportunities and shares how you can get involved.

There is an opportunity for everyone to join our mission, whether by volunteering or as a community partner. Learn more at www.SeniorsInService.org.





Pinellas Sheriff's Citizens Association Honors Senior Companion Volunteer

If there is an opportunity to help, Lauren Smalls will raise her hand! Seniors in Service volunteer Lauren Smalls was recognized by the Sheriff's Citizens Association for her dedication as a Senior Companion. She never hesitates to provide an act of kindness, big or small, to help a homebound elder, a fellow volunteer, or her community. Her heart for service shines through wherever she goes.



Senior Companion Volunteer Lauren Smalls with her client Shiela

If you've ever sat next to Lauren, then you've probably heard about our Senior Companion Program. She's the biggest advocate for recruiting more volunteers to ensure that every senior in need of support has a caring companion by their side. Lauren's involvement in community organizations like the Sheriff's Citizens Association gives her a wealth of knowledge of local resources that she eagerly shares to enhance the quality of life for others.

When we began a Financial Wellness Pilot Program at St. Anthony's Hospital and needed volunteers, Lauren raised her hand right away to help. She began taking online financial courses so she had the knowledge needed to mentor a young medical associate for a strong financial future.

Pinellas Community Foundation Supports Senior Companion Services



Pinellas Community Foundation is giving seniors the companionship they need for social connection and independence! Homebound elders are at risk of social isolation and loneliness, but having the ongoing support of a caring, compassionate friend helps them continue to live independently. This \$40,000 Grant from Pinellas Community Foundation will provide companionship services to 150 seniors in Pinellas County! Our Senior Companion volunteers provide the encouragement and friendship isolated seniors need. Companions visit every week and do activities their client enjoys like listening to music or completing a puzzle together. They also assist with errands and help identify solutions to challenges seniors may be facing that threaten their independence, like meal delivery services, medication adherence, or home safety. Thank you, Pinellas Community Foundation, for helping our community's seniors stay healthy, happy, and independent.



Our Pinellas County Senior Companions are a dedicated, compassionate group of volunteers who improve the quality of life for older adults through friendship, assistance, and encouragement.

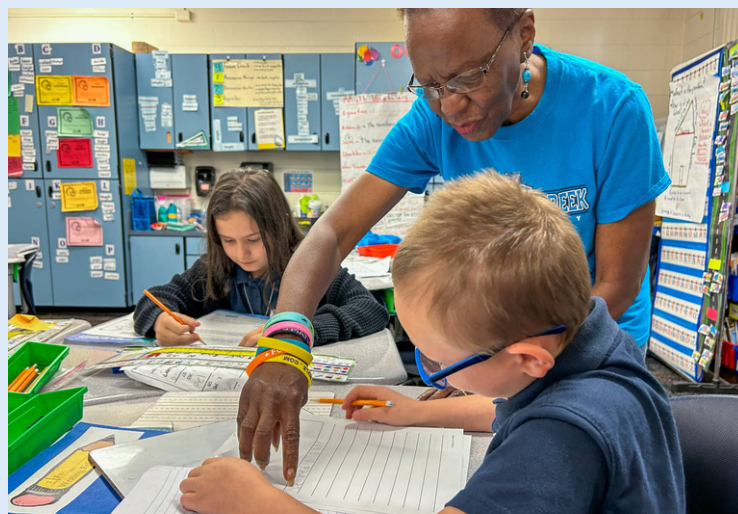
Are you able to help an isolated senior? Or do you know a senior who could use support? Learn more about Senior Companions by contacting Carmen Rodriguez at crodriguez@seniorsinservice.org or scan the QR code here.



Happy Volunteer Appreciation Month!

When a first-grade student is frustrated with reading and ready to give up, there is someone sitting next to him encouraging him to keep going. When a family must decide between paying the electric bill or buying food, there is someone at the food pantry full of kindness and ready to load their car with groceries. When a homebound senior is overwhelmed with loneliness, there is a knock on the door, a friendly smile, and someone who cares. When a struggling veteran needs someone to talk to, there is a fellow veteran who understands their experiences and is ready to listen.

Who are these humble heroes? They are our dedicated volunteers, serving in over 150 different locations throughout Tampa Bay. Check out the impact they are making in the community every day! And make sure to thank a volunteer this month for making our community a better place for all.



**Photo Credit: Ashley Morales, St. Pete Catalyst*

"It's clear the students love working with "Grandma B," as 81-year-old Burnett is affectionately nicknamed. The St. Petersburg resident spends more than 60 hours each month volunteering, working with children and mentoring students." Scan the QR code to read Grandma B's story in the St. Pete Catalyst!



"THANK YOU! The service you provide is invaluable to teachers and students. I am so honored that I get to work with Grandma Myrna. She truly has become a special part of the classroom, and I would not be able to move my students along so quickly without the extra help. She is such a beautiful person and loves the students as if they were her own. She has gone out of her way to encourage and motivate them and teach them in a manner that they understand. The students love her so much that I am questioned (interrogated) when she is not here. Again, thank you!

-Marla Litz, 2nd Grade Teacher



"We at Keystone Place LOVE the time that our amazing volunteer Ken spends with us. He has developed a relationship with so many of our residents. They all Love Ken and the kindness and joy that he brings to us twice a week. One of his special friends is Jack who only comes out to play bingo when his daughter OR Ken is here. Ken takes such special care of him. We couldn't be happier and thank God that you brought him to us. Thank you Seniors in Service."



Sylvia Gheen writes letters to encourage a class of Air Force Cadets who are training at the Academy.

Seniors in Service - GEARED UP TO SERVE



Carmen Lake (pictured in the middle) has been a volunteer for 20 years! She has served over 14,759 hours in Pinellas County, helping seniors age with dignity, tutoring and mentoring students, fight food insecurity, and helping others find the volunteer opportunity of their dreams!



Joseph Olivero teaches a tai chi class to veterans at St. Michaels Homeless Veterans Outreach, helping them improve their mental and physical health.. Shoutout to every Operation: Veteran Connect members who shares their talents through service to benefit veterans.



"Volunteering for Seniors in Service makes me feel good! I call bingo at an assisted living community and the residents always thank me for volunteering. I think they realize I could be doing something else, but I choose to spend my time with them. I am lucky to have the good health that allows me to do this."

- Ambassador Anne Kramer



Operation: Veteran Connect Members teach cooking classes to help struggling veterans learn how to make easy budget friendly meals that are delicious!



"Volunteering has helped me to meet very kind and caring people. It also has brought a very special feeling of contentment to me to know I am helping people and the community."

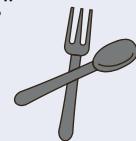
-RSVP Volunteer
Laura Oddo



Volunteers serving hot and nutritious meals to over 60 community members facing homelessness at Christ United Methodist Church in the heart of downtown St. Pete!



Retired Senior Volunteer Program volunteer Ronnie, prepares utensils and ready to serve meals with a smile, at the Pasco County Senior Center in Land O'Lakes. Program Coordinator Tracy Raisor says, "We love Ronnie and so do the seniors. She really is awesome."



Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg and Orlando Health Bayfront Hospital support Children and Seniors' Mental Well-being



Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg

ORLANDO HEALTH

Bayfront Hospital

Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg and Orlando Health Bayfront Hospital are helping children and seniors in South St. Petersburg improve their mental well-being through the Classroom Grandparent Program. Thanks to their \$249,524 grant, we will be able to engage 12 NEW Classroom Grandparent volunteers to mentor students in St. Petersburg's highest-need elementary schools for the next three years! Our Classroom Grandparents receive expert training to help struggling children learn skills to overcome challenges and build resilience while simultaneously improving their own well-being through social connection. A win-win!



Health Buddies Partners with the University of South Florida to Train the Next Generation of Healthcare Care Professionals

This year, students at the University of South Florida studying psychology, aging studies, and nursing have the opportunity to join the Health Buddies Club in partnership with our Health Buddies program. The Health Buddies Club is an on-campus opportunity that offers students studying medicine a real-life experience to help adults suffering from chronic conditions. Students get 12 weeks of training on nutrition, fall prevention, prescription management, health resources, financial fraud, and elder abuse.



Through weekly telephone calls, our volunteers empower their Health Buddies to self-manage their health. Together, Health Buddies participants and volunteers show an improvement in health knowledge, feel connected to the community, enjoy speaking to someone from a different generation, and gain a new friend! Just hear how impactful these connections are by these testimonials:

"Health Buddies impacted my everyday life. I share the information I learned with everyone who will listen! I loved the experience of connecting with my client and providing the education to her, and now I get to share that education and apply it to my life as well". -Zoe C., USF Volunteer

"Pamela has been a life saver for me. I was facing a lot of anxiety and stress due to an upcoming surgery. Thanks to Pamela's reassurance, I made it through my surgery and have been able to have a much easier recovery. She helped put things in perspective and has been a constant friend that I can rely on. I felt alone and isolated before I was connected to Pamela, and now I know I have a friend I can count on!" -Elaine M. Health Buddy Participant

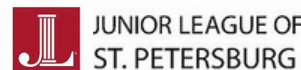
Interested in becoming a Health Buddy or know someone who could benefit from their companionship? Scan the QR code or email HealthBuddies@seniorsinservice.org to learn more.



Thank you to our funders!



Senior Citizens Services





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We Need Your Help Celebrating Our 40th Anniversary!

It's our 40th Anniversary! We've been serving the Tampa Bay community since 1984 thanks to volunteers like you. But we need your help sharing our story. Have you been serving for 5, 10, 15 or even 20 years?! Great! We want to hear from you. Send us any testimonials, pictures, or your favorite memory about volunteering so we can get the word out about the power of volunteering and build a stronger community!



1984



Do you have pictures or memories to share?
Email them to Lindsey May at
lmay@SeniorsInService.org

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