



SENIORS in SERVICE
GEARED UP TO SERVE

GEARED UP News

Seniors in Service presents the
News You Need to Know About
Community Service in Tampa Bay

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE!

Friday, Dec. 4th, 2020
Annual Volunteer
Recognition Luncheon
Sponsored by:



TPepin's Hospitality Centre

11:30 am - 2:00 pm

We're keeping our fingers crossed and still planning this exclusive event to honor the ongoing contributions of our GEARED UP volunteers. Join us for a mouthwatering meal, raffle prizes, gift bags, music and dancing.

Fun! Free! Attendance is limited to Seniors in Service Volunteers.

Call 813-932-5228 to become a Seniors in Service volunteer. Let us help you find the service opportunity of your dreams!

Foster Grandparents GEAR UP Virtually!

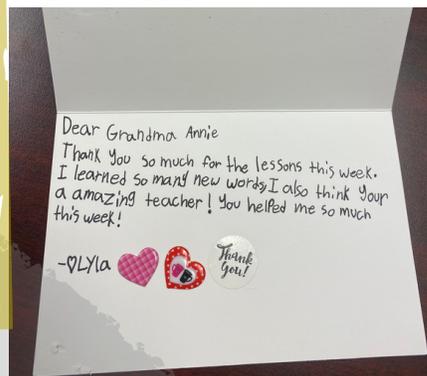
Seniors in Service is equipping our dedicated, caring Foster Grandparent Volunteers with technology to tutor and mentor children virtually. Volunteers will be unable to return to schools physically; yet at-risk children who were already struggling to cope will need their support more than ever. Before, at-risk kids got in-class academic/emotional support that supported their teachers too. They now need support virtually. Both in-class and digital learners will need a supportive presence to navigate these challenging times. And our Senior aged volunteers need a safe way to remain purposeful.

Recent interviews and surveys with teachers tell us that kids who struggled with e-learning in the Spring felt intimidated to ask for help. Teachers say they want Foster Grandparent Volunteers to tutor kids remotely, to help engage parents, and: "Just continue to be a loving supportive presence to help our kids navigate these uncertain times."

We are arming our volunteer tutors, all low-income seniors, with tablets, internet and expert training to tutor kids virtually. In addition, COVID-19 made evident the digital inclusion gap for seniors. Equipping our volunteers with technology will also benefit them personally, providing access to digital services like telehealth to help them stay healthy and safe.



We've already piloted technology from T-Mobile and training from Cyber Seniors for 20 volunteers this summer with generous support from Children's Board of Hillsborough County. A few like "Grandma" Annie helped kids like Lyla with remote learning. "Grandma" Annie was still there - helping Lyla with literacy and social-emotional support. The results? Lyla's thank you note (below) says it best.



And our virtual tutoring pilot is helping kids and seniors across the nation too! The Corporation for National and Community Service asked Seniors in Service to share our approach with our Senior Corps affiliates in a nationwide zoom meeting. Several have followed up to find out more and now plan to arm their own senior-aged volunteers with technology to tutor kids virtually in their community!

Learn more at: www.SeniorsinService.org
Follow us on FB: www.facebook.com/seniorsinservice

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A Message from our CEO

We're in a strange time now. We all feel like we're past the beginning, but it doesn't feel like it's over. Our team has adopted the mantra of social scientist Brene Brown, "The Messy Middle is Where the Magic Is". The messy middle is where the crisis management of the beginning is over, but the end is still off in the distance. We don't know how things will look from one day to the next,

but we continue to move forward one step at time. This is where our staff and volunteers shine as brave, compassionate and empathetic caregivers to one another and themselves.

And we see shimmering glimpses of humanity. Our team has embraced those who are sick, fed people who were hungry, and loved people they don't even know. Our telephone reassurance program (TelePals) has connected people who would never have met before COVID. Our intergenerational impact has been an inspiration of reaching across age and circumstance to embrace one another. Our Senior Companions have stayed in touch with their homebound clients, keeping them connected with hope and possibility. And, our Foster Grandparents have spent the summer getting equipped and trained on technology for virtual tutoring. Children need them more than ever.

Thank you, to our staff and volunteers, who can be so gentle and so tough at the same time. Your strength, perseverance and patience proves the messy middle is where the magic is.

-Robin Ingles, CEO

Our GEARED UP Team

Welcoming New Staff



Maribeth Stacey,
Foster Grandparent Coordinator



Carolina Montoya,
Senior Companion & TelePal Assistant



Michaela Pattison,
Health Buddies Coordinator



Hannah Smith,
Foster Grandparent Admin. Assistant



Justine Montalvo,
Academic Coordinator



Lorene Rodriguez,
Senior Companion & TelePals Assistant



Becky Ford,
Senior Companion Coordinator



Tom David,
Operation: Veteran Connect Coordinator



Crystal Rice,
Director of Finance and Accounting



Darius Mack,
Senior Companion & TelePals Coordinator



Marissa Davis,
Foster Grandparent Coordinator

Service Moments

Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)



Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) collaborates with Florida Food Force to reduce hunger in our community. Since 2012, Florida Food Force has continued to advance their mission to fight hunger through partnerships. They offer an emergency food box service and a weekly program benefiting shelters, homeless projects, pantries, and veterans' needs. Other essential resources are provided along with food. COVID-19 has pushed food insecurity in Tampa Bay to the point of crisis. Florida Food Force addresses this crisis at their facility by serving 400 cars each week, each representing 2-6 families in need. A grateful client shared how much this has meant to her and her family, "My household went from not having enough to put on the table to having enough to share with others." Florida Food Force Vice President Vance McCutcheon says he and his team are dedicated to assisting anyone in the community who needs it, sharing, "to receive a blessing, we must be a blessing." Seniors in Service engages 8 volunteers to assist Florida Food Force in their fight against hunger. Thank you Florida Food Force for supporting our community!

Senior Companion Volunteers help isolated homebound elders or veterans live independently, with dignity, in their own homes. For the past 5 months, while social distancing remained mandatory, Senior Companion Volunteers have continued to serve their clients as TelePals, staying in touch by phone. Now, some volunteers like Asleen Griffin are excited to resume serving their clients in person. Asleen has been providing companionship services to Mr. Jones for approximately 2 years. When she began to serve, Mr. Jones had recently suffered a stroke and was partially paralyzed. He could not use his right hand and was unable to pick up his right foot to walk. He also had a hard time remembering simple words and was unable to read or write. And he had no family in town to help.

Senior Companions



Asleen visited Mr. Jones several times each a week, helping him write, read, and reminding him of words that he had forgotten. When Asleen wrote letters on his behalf, she would have him re-write them. When Asleen read to him, he would repeat the words in the story along with her. Asleen also helped Mr. Jones by going to the grocery store for him. Since Mr. Jones couldn't write, he made a grocery list by drawing pictures of the items he needed. She often would have to guess what the item was and bring it back to him. At times she got it wrong and needed to return to the store. But she didn't mind. Helping Mr. Jones gave her a sense of purpose.

Over time, Mr. Jones grew strong and more verbal. He is now able to write his grocery list in words, with few drawings. Before the pandemic he was even able to get on his golf cart from time to time, going to stores to pick up small items. Asleen says she feels blessed to have been able to help with Mr. Jones' recovery. Mr. Jones shares that Asleen is a dedicated volunteer who shows patience when he has a hard time speaking. They've missed each other and look forward to spending time together in person again, wearing masks and staying safe.

Service Moments

TelePals



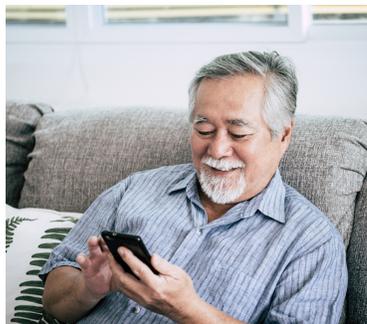
In times of social distancing, connection is essential. TelePals continues to connect people through telephone reassurance, reducing isolation

across Tampa Bay. Seniors in Service has matched 65 TelePals, like Carlis and Ms. Jay. After completing the application and training, Carlis shared her experience, "My call was welcomed by the most lively, exuberant, and most friendly lady you can imagine!" Ms. Jay and Carlis instantly hit it off, excitedly learning more about each other. Carlis was

amazed at how well they were matched, "Ms. Jay and I made an immediate connection. We have so much in common that it is almost mystical. How in the world did Seniors in



Service get it so right?" The pair has a great deal in common, including childhood and life experiences that parallel each other. They talk about anything from their children to food preparation to household chores and challenges. "I feel like I have found a family member," Carlis shared. "Thank you for matching me with this lovely lady, I feel like this connection will last forever."



Operation: Veteran Connect



Seniors in Service Operation: Veteran Connect volunteers serve veterans, active military, and military family members. In July, Operation: Veteran Connect teamed up

with Operation: Military Matters on "Letters with Love," a project to send letters of encouragement to troops overseas. Volunteers wrote over 200 letters to active military members, sending love and support to them during this difficult time. One volunteer shared her motivation: "We may not know them, but we wanted to make sure they know how much we care." We are so thankful for the opportunity to partner with Operation: Military Matters to help serve those who serve our nation!



Service Moments

In times of isolation and distancing, the importance of connection and collaboration cannot be understated. Senior isolation and food insecurity are significant issues in the Tampa Bay area. Even before the pandemic, 1 in 6 Tampa Bay seniors faced hunger every day. COVID-19 pushed them to the brink of crisis. Mandatory social distancing meant that many seniors became homebound and isolated. The rise in already high numbers of isolated seniors led to a 300% increase in requests for home-delivered meals. Many found themselves wait-listed or turned away. One stated, "We didn't know what was happening. We were cut off from the world and our friends and neighbors." At the same time, in the restaurant industry mandatory closures meant loss of customers and revenue. More than that, it forced restaurant owners and chefs to stop doing what they love: serving food and joy.

While some might see two unrelated issues, others recognized an opportunity to connect and help. Area Agency on Aging Pasco-Pinellas (AAAPP) saw the increased isolation of seniors, the loss of revenue for restaurants and connected the two using federal CARES act dollars targeted specifically to feed seniors. Together, Seniors in Service, AAAPP and Neighborly Care Network brought an innovative home-delivery meal program for low-income seniors to life. Faced with the logistical problems of creating a new program, AAAPP reached out to Seniors in Service for assistance. Becky MacKenzie, Director of Program Accountability for AAAPP, explained, "We're used to vendors that are geared toward home delivery. Restaurants are a non-traditional vendor, so it was a learning experience." Becky shared that Seniors in Service made sure the restaurants were in compliance. Seniors in Service hired Morgan Griffin, who tells why she jumped at the chance to spearhead the program. Morgan explained, "I have a background in restaurants, so this seemed like a great opportunity. It was really rewarding to feel like I am actually making a difference and helping those in need."

With Morgan heading the charge, Seniors in Service tackled logistics, from identifying seniors who needed meals to finding and vetting restaurants interested in participating. The process had to be built from the ground up. Seniors in Service partnered with Neighborly Care Network and Pasco County Senior Services to build relationships with local restaurants. Unlike other food delivery programs, the food served through Dining Out At Home is fresh and hot. With Neighborly's guidance, restaurants designed menus to meet the dietary restrictions of older adults. Glenn Wostbrock, restaurateur and owner of Frog Pond, described the menu creation process, "We thought about some of the things seniors might like, generational things. We



make a home-cooked meal that we would provide to our family members while keeping the nutritional value balanced." Glen continued, "We're proud of the menu we created, and we're happy to have the opportunity to be involved and make a difference. To us, it was a blessing."

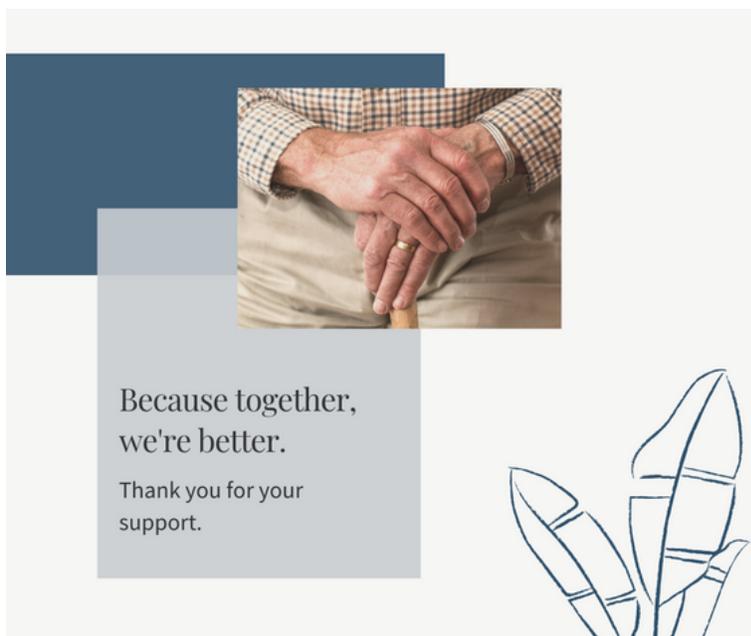
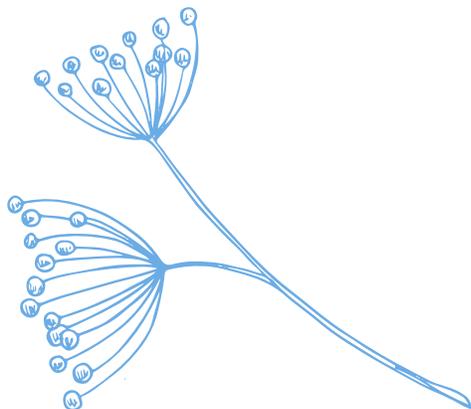
While meals are the primary concern, Dining Out At Home is also delivering social connection to isolated seniors while allowing restaurants to serve up good food and joy to recipients. Vicky, owner of Natalie's Restaurant, stated, "We love working with seniors, most of our customers are seniors." Dining Out At Home gives Vicky and Natalie's staff the chance to continue serving seniors while volunteers ease their isolation. Vicky shared, "When volunteers come back and say the seniors are waiting at the door for their food, that really strikes me. Even if it's a minute or two to talk to the person delivering, it might be the only human interaction they have all day." And volunteers also benefit, telling us how much they appreciate the chance to stay active and purposeful.

Dining Out At Home has been a huge success, delivering 87,103 meals since April to homebound elders. 18 restaurants, including Frog Pond and Natalie's, came together across Pinellas and Pasco counties to serve seniors. Together, our community can make it through good times and bad. Becky put it perfectly, "I think we will look back on these times many years from now and will be able to tell people how our community came together during the pandemic of 2020." Together, we're better.

Dining Out At Home



Thank you to our funders!



Because together,
we're better.

Thank you for your
support.



Partner Highlight

Imagine: you're a senior citizen on a fixed income, and you have been diagnosed with cancer. Before your diagnosis, you budgeted well to pay your bills, and you never missed a payment or required outside assistance. But now, the medical device required for your treatment is driving your electric bill through the roof. You're falling behind on payments and feel like you'll never be able to catch up.

For one of our TelePals clients, it isn't hard to imagine. It is her story. She shared her predicament with her TelePals volunteer, who calls regularly to check in on her. TelePals volunteers are trained to respond with sympathy and to inform Seniors in Service staff about their client's unmet needs. After hearing about this client's struggle, Seniors in Service stepped in to assist by connecting with Womenade of Tampa.

Womenade members are generous, compassionate women who care about others in our community; simply giving back; simply doing good. Their mission is to bring women friends together in an atmosphere of friendship, generosity, and community to provide anonymous, short term, modest financial assistance to eligible individuals and families, seeking help for an urgent need when it is not otherwise available. Womenade of Tampa partners with local organizations to identify those in crisis who can benefit from a one-time grant of \$500 or less.

Womenade makes the process simple. Through partner agencies like Seniors in Service, they were able to respond to our client's urgent need within 24 hours and pay her electric bill. Because of the partnership between Womenade and Seniors in Service, our client is back on her feet and can continue her treatments. Thank you, Womenade, for helping those less fortunate in our community – for simply giving back!



Volunteer Highlight



Tom and Anita Bullaro are Seniors in Service volunteers who run Our Lady's pantry food in Sun City. Before COVID-19, approximately 600,000 people were food-insecure in the Tampa Bay Area. Now, that number has nearly doubled to 1.3 million. Food pantries across our community, including Our Lady of Guadalupe, are working around the clock to ensure that our citizens have access to food. Starting out as volunteers before COVID-19, Tom and Anita saw the enormous need and soon were RUNNING the organization as volunteer co-directors. Tom explained, "Our wonderful initiative is dedicated to assisting those in need of food assistance." Before COVID-19, the pantry had grown into one of the county's largest, helping 200+ families per WEEK. Now, they serve around 375 families across Sun City Center, Wimauma and Balm with an all-volunteer staff. Tom says, "Our initiative wouldn't be possible without our volunteers who come from all walks of life. They all share a commonality in that inner desire to help." Seniors in Service staff connect with volunteers during periodic site visits and volunteer appreciation events. Anita shares that the simple thanks they receive is what drives them to serve. "Families bring us big smiles. Some bring us flowers or hugs. One gentleman brings his guitar and serenades us." Thank you Tom and Anita, for volunteering with us to serve our community!





SENIORS in SERVICE

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THANK YOU,



for your support

Thank you, Suncoast Credit Union, for the fabulous tote bags! Our team will use these to prepare PPE packages for our Senior Companion Volunteers as they start visiting again – safely, following CDC guidelines, of course!