



Stay Strong Tampa Bay

We hope that you and your family are safe. As our community recovers from the destruction brought by Hurricanes Helene and Milton, we feel fortunate to be able to share all the ways that even during this natural disaster, Seniors in Service is helping people in Tampa Bay do what comes naturally – helping friends, neighbors, even total strangers.

Though our hearts are heavy for those who have lost so much, we feel fortunate to report that our staff and volunteers are safe, and even back serving in the classroom, visiting homebound elders, delivering furniture to veterans in need and supporting overwhelmed food pantries.

If you need help, we are ready to assist you. When you are ready to help, we are here to welcome you to join us in helping your neighbors while making new friends.

Help Seniors Rebuild After the Storm: Donate to the Disaster Response Fund

Hurricanes Helene and Milton have left deep scars on our community, and some of the hardest hit are our seniors. Their lives have been turned upside down, and they need more than just a quick fix—they need ongoing support to rebuild. This is where you come in.

We've launched a Disaster Response Task Force to train and mobilize specialized volunteers to serve as resource companions for seniors. These volunteers will help them navigate the overwhelming maze of online forms, insurance claims, and services they desperately need to regain stability.

It's not just about the paperwork, though. It's about caring for people who are at their most vulnerable. Seniors like the woman who lost her fridge and now has no way to keep her medications safe. Or the gentleman who lost everything, and doesn't even have a chair to sit in. These are real stories. Real people in our community who are struggling—alone.

Your donation to the Disaster Recovery Fund will help us send volunteers to be there for them, not just today but for as long as it takes to get them back on their feet. Our volunteers are the lifeline seniors need to navigate the long road to recovery.

Thank you for your compassion. Scan the QR code or visit this link to donate.

<https://seniorsinservice.org/donate/>



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176 Seniors Have Happy Feet and Happy Hearts!

On 9/11 Day of Service, we teamed up with Samaritan's Feet to give away 176 pairs of shoes to seniors throughout Tampa Bay! Many of these seniors are our Classroom Grandparent and Senior Companion volunteers who depend on supportive shoes to help keep them on their feet doing what they love...Serving their community!

For seniors, the right pair of shoes is about more than just comfort. They play a crucial role in preventing falls. Each year, over 3 million older adults are treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries, including broken bones and head injuries, which can be life-threatening. Thanks to Samaritan's Feet, every senior who attended the event left with a brand new, nonslip pair of shoes that fit perfectly!

But the day was about more than just shoes. Each senior received a Hope Tote bag filled with cozy socks, a hygiene kit, and handwritten notes with uplifting messages. Tampa Bay agencies that support seniors joined us to share additional resources. The real magic came from our amazing volunteers who greeted each senior with a smile, helped them find and try on their shoes, served lunch, and made everyone feel special. Thank you to everyone who made this day filled with love, laughter, shoes, and service possible!



Thank You to the Sponsors



SAMARITAN'S FEET



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Classroom Grandparents Honored by Mayor Jane Castor with a Special Back-to-School Gift

There were tears of joy when Janelle McGregor from the City of Tampa Mayor's Office announced each Classroom Grandparent would be given \$100 in Tampa Kind Dash Dollars as a back-to-school gift to recognize the value each "Grandparent" brings to the classroom.

These volunteers do more than help children learn to read—they provide guidance, stability, and a warm, loving presence in the classroom. Thank you Mayor Castor for this wonderful reminder of how deeply valued their contributions are in our community.

"Hurricane Helene Canceled our 40th Anniversary Bridging Generations Dinner: But Your Support Shined Through – Thank You!"

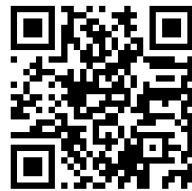
It was supposed to be a celebration of our 40th Anniversary. Unfortunately, Hurricane Helene had other plans. As the storm grew closer we made the difficult decision to cancel our 40th Anniversary Bridging Generations Dinner on September 26. Thank you to everyone who helped plan for this event including our board members, keynote speaker Colonel DJ Reyes, event emcee Al Ruechel, our sponsors, and all who registered to attend.

We want to give a special shoutout to all of our sponsors and attendees who transferred their event support to a donation to Seniors in Service because the needs haven't changed; in fact, they are greater than ever.

If you would like to help support our mission scan the QR code here or visit <https://seniorsinservice.org/donate/>

Thank You to Our Sponsors

Marina Choundas • Mark Hall • Steve Marciano • Kevin Zwetsch



Health Buddies is Spreading Across College Campuses

Health Buddies has hit an incredible milestone this year, serving 212 clients and counting! How did they achieve this? The secret lies in the dedication and energy of college students. Across eight campuses, these students are not just volunteering—they're forming Health Buddies Clubs. These clubs are on a mission to educate their peers about the crucial role companionship plays in the lives of older adults, highlighting the severe health risks associated with isolation, and recruiting new volunteers to join their cause.

One standout leader in this movement is Sana, a Master of Science in Medical Sciences student at USF Morsani College of Medicine. With aspirations of becoming a leader in healthcare, Sana has been a Health Buddies volunteer for the past three years. Her commitment is evident in the strong bonds she's built with her clients, many of whom she still keeps in touch with over the phone.

This school year, Sana has taken on the role of Chapter Support Manager for Health Buddies Clubs. She's spearheading efforts to provide more students with the same enriching, hands-on experience she gained. Most of the volunteers are pursuing health-related professions, and this experience not only enhances their training but also allows them to make a significant impact on the lives of those they serve.

Through the efforts of passionate leaders like Sana and the collective energy of college students, Health Buddies Clubs are transforming lives and fostering meaningful connections.



We're proud to have Health Buddies volunteers at:
University of South Florida | Eckerd College
University of Florida | East Carolina University
University of Tampa | Florida International University
Florida State University | Nova Southeastern University



Are you an adult aged 18 or older looking for a little extra support in your health journey or suffering from a chronic illness? Our Health Buddies are here for you! Reach out today by scanning the QR code below or contact us at HealthBuddies@SeniorsInService.org

Honoring 9/11: Operation Veteran Connect Helps Revitalize The Franciscan Center



Each year, our Operation: Veteran Connect members serving with AmeriCorps and Volunteer Florida come together for the 9/11 Day of Remembrance to honor the day by giving back to the community through volunteering.

For this year's 9/11 Day of Remembrance, our members rolled up their sleeves and headed to The Franciscan Center in Tampa, which provides a peaceful environment for first responders to heal and recover from the cumulative stress of risking their lives to protect our community.

The team focused their efforts on the beautiful St. Francis Labyrinth, a serene space used for reflection and meditation. This sacred area is vital to the center's programs, particularly their Operation Restore initiative, which offers post-trauma training to first responders in need of healing. Volunteers worked diligently to clear debris, tend to the garden, and refresh the pathways of the labyrinth, ensuring it was in pristine condition for those who rely on its peace and tranquility.

By the end of the day, the grounds looked absolutely beautiful, and the Franciscan Center is now fully prepared to welcome first responders for its upcoming programs. A big thank you to everyone who helped make the Franciscan Center shine! Together, we honored the spirit of 9/11 by supporting those who serve our community every day.

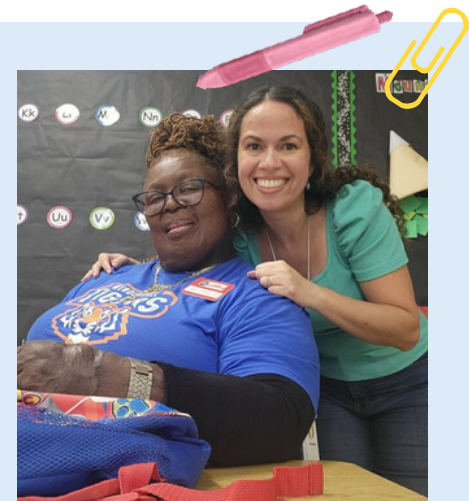
Grandma Ruby Brings Heart to the Classroom

"I absolutely love working with Grandma Ruby in our kindergarten classroom. She's such a wonderful help to me and the children, always bringing warmth, patience, and a kind heart to everything she does. We're so lucky to have her!"
-Ms. Duckwitz at Mendenhall Elementary

Grandma Ruby is one of those folks who makes the world feel a little brighter. As one of our Classroom Grandparents, she's been spreading love, helping children learn to read, and lending a helping hand at Mendenhall Elementary, and the impact she's having is truly special. The children she tutors feel supported and are becoming more confident learners. But here's the thing – the kids aren't the only ones benefiting from it. Volunteering brings Grandma Ruby joy, keeps her active, and gives her a sense of purpose. It's truly a win-win!

Now here's where you come in – we need more folks like Grandma Ruby! Schools like Oak Grove, Mendenhall, and Seminole Elementary are ready to welcome their very own Classroom Grandparents. If you're 55+ and have the loving heart of a grandparent, this is the perfect way to make a difference in a child's life (and yours too!).

So, how about it? Join our team of Classroom Grandparents and help make a world of difference! Scan the QR code or contact us today at FGP@SeniorsinService.org or (813) 492-8926.



Welcome to our newest group of Classroom Grandparents who finished their orientation in September and are now serving in the classroom. **You can sign up to join them!**

Humana Foundation is Helping to Build Connected, Healthy Lives

Seniors in Service is proud to partner with Humana Foundation to bring isolated seniors and veterans the vital support they need, offering both companionship and nutritious food to help them stay connected, healthy, and thriving. We are thrilled to announce that Seniors in Service has received a 2-year grant from Humana Foundation, totaling \$270,000. Thanks to this grant, we'll be able to provide fresh produce deliveries to seniors and veterans each year, ensuring they have access to nutritious food. With our focus on companionship, we'll also help fight isolation by matching volunteers with seniors and veterans who are in need of friendship and support through our companionship programs.



Social connection is a lifeline for seniors, especially those managing chronic conditions. When folks are dealing with ongoing health issues, isolation can make everything feel a little heavier. But having someone to talk to, share a meal with, or just check in on them can make all the difference. It's more than just company—it's about boosting their mental health, reducing stress, and even helping them stick to their medical routines. Strong social ties can really brighten their days and improve their overall well-being.

Good nutrition is the cornerstone of a healthy, happy life, especially for seniors. It's more than just putting food on the table—it's about giving them the strength and energy to enjoy their days, whether that's spending time with friends and family, helping their community, or simply feeling their best. Nutritious meals can help keep health issues like diabetes and heart disease at bay, and a good meal can lift the spirit, too. When we make sure seniors have access to fresh, wholesome food, we're helping them live their fullest lives with vitality and joy.

This partnership with Humana Foundation is a powerful step forward for our mission, and we couldn't be more excited about the positive impact it will have on the lives of those we serve. We look forward to sharing updates and success stories as we embark on this journey. Together, with Humana Foundation's support, we are making strides toward a healthier, more connected community.

Meet the Newest Volunteer Team at Grace's Food Pantry!



We're thrilled to introduce the newest group of volunteers lending their hearts and hands at Grace's Food Pantry in Brentwood Estates! This incredible team shows up each week to serve their neighbors by providing much-needed supplemental groceries to help them make it through the month. Their dedication and commitment to fighting food insecurity are truly inspiring, and we want to give a big shoutout to Grace and Ed for leading the charge and continuing their mission to tackle hunger in Pasco County.

Grace's Food Pantry goes beyond just handing out groceries. They provide a dignified shopping experience where patrons can select the items they need to feed themselves and their families.

With the holidays quickly approaching, the need for food and support is greater than ever. Now is the perfect time to get involved! Many families face additional challenges as they prepare for the season, and food pantries like Grace's rely on the extra help from volunteers to meet the growing demand. If you've been looking for a way to give back, consider signing up to volunteer and help fight food insecurity in your community. You can be the reason a family has enough food on their table during this special time of year!



Thank you to these dedicated volunteers for their service, and to Grace and Ed for their tireless work in making Pasco and Pinellas County a more connected community!

Scan the QR code to learn more or contact us at RSVP@SeniorsInService.org

Operation: Veteran Connect is Creating a Safe Place for Veterans



Congratulations Grayson!
Grayson is one of our youngest volunteers who received the YEA! Award from Hillsborough County. Grayson was honored for his leadership and volunteers service to support veterans with Operation: Veteran Connect.

Veteran suicide has been a heartbreaking issue for too long, with over 6,000 veterans across the U.S. taking their own lives each year, including more than 500 right here in Florida. Thanks to The Fire Watch's Safe Place suicide prevention training, our Operation: Veteran Connect members are now better equipped to recognize the warning signs of a veteran in crisis and connect them to the help they need. This training is crucial in our mission to support veterans, ensuring they have a Safe Place to turn to in times of need.

But our team didn't stop there! We also got some hands-on training from Hershey and Nolan, E5 Therapy's pups to learn how canine-assisted therapy is beneficial for military veterans. Thanks to these amazing resources, we're ready to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our veterans, making sure they know we've got their backs.

Senior Companion Makes a Heartwarming Connection



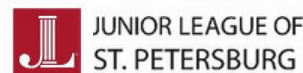
For years, Barbara tried to manage on her own, but she knew she was putting her safety at risk. Barbara is legally blind, a widow, and has no family nearby for support. Tasks that were once easier with her husband's help, like cooking a meal, moving around safely, and tidying the house, became increasingly difficult by herself.

Everyone in the room felt Barbara's joy and relief when she first met Cynthia, her Senior Companion. This moment reminded us just how much friendship can mean, especially for someone who is used to feeling alone.

Barbara and Cynthia held hands the entire time, smiling and laughing like they had known each other for years. You could sense the warmth between them. By the end of the meeting, Barbara said something to Cynthia that tugged at all our heartstrings: "Your voice makes me feel comfortable and happy." For Barbara, Cynthia is a lifeline, helping her navigate the challenges of her life with warmth, compassion, and care. Cynthia and Barbara are off to a beautiful start, and we can't wait to see how their friendship blossoms.

This is what the Senior Companion Program is all about – not just lending a helping hand but bringing a little joy and friendship into someone's life. We're always on the lookout for more volunteers like Cynthia, willing to step in and make a difference. So, if you've got some time to spare and a heart full of kindness, we'd love for you to join us in brightening the days of seniors like Barbara. **Scan the QR code to learn more or contact us at SCP@SeniorsInService.org.**

Thank you to our funders!





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Do you want to help?

We're forming a Disaster Response Task Force, and you can join.

In the wake of a natural disaster, we all want to do what comes naturally—help our friends, neighbors (and even perfect strangers). You don't need special skills, just a heart for service.

The recovery from Hurricanes Helene and Milton will take months and even years. We want to create a team that walks alongside our neighbors through this process, no matter how long it takes. We're forming a Disaster Response Task Force to support people with immediate disaster recovery and future disaster preparedness.

If you're aged 55+ and want to help, we'll find a service opportunity that fits your talents and passion. There's a place for everyone, from collecting donations, delivering meals, cleaning up debris, assisting with insurance or FEMA, to offering reassurance and friendship to someone who feels overwhelmed.

Scan the QR Code or visit this link to register for more information:

<https://seniorsinservice.link/DisasterResponseTaskForce>

