Our Service Impact in 2020-21!

Now serving all of Boston, Brookline, Newton, Somerville and Cambridge.

The Mission of FriendshipWorks

FriendshipWorks reduces isolation, enhances the quality of life, and preserves the dignity of older adults in Greater Boston. We accomplish this by recruiting, training, and matching volunteers of all backgrounds with older adults for friendship and support.

FriendshipWorks currently serves more than 1713 older adults annually with the help of more than 650 volunteers providing friendship, support, and assistance.

We have taken precautions to ensure that everyone remains as safe as possible, so our programs have adapted to ensure continuity of connection between older adults and their volunteers since the pandemic began in 2020. While we are physically distanced, wear masks, and monitor vaccine roll out programs, we continue to keep our programs running using new and old ways to connect and engage. Our Friendly Visitor program connected elders and volunteers by phone, by letters and cards, and by Zoom where possible. Friendly Helpers delivered groceries and medications and cleared pathways so older adults could get to their mailboxes to receive mail, pay bills, and vote, and now assist in other safe ways.

Medical Escorts accompany elders to appointments so check-ups, treatments, and medications can continue, and may take people to their vaccines where possible. Meanwhile, our MusicWorks program held 6 outdoor concerts in the fall and delivered 850 music CDs during the holidays. Our ‘Relaxing Through the Arts’ program offered poetry and art classes outdoors and online, and the ‘PetPals’ teams sent videos to their matches and 273 stuffed animals to the buildings PetPals teams visit to provide some familiar comfort.

A pop-up Card-making initiative that began last spring is still going strong having delivered more than 1800+ cards and letters to isolated older adults! What began as a way to connect and make a difference for people of all ages, has blossomed into a robust initiative delivering messages, smiles and connection thanks to families, area groups, and organizations that have created monthly-themed homemade cards and handwritten letters.

If you have would like to make a referral, need a Medical Escort, want to become a volunteer, make a donation or would like to connect, please visit us at www.fw4elders.org
Friendly Visiting

- 750 matches were active during the past year
- Over 50% of matches have been meeting for 12 months or more
- 555 elders benefited from friendly visiting over the past year

Medical Escort

- 108 elders received medical escorts to appointments
- During the pandemic period from March 2020 to December 2020, 90 elders were able to attend medical appointments, receive diagnosis, and their medications.

Friendly Helping

- 76 elders received one-time or short-term assistance (“helps”)
- The majority of short-term assistance was related to housework (pre-March) and grocery/errands during March-May 2020
- Volunteers gave over 530 hours in short-term assistance
- More than 1800+ cards have been sent to resident buildings and nursing homes.

MusicWorks

- MusicWorks held almost 100 groups in 7 different elder buildings
- MusicWorks held 6 outdoor concerts between July and October 2020.
- MusicWorks coordinated with its musicians to create 2 bilingual CDS distributed to more than 900 older adults between December - May).
- The first of 4 MusicWorks concerts have been broadcast on Boston and Brookline’s public access stations.

PetPals

- Over 39 teams of pets & volunteers visited assisted living & nursing homes last year
- During COVID, PetPals teams created video greetings for their human friends
- PetPals received 2 grants to distribute 273 plush animals with homemade cards in December 2020 and March 2021 to 10 assisted living & nursing facilities FriendshipWorks serves.

Relaxing through the Arts

- Relaxing through the Arts visited five nursing homes last year bringing reflection, music, and companionship.
- Relaxing through the Arts has made and delivered more than 125 cards in the past several months to assisted living & nursing homes.

FriendshipWorks Outreach & Education

- Volunteer Listening Sessions (Summer 2020)
- First online Low-Vision Forum at which specialists and experts in the field presented (September 2020)
- LGBT Anti-Aging partnership
- 3 LGBT StoryShare Sessions
- Service of Remembrance (DEC. 9, 2020)
- 2nd Prudential Night of Lights highlights FriendshipWorks mission (FRI, DEC 11)
- Blue Skies Ahead: Winter Wellness session (January 2021)
Volunteer Engagement: Online Game Night and Creativity & Inspiration Sessions (March & April 2021)

Walk to End Elder Isolation: a Virtual Gathering on May 17, 2020

Hundreds gathered online to see the David Libby Volunteer Awards presentation, hear recipient stories and LIVE music, participate in trivia, and then take their walks!

The Walk garnered over $78,200 from over 690 individual donations, 38 teams, 17 corporate and 8 individual sponsors!

FriendshipWorks has participated in 11 regional and national Webinars/Seminars/Conferences and area partnerships

- AgeStrong Boston
- AARP MA - year long campaign to highlight ways to reduce social isolation among older adults. #ReachOutMa
- Babson College
- Harvard University
- Shepherd Centers
- Newton City Council
- Newton Free Library
- Shepherd Centers of America National Conference
- Coalition to End social Isolation and Loneliness had a conference in Oct
- Massachusetts Service Alliance sponsored a webinar on inclusive volunteering
- FW present at the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaboration’s webinar Technology as a Social Determinant of Health.
- Social Wellness Series participant with Kasley Killam, founder of Social Health Labs

In their own words...

The best way to show what a gift to FriendshipWorks means is to share the words we often hear from those who interact with FriendshipWorks.

Through FriendshipWorks, I’ve gained a friend. And I’ve gained a community of people who care. — Maggie Fisher, Friendly Caller Volunteer

Without this program, far too many seniors would not get the care they need. — Russ Colton, Medical Escort Volunteer

We can’t do what we need to without a service like FriendshipWorks Medical Escorts. Thank you! — Martha, MGH healthcare worker

My friendly visitors really brighten my day. They have really helped me tremendously. — Elaine, recipient

I always know I can count on FriendshipWorks volunteers to give me a hand. And I’ve had nothing but good experiences with all of them. — Sheldon, recipient

FriendshipWorks has been an unbelievably invaluable resource to my family. Every volunteer we’ve had over the years has been wonderful. — Robin, family member of Sheldon, recipient