When the country declared COVID-19 a national emergency, I was reading the news and scrolling through social media in shock. At that time, I was a few months away from wrapping up my masters at Harvard’s T. H. Chan School of Public Health. I could hardly believe that my degree would end in a global public health crisis.

Ironically, I had gone to grad school to specialize in isolation and loneliness—and we were about to enter months of separation and social distancing. Being familiar with the huge body of research that links social isolation to everything from common colds and cognitive decline to heart disease and mortality, I was deeply concerned.

I have long thought of connection as a healthy habit, just like nutrition, exercise, and sleep, and that we should view health as not only physical or mental but also social. During the pandemic, everyone’s social health has suffered. We’ve all had to exercise our connection muscles in new ways—over technology or from a safe distance.

But the public often doesn’t realize that isolation has been a way of life for many older adults since long before COVID-19 struck. In addition to the significant emotional cost, this takes a toll on the healthcare system and economy.

That’s why FriendshipWorks plays such an important role. From a public health perspective, I believe that programs like Friendly Visiting are essential community resources. I also know that the benefits are bidirectional; if you are an elder friend, you enjoy companionship and support, and if you are a younger volunteer, you enjoy the friendship and gain a sense of meaning and purpose.

Shortly after the lockdown began, I connected with the FriendshipWorks team through our participation on the Massachusetts Task Force to End Loneliness & Build Community—a statewide coalition that formed before the pandemic. In partnership with over 20 organizations, we launched the #ReachOutMA campaign to inspire people to connect in pandemic-safe ways.

This campaign is based on the belief that small gestures can make a big difference and brighten someone’s day: giving a friend a genuine compliment, making a surprise phone call to a family member, helping an isolated neighbor with groceries. Whether you are giving or receiving these gestures, it is the connection that matters.

I learned about the importance of upstream interventions that create the conditions for health and prevent illness in the first place. There are many steps our society needs to take to create better conditions for social health and prevent isolation and loneliness.

But through my collaboration on the Task Force, I saw how each of us can meaningfully influence our communities through programs like Friendly Visiting and campaigns like #ReachOutMA. My hope is that, as the pandemic wanes and thereafter, people of all ages have learned new ways to feel connected and supported.

Together, we can change the statistics on isolation and loneliness—and in many ways; the pandemic may help us do just that, by amplifying the work of organizations like FriendshipWorks and catalyzing a movement toward greater social health.

Kasley Killam, MPH, is the founder of Social Health Labs, an Encore Public Voices Fellow, and a World Economic Forum Global Shaper. Learn more and connect with her at kasleykillam.com.
This is a quote from an older adult to his friend, a FriendshipWorks volunteer. And when I hear these words, I know that we are doing something right. I know that throughout this past year—as we had to pivot so many of our programs to keep our recipients, volunteers, and staff safe from COVID-19—our mission and vision still endure and have a great impact. It is with the strength and dedication of all of those who have supported us with their time and philanthropic giving that we have remained successful in our work. Together we are conduits for critical connections, life-affirming friendships, purpose, and joy. We are having a positive impact on thousands of lives.

During these past 12 months—our 36th year, one that isolated all of us from each other, FriendshipWorks created new ways to carry out our mission. In this special issue of FriendshipMatters which celebrates friendship, interdependence, and connection, you will read about some of our program adaptations and new initiatives. You will hear stories from volunteers and recipients about their growing friendships. They show us how their involvement with FriendshipWorks and knowing they have a friend to count on has given them a sense of belonging and improved their quality of life.

As the leader of this marvelous endeavor, this is what is of particular note for me:

• In the summer and fall, I experienced the joy of attending several of our MusicWorks concerts in courtyards of elder buildings. I listened, sang, and danced along with the residents and staff to live music—sax, flute, guitar, and vocals. We smiled through our masks and shook the maracas we brought for everyone. Many elders came outside, others participated through their windows or from their balconies. The feeling of togetherness and abandon, even for just a short while, changed the fabric of my day, as I know it did for each person present.

• A very different activity was participating in FriendshipWorks 3rd Low Vision (first on-line) Forum. I learned from speakers, the panel, and the audience about the special challenges during this pandemic of being isolated and having low or no vision. Valuable feedback provided insight and resources and tools for Forum attendees, particularly in how to help someone with low vision while remaining socially distanced.

• To date, volunteers ages 12 to 70 have made and delivered 2750 handcrafted, personalized cards. Happily, this initiative is still going strong!

• Videos of pets have been created and shared with residents of assisted living and nursing homes through our PetPals program, and gifts of 273 plush stuffed animals were purchased through two grants to provide the comfort of touch and a reminder of the unconditional love that pets bring.

• And talk about impact: our Medical Escort program has remained open, ensuring that nearly 100 older adults could get the medical attention, treatment, or medication they needed.

Thanks to the impact of your involvement and the dedication of our community to our mission, the sampling of the activities and experiences noted above took place throughout the pandemic and offer you just a glimpse into the lives we have touched. Did we stand the test? I think we did.

In friendship,
Volunteer-Driven Means Volunteer Impact

We’ve heard the question asked many times: What difference can one person make?

Perhaps that is illustrated in the conversation between a mouse and a wren about the impact of a snowflake.

“How much do you think a snowflake weighs?” the mouse asked the wren.

“Oh, obviously, it weighs nothing!” the wren replied.

“I disagree,” said the mouse.

“I watched the snowfall and slowly accumulate on the bough of a pine tree. I counted the flakes as they fell. Finally, when one snowflake fell and settled on the branch, the branch fell to the ground. One snowflake does weigh something—it weighed enough to make that branch fall to the ground. One snowflake made a difference!”*

In this season of change, it is reasonable to think about the impact we each make on ending elder isolation and creating social connections, one person at a time. Because to the individual, one volunteer makes all the difference in the world.

It’s that phone call, letter, or online visit from a Friendly Visitor, a task or an errand by a Friendly Helper, the joy music brings during an outdoor MusicWorks concert, the smiles a pet photo or video elicits from our PetPals program or a critical doctor appointment that has been kept thanks to a Medical Escort. Together, we are changing the world one person at a time multiplied by the many individuals who make up our volunteer corps—now more than 650 people strong!

We know that community connection is critical during times of crisis. It has never been truer than during the pandemic we are currently experiencing. According to a recent study “It is only through community support that those who are clinically vulnerable and who are required to ‘shield’ by staying at home for a protracted length of time can successfully self-isolate and maintain social distancing.”**

At the beginning of the pandemic, our Friendly Visiting volunteers quickly switched from visiting in person to calling or video visiting, ensuring continuity of connection. Many new volunteers stepped up to create social connections in their community during a time of increased physical distancing. A unique initiative—card-making—was launched and is still going strong a year later! Eager to create connection by closing the physical distance gap, families, individuals, and organizations participated creating more than 2000 homemade cards that have been sent to isolated older adults.

Volunteers have delivered groceries and medications, cleaned up yards, and cleared walkways. In fact, without the support of our volunteers, older adults might have gone without consistent connection or missed a medical appointment or medication. They created a different kind of community—for both the volunteer and the recipient.

We will never know exactly how many lives we contributed to—but we do know that the volunteers of FriendshipWorks are making the entire Greater Boston community safer, healthier, connected, and more resilient. In a volunteer survey done in 2020, FriendshipWorks volunteers told us that they gained a purpose, hope, and learned resiliency by connecting with their matches regularly. In Volunteer Listening sessions, we heard how they wanted to have more resources to help their matches and communities.

In a volunteer-driven organization, recognizing and caring for its volunteers as well as its community has become even more essential as we move forward. So, with all the excellent input we received, moving forward, FriendshipWorks will be offering regular Volunteer Engagement events that foster community, connection, and creativity.

After all, many snowflakes build a thing of beauty that can cover a community.

*Full story can be found at One Hundred Wisdom Stories from Around the World, Margaret Silf, p.29.


**Full article can be found at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/17579320949582.
Meet Cathy Fabrizi
Healthcare Worker and FriendshipWorks Supporter

It’s hard to believe that the vibrant woman projecting good energy across a Zoom meeting accomplishes all that she does and still takes time to champion a cause she not only believes and invests in but also makes part of her professional life.

On a late afternoon between shifts at Boston Medical Center, Cathy Fabrizi is relaxed and engaging, even as she shares a deep concern for the nurses she manages and the patients they serve.

“At the start of the pandemic, there was just so much going on. The hospital had to rearrange beds to make more room, just so many things happening. But I wasn’t serving in the capacity of a hands-on nurse. I wrestled with the feeling that I was not doing enough,” she says, growing thoughtful.

Given that Cathy is a Nurse Manager for Geriatrics Offsite Programs at Boston Medical Center, and that the effect on the elderly and most vulnerable was at the center of the COVID crisis, in reality, she had more than enough to do.

“I was doing more listening to my colleagues and supporting them to do their jobs. I found that was the best thing I could do — keep supporting them so they could be safe and provide the care needed.”

That skill of listening is a key to any healthy relationship and has been paramount during this pandemic, where ‘hybrid’ care — a mix of telemedicine appointments online and by telephone — has been practiced to keep everyone connected to healthcare while ensuring safety.

“We have to help patients find balance. How do we take care of them? Do they need to come to the hospital, or can they be best served at home? We were working with limited resources, and we worried about their needs being met. People called us, and we tried to call them back and check on them. Our goal is care, and providing that level of care was difficult,” she admits.

Cathy was well aware of the challenges that come with caring for older adults; she worked for years in New York as a nurse and experienced the issues of repeat visitors to the hospital. “We would discharge patients out to the community. And they would come back. We couldn’t understand why. We revisited that because we thought we had a good plan set up for the patient.”

When she moved to Boston in 1983, it was another medical professional, a doctor, who introduced her to FriendshipWorks, and she was impressed with the model of providing connection. She started referring her patients for services, and the relationship deepened over the years.

“When you work in a hospital, you see what’s happening inside, not necessarily outside.” That’s where FriendshipWorks has been a key support for medical personnel, according to Cathy.

“I want people to know that FriendshipWorks has many different programs—in addition to Medical Escorts—that can help isolated elders to improve their health and well-being. Addressing isolation impacts the mental health of those you serve, which is just as important as addressing physical health.”

Cathy believes that being a geriatric nurse provides her with a holistic approach to care by seeing the bigger picture beyond the care that a hospital provides. She points out that family members who may be caregivers need and get a break by having a FriendshipWorks Friendly Visitor for an hour so that medication can be picked up. Or, having an invaluable Friendly Helper sort paperwork to pay bills, check the mail, or even clear a path to the mailbox helps so much.

Cathy loves to share how FriendshipWorks has made a difference to patients and colleagues with
whom she has worked.

“FriendshipWorks is a trusted friend, and colleagues know that FriendshipWorks is here to support many of our isolated elders in so many ways,” she explains, adding: “Specifically, for healthcare by getting elders to appointments when there is no other way to get there and supporting them through the appointment; helping elders understand what the provider is talking about; reinforcing the providers’ health instructions and assisting in obtaining medications or supplies from the pharmacy.”

The irony of the headlines in the last year is not lost to those working and supporting the field of social isolation and well-being. For 36 years, FriendshipWorks has made reducing elder isolation the heart of its mission. Now, during the pandemic, more research and studies have shown a clear path between social isolation and the well-being of older adults as a social determinant of health. Cathy feels this is a small victory for what she has seen and experienced throughout her career.

“Care of older adults is not top of mind. Geriatrics is last on the list. Social isolation is so obvious but people don’t think about it as a mental health issue. The tasks get done but they have to think about the bigger picture. In geriatrics, you have a more holistic approach so we can recognize when social isolation and loneliness affect older adults, what supports they need to have, or what barriers exist.”

While physical distancing continues as vaccinations roll out, Cathy believes FriendshipWorks will continue to be an important part of assisting older adults in the future to access their health care and overall well-being. “FriendshipWorks was here helping elders before the pandemic and will be needed well after the pandemic resolves—maybe more so.”

Cathy’s message to our readers: “Don’t forget about our elders. They have a lot to offer us that we can learn from. They have given a lot to our city and our country. Elders deserve attention and love back. The people we serve at Boston Medical Center need the support of other people. People can make a difference by supporting FriendshipWorks!”

The Impact of Volunteers, Interns and Fellows

FriendshipWorks benefits from the energy and talents of office volunteers and interns, and collaborations with other volunteer organizations. In addition to over 650 direct-service volunteers, FriendshipWorks office volunteers share their skills to move our work forward. Long-term volunteer Zippy Ostro has dedicated countless hours as our bookkeeper. She is a key member of the FriendshipWorks team; things just run better when Zippy is around. This last year, Priscilla Ballou and Bruce Cohen worked in the office, providing tech help, grant writing, and event support. Development volunteer Alice Zaff shared her years of experience in donor engagement, helping us improve our individual giving.

Organizations like Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS) and Ignatian Volunteer Corp (IVC) connect us with a pool of talented and invested volunteers who strengthen our work. QVS places recent college graduates from around the country with social services organizations committed to making the world a better place. Last year, we hosted our first QVS fellow, Grace Beavin who conducted community outreach and engaged in over 20 Medical Escorts. In September, our second fellow, Olivia Tennyson, began working with us overseeing our LGBT Elder Initiative and will support our many planned educational programs over the course of the next year.

We are also hosting two Ignatian Volunteer Corp volunteers, Joanne Meehan and Joan Byrne. Joanne is helping with office administrative activities, and Joan is supporting our outreach efforts. They both have previous experience in the health care sector, and Joan is a long-time Medical Escort for FriendshipWorks. They each give two days a week of dedicated service to improve our work.

We are grateful for the intelligence and creativity that interns bring to our programs. Last summer, we hosted Harvard Divinity School intern Nick Scrimenti, who facilitated a series of Volunteer Listening Sessions.

In addition to over 650 direct-service volunteers, FriendshipWorks office volunteers share their skills to move our work forward.

“"
Like so many things and people that connect the Irish of Boston to their roots in Ireland, FriendshipWorks’ Telefriends program had its beginnings on the Emerald Isle. In 1988, Mary Nalley, a long-term care nurse, invited her mother to come to live with her. Recognizing the isolation her mother—and many other older adults in rural areas were experiencing—she set up Bingo at her home. When 40 people attended from rural areas, Mary knew she was on to something. When she asked what these older adults wanted and needed, their resounding answer was connection. Thus Telefriends was born.

Mary recognized what FriendshipWorks did in 1984, that social isolation is prevalent in older adults and has dire effects on their health and well-being. Eventually, the program grew to encompass dozens of counties all over Ireland and transferred across the Atlantic, landing in Boston at the Irish Pastoral Centre.

Susan Doody began working with the Telefriends Program in 2012, implementing the Irish model as a call-out line to connect with elders in the community. In December 2016, Susan connected with FriendshipWorks at a networking meeting of senior service agencies. Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti was invited to attend the next meeting, where she learned more about Telefriends and began talking about program similarities.

“Our goal was to build partnerships and bring referrals, secure funding, share resources, and expand service areas,” Susan explains. In 2017, we began a three-year pilot project to work with FriendshipWorks and reached 60 seniors as a milestone,” she adds.

In 2020, many things changed significantly, but for FriendshipWorks, it was for the better! After the Irish Pastoral Centre was restructured, Susan was hired as the new FriendshipWorks Telefriends Coordinator, and now, we celebrate a year of partnership and friendship.

“Telefriends is an important addition to the many services that FriendshipWorks provides. It especially helps to make the social connection and provide extra support to those finding themselves in need of a friend.”

Susan notes that some people have been Telefriends for eight years, and during that time, some recipients have had circumstances change due to moves, illnesses, loss of a spouse, or other situations. “And yet, Telefriends can talk with people going through transitions,” Doody notes.

Echoing a FriendshipWorks’ Volunteer survey done last summer, Doody says that volunteers in the Telefriends program are also experiencing benefits to connecting during the pandemic.

“Volunteers talked about resilience and how the people they talked to cope with challenges. It put their lives into perspective,” she said, noting that sharing these things deepens their compassion. “A physical situation can make them feel down. You just have to walk alongside them and make sure it is not cutting them off,” she offers.

For older adults who share their experiences, it provides them with a sense of dignity and purpose—tenets of FriendshipWorks’ mission. “Older adults feel they are being productive and helping, and that makes them feel worthwhile,” Doody added.

As the Irish say: *Slainte! Health!*
Supporter & Telefriends Match: Rev. David Shepherd King

Reverend David Shepherd King is still a busy individual. After 65 years as an ordained minister, a life of service devoted to caring for others and in particular, serving older adults, he continues to be a resource for people and engage with others. At 93, he says he comes by his longevity honestly, which gives him a unique perspective into what older adults need and may be experiencing as they age.

“I had two grandmothers who lived into their 100th year and a sister who lived into her 90s,” he says by phone.

Serving as a minister in Amherst and Connecticut, Rev. King worked primarily with aging adults. It was in Connecticut while working at the Center City Church with the Aging, that their name caught his attention. “It said WITH the Aging NOT for,” he emphasizes, adding, “The church was encouraging people to do things (as able) for themselves instead of having things done for them.”

So that philosophy felt like a natural segue when he moved back to Boston and met FriendshipWorks’ Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti through what was then Match-Up Interfaith Volunteers (which became FriendshipWorks). And thus began his journey with FriendshipWorks more than 36 years ago.

“Janet and I were part of a small group talking about housing, health, transportation, etc., but we did not discuss the life of the spirit. So, we began running seminars for people working in the field of aging to talk about spiritual life,” he said.

He watched his own family’s experience with health challenges that decreased their social circles until eventually, they lost contact with friends, creating a terrible sense of isolation. Rev. King did all he could to assist them, so when FriendshipWorks came into being, he was one of its original supporters.

“Now, I am a recipient of their services,” he candidly offers.

Rev. King participates in the Telefriends (see adjoining article) initiative administered through the Friendly Visiting program, in which volunteers call people every week to check-in and connect.

“Susan Doody calls me, and we talk. I have people that call me every day and every week.”

He notes that in his three decades with FriendshipWorks, it has always impressed him that FriendshipWorks demonstrates a desire to keep people in contact and in touch.

Rev. King feels his life experience and work have come full circle.

“I’m 93 years old, so I found out just how important friendships are.”

Card-Making Pop-up Initiative Delivers Connection and Smiles

Good old-fashioned cards and letters to elders have made a most-welcome reappearance during the pandemic, keeping the post office busy and senders and recipients connected. Homemade cards have created smiles, memories, moments, and connections for individuals with no access to technology. The telephone and mailbox have become lifelines.

Thanks to FriendshipWorks’ Card-Making Initiative, older adults in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and senior residences have received 1800 cards and letters regularly as snail mail has come back into favor.

What started as a pop-up initiative for a few people wanting to make a difference for the most socially isolated elders quickly gained traction among all ages, civic groups, families, and individuals. The annual Gay For Good Valentine’s Day card-making event added 950 cards! As of this printing, more than 2750 total cards have been sent to older adults in need of connection, and the initiative is still going strong, with monthly themes and family and groups proudly sharing their creativity on social media.
PetPals Delivered Comfort in Pawsitively Delightful Ways

FriendshipWorks volunteers are providing friendship and support with phone calls, accompaniment to medical appointments, personalized cards, online visits, errands, and during the fall, outdoor music concerts. But noticeably absent from that mix were the PetPals teams.

“Since the start of the pandemic, our PetPals teams have been unable to visit their friends in nursing homes, assisted living, and residences due to safety measures. So the PetPals teams put together a Pawsitive Pets video with their dogs to provide greetings, updates, and demonstrate some new skills,” said Janet Hirsch, FriendshipWorks PetPals Program Coordinator. “But staff and volunteers still wanted to find a tangible way to truly connect.”

Hirsch recounts that surveys were sent to facilities and residences that FriendshipWorks serves. The responses were overwhelming among the choices presented—stuffed animals would be loved. So FriendshipWorks received a grant for PetPals to purchase unique stuffed animals from Memorable Pets. Now, FriendshipWorks’ PetPals program can provide the next best thing to an in-person PetPals visit!

“These specially designed plush animals can uniquely bring the unconditional love and comfort of a pet to people,” added Hirsch.

This pop-up initiative was pawsitively wonderful! Our PetPals program brought some elders an experience as close as possible to the comfort and touch of a pet, thanks to quality, soft-stuffed animals. Hirsch and her husband David Helm delivered more than 167 pets along with homemade cards to six buildings in Greater Boston.

“Staff from buildings like Sherrill House, Landmark at Longwood, and Mount Pleasant have been thrilled with the animals,” Hirsch noted. “They have reiterated how much these pets will make a difference to the individuals for whom they are intended. The smiles on their faces have made it all worthwhile.”

New research indicates that animals have emerged as one of the important factors filling the loss of human contact and touch due to prolonged social isolation. Those losses have been particularly difficult for vulnerable individuals for whom pets provide comfort and family connection.

“It has also been trying for the teams and pets that miss visiting their friends, so Memorable Pets feel like a good interim solution,” noted Hirsch.

When asked about her new “friend,” one recipient summed it up, “He’s mine and I love him.” The initiative has been so well received that the second round of 106 stuffed animals was recently delivered!

Moving forward in 2021, PetPals will continue to evaluate when it is safe to begin visiting nursing homes and assisted living facilities again. Much will depend on the state of the pandemic, COVID-19 and vaccination levels, facilities establishing when they can allow visitors, and when our volunteers are vaccinated. But we hope to at least be able to visit with residents outside in the not-too-distant future!
Last May, all of Boston was introduced to the beautiful friendship of Davida Pekarsky and her match, Divya Pawar, thanks to a feature story written and broadcast by WGBH. At the time, the state was in lockdown, and people, schools, and businesses were trying to sort out how best to keep moving forward.

Of particular concern were seniors and those with chronic health conditions who had been disproportionately affected by the COVID virus through social distancing policies and stay-at-home orders. As a result, for FriendshipWorks, whose mission is to reduce elder isolation, 2020 was the busiest year in its 36-year history.

Davida and Divya are part of the Friendly Visitor program and for Davida, the program was a lifeline. Unable to leave her residence or fully interact with others due to safety concerns, her weekly phone and Zoom calls with Divya were not only reassuring, but essential.

"Being able to see a person as well as talk with them, even if it is through technology, was comforting," she explains. "You can see facial characteristics, expressions, and gestures."

That is how their relationship progressed until the warmer weather allowed for in-person outdoor visits that were six-feet apart. For Davida, it was a turn in the road for the better. "We were able to safely interact, see other people in our building, and look forward to things."

Both ladies agree that having a routine during the pandemic to break up the days and weeks proved to be essential as days blended into weeks and weeks became months.

"It gave some momentum to the week if I knew that people were coming," she added. That was something, Davida emphasizes, that connected to her overall well-being.

Divya concurs. "The regular interaction provided some structure for me; I was interacting with a friend, and I've been grateful for that."

"It helps to have a companion like that. It fulfills a lot of functions; in communications and organizing my thoughts about certain things, having someone to talk to about things, and visits – in-person or online - gives direction to my days," said Davida.

Despite the four-and-a-half decades that separate them, their friendship remains timeless. "Our relationship has evolved – we've become quite good friends," Davida relates.

She relates that Divya has been caring for a very sick pet, so it's been a difficult time for her. "I've been trying to comfort her [Divya] about that. I think it's helped her. And in turn," she adds thoughtfully, "it has helped me. We've become reciprocal friends, which is really nice."

Davida says that their friendship has become both comforting and nourishing.

Divya echoes the sentiments of her friend. "Davida is a friend; a good friend. We know each other's personal experiences. She is like a guide for me."

Now that a year has passed, and there have been steps toward new normalcy, Davida is ready to get going.

"I'm looking for ways to try new things, like going to Walgreens!"

Her friendship with Divya was the one constant in a year that was continually changing.

"It is a wonderful opportunity to have the friendship of somebody," Davida says of FriendshipWorks.

Davida and Divya – A Friendly Visiting Match That Made the News!

Last May, all of Boston was introduced to the beautiful friendship of Davida Pekarsky and her match, Divya Pawar, thanks to a feature story written and broadcast by WGBH. At the time, the state was in lockdown, and people, schools, and businesses were trying to sort out how best to keep moving forward.

"It is a wonderful opportunity to have the friendship of somebody," Davida says of FriendshipWorks.
Volunteers

Still Sharing and Making Beautiful Music Together

Just as the notes on a sheet of music culminate in a work of art, the creative efforts of our MusicWorks program ensured that a synchronous blend of outdoor concerts and specially recorded CDs brought the joy of music to dozens of older adults, caregivers, and building staff all year.

From the outset of the pandemic, MusicWorks musicians, staff, and volunteers were eager to provide a musical link for isolated older adults with whom we knew music not only resonated but also offered a connection to their culture, memories, and each other. Thanks to the collaboration and support of Goddard House Community Initiatives, MusicWorks continues to bring music to older adults in creative but safe ways.

By partnering with the various buildings where MusicWorks programs are delivered, we were able to establish ways to perform concerts that could be safely attended from courtyards, balconies, windows, or walkways.

Throughout the summer and into the Fall, MusicWorks held outdoor concerts at elder buildings in Jamaica Plain and the South End, with two additional concerts in Jamaica Plain and Roxbury in October.

With each performance—and continuing good weather—the popularity of the concerts grew. So did the overall participation! Residents (and staff) were dancing, singing along, swaying, or shaking maracas. Some residents even performed with the musicians at a safe distance.

Music is powerful. As people listen to it, they can be affected.
-Ray Charles

The positive feedback from the Resident Service Coordinators was overwhelming. Coordinators told FriendshipWorks that residents really enjoyed the music, participating, and connecting.

As 2020 slowly wound to a close, just prior to the holidays, MusicWorks created and distributed over 850 CDs. Four musicians recorded exclusively for the CD, which included an introduction from FriendshipWorks and music in both Spanish and English. The MusicWorks program also distributed information about all FriendshipWorks programs, along with our special interfaith newsletter, The Companion, and postcards for contact information.

As we look into 2021, MusicWorks musicians have produced another 850 CDs, are already planning outdoor spring and summer concerts, and the first new MusicWorks concert to be aired on public access TV in Boston and Brookline! The show will feature two of our MusicWorks artists in a 4-part series airing this year.

They say that music never truly stops—like the song that gets stuck in your head. In 2020 and beyond, we are pleased to say that was definitely the case at FriendshipWorks!
Providing Meaningful Engagement During the Pandemic

Every volunteer match moves FriendshipWorks closer to meeting our mission to reduce social isolation, maintain dignity, and enhance the quality of life of seniors in the Boston area. In addition to our direct service, yearly community building and educational initiatives allow us to reach out to the communities we serve while offering opportunities for engagement and learning.

During this time of social distancing, FriendshipWorks has provided meaningful opportunities online to over 200 participants. Here are some highlights from our events:

We offered our third low vision forum, Opening Doors For Seniors with Vision Loss: A Discussion of Safety and Accessibility. The forum added best practices to serve elders with low vision or no vision during times of physical distancing and raised awareness about the need for safe and inclusive services.

One participant shared, "I am new to my job and vision loss issues, so it was just great to get so much information about the challenges. It made me aware of resources that are available." Others highlighted how important it was to have adults with vision loss as speakers and panelists.

- We held a Service of Remembrance as an opportunity for volunteers and community partners to gather, grieve the many losses we have experienced during the year, and uphold the lives of those we loved. Musician Ana Hernandez led us in uplifting chants, and our partners at Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly and Sherrill House offered poetry readings and a recitation of names. The Service was picked up by WBUR, who offered another avenue to honor our elders who passed away this year.

- We held three LGBT StoryShare events as virtual community-building activities. Through storytelling, we inspired the community, commemorated the past, and celebrated our shared humanity. Participants shared how meaningful it was to listen to and share stories; one participant shared, “This event was amazing to hear people or different ages tell their stories.”

- FriendshipWorks held our first of two Lunch & Learn opportunities, Blue Skies Ahead: Emotional Well-being During the Winter Season. This virtual workshop highlighted practices to address emotional needs, with special attention to the impacts of social isolation posed by COVID-19. Participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to build community and gain support during this time.

In addition to these events, FriendshipWorks created The Companion, an interfaith newsletter with contributions from faith traditions and spiritual leaders, which we distributed to 1500 elders. This newsletter included reflections, photographs, an adult coloring page, and a word search. Our intention was to bring a little light into the lives of elders who had little to look forward to during COVID-19. One elder shared a single-word sentiment, “Beautiful.”
Walk to End Elder Isolation, May 17, 2020

Hundreds of supporters joined together with our staff and Board for our first-ever Walk to End Elder Isolation: A Virtual Gathering during a live and very meaningful program—despite a world-wide Zoom crash! There was shared music, the presentation of two David Libby Awards to outstanding volunteers, cartoons to bring a bit of humor to our quarantine, heartfelt stories from elders, raffles, and pictures from people’s walks! All around, it was a success, and we are humbled and grateful.

*The Walk garnered over $78,200 from over 690 individual donations, 38 teams, 17 corporate, and 8 individual sponsors! THANK YOU!*
A Look back at our 35th Anniversary Celebration

In November 2019, our My Friend, My World Gala convened 300 friends to celebrate our 35th anniversary. The inspiring evening started with a cocktail hour featuring our MusicWorks musicians playing and PetPals teams greeting attendees! Guests could also have their pictures taken at the interactive FriendshipWorks photo booth.

This was followed by a delicious dinner and an awards ceremony that honored Sandra Albright with the Friendship Award for her dedicated career supporting older adults in Massachusetts and the Boston Medical Center with the Catalyst Award recognizing their outstanding care and support of older adults.

Guests were treated to our new video, Creating Connections Through Friendships, and a fun Live Auction that kept the evening buzzing. Capping the evening with the familiar tunes of yesteryear was Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee Darlene Love!

This event raised $375,000 thanks to the generosity of so many! We’re grateful we could be together and raise funds ahead of a time when our services would be more essential than ever.
### In Honor Of...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>Gifts in Honor Of</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Gifts in Honor Of</th>
<th>From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary Gunn</td>
<td>Sandra Abril</td>
<td>Robert Gray</td>
<td>Emma Gray</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Festa</td>
<td>Sandra Abril</td>
<td>Susan Sidell</td>
<td>Jamie Levy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Alliger</td>
<td>Janet Aliger</td>
<td>Mike Williams</td>
<td>Thomas Greenwood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Althea</td>
<td>Robert Jordan</td>
<td>Ami Jackman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>All of Connie’s good work</td>
<td>Shelley Barron</td>
<td>John Sequeria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debra Harden</td>
<td>All those first responders who</td>
<td>Neal Braverman</td>
<td>Kristine Peak-Olivera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borni O’Malley</td>
<td>kept vigil over the dying patients</td>
<td>Robert and Joy Falkon</td>
<td>Adam, Annie, and Barry Dungan-Lewis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine C and Brian Connelly</td>
<td>All of those feeling isolated these days!</td>
<td>Joseph Collins</td>
<td>Patricia Flagg-Gerald</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison and Eric Remm</td>
<td>Alma and Bob’s friendship</td>
<td>Donald Jeffrey</td>
<td>Fabola Oliveira</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Tobin Zaff and Alan Zaff</td>
<td>to Community and Music</td>
<td>Michael and Carol Kurt</td>
<td>Karen Poggi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Sarno</td>
<td>Nancy Aron</td>
<td>Ms. Eileen Zelner</td>
<td>Dorothy and Wesley W. Clarke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Seckel</td>
<td>Aunt Janet and all of her</td>
<td>James M. and Karen Helm</td>
<td>Danz Hoffman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross Seckel</td>
<td>hard work for a great cause</td>
<td>Marjorie Glazer</td>
<td>Seneca Heartz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Althea Monroe</td>
<td>Aunt Janet and Uncle Dennis</td>
<td>Marilyn Holler</td>
<td>Janet Hirsch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Eileen Zelner</td>
<td>Aunt Lileen</td>
<td>Jeffrey Lahatte</td>
<td>Janet Hirsch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert Bickel</td>
<td>Elia Bakal</td>
<td>Karen Hurvitz</td>
<td>Bill &amp; Edna Hekker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Rediker</td>
<td>Mr. Craig Baker</td>
<td>Stella Mark</td>
<td>HouseWorks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariann Anzani</td>
<td>Priscilla Balou</td>
<td>Joyce &amp; Arthur Hurvitz</td>
<td>Joyce Starks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Malster</td>
<td>Remigio Bautista</td>
<td>In honor of my friends who took care of</td>
<td>Stephen Swartz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Eisenov</td>
<td>Alma Vernon</td>
<td>me while recovering from a broken hip</td>
<td>Minnie and Benjamin Swartz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roz and Wally Benheimer</td>
<td>Bennita</td>
<td>Mary Rita Wescher</td>
<td>Naomi Ribner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurie Bloom</td>
<td>Donna &amp; Michael Blau</td>
<td>Alice Tobin Zaff and Alan Zaff</td>
<td>Roz and Wally Benheimer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Mrs. Frances Marie Bloom</td>
<td>Alice Tobin Zaff and Alan Zaff</td>
<td>Theodore Metres and Jane Schenkel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viana Bruce</td>
<td>Bo and the band</td>
<td>Mary Rita Wescher</td>
<td>Barbara Moss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Gray</td>
<td>Mary Weiss Bruce</td>
<td>Gerald Blum</td>
<td>Stephen Petelter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Berardino</td>
<td>Markie Byrne</td>
<td>Deborah Kaufmann</td>
<td>Amanda Teal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Delapoli Byrne and Patrick Byrne</td>
<td>Markie Byrne</td>
<td>Heidi Jalon</td>
<td>Chunnong Li</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH Alexander</td>
<td>Markie Byrne</td>
<td>Rae Simpson</td>
<td>Jose Aquino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemant Pandavaram</td>
<td>Markie Byrne</td>
<td>Kate and Jamie King</td>
<td>Patricia Magure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Tobin Zaff</td>
<td>Amy Bucher</td>
<td>Tracy Slater</td>
<td>Patricia Magure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances Young</td>
<td>Amy Bucher</td>
<td>Jony and Bridget</td>
<td>Sophie Khalan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Mazur</td>
<td>Xurong Peng</td>
<td>Yung Peng</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Tobin Zaff</td>
<td>Caro’s Dedication and Goodness</td>
<td>Ian MacDonald</td>
<td>Donald Ross</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol Kurt</td>
<td>Carolyn and Friendly Helpers</td>
<td>Margaret Slater</td>
<td>Brit Gill-Austen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Rosen and Gary Belowich</td>
<td>Christine Chapman</td>
<td>Sophie Khalan</td>
<td>Priscilla Stone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Barasch</td>
<td>Andra Cohen</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Jesse Mc兵tire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc Griger</td>
<td>Andrea Cohen</td>
<td>Donald Ross</td>
<td>Peter McKinnon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Wells</td>
<td>Russ Colton</td>
<td>Britt Gill-Austen</td>
<td>Michael McKinnon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany Peterson</td>
<td>Rene Dawson</td>
<td>Priscilla Stone</td>
<td>Susan Wolfson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Dorrance</td>
<td>Dean and Gus</td>
<td>Jesse Mc兵tire</td>
<td>Kent Tobin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Oebstern</td>
<td>Frank (Kenny) Dorrance</td>
<td>Dorothy McWhine</td>
<td>Alanna Zuckerman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB Sweeney</td>
<td>Peg &amp; Jack Oebstern &amp; Family</td>
<td>My amazing friend and advocate</td>
<td>Candace Gareisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leviina Wong</td>
<td>Dean Denniston and Gus</td>
<td>Dean Denniston</td>
<td>Barbara O. Odema</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur &amp; Joan O’Neill</td>
<td>Dean Denniston</td>
<td>Dean Denniston</td>
<td>Hank Odema</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Kulchin</td>
<td>Dean Denniston</td>
<td>Dean Denniston</td>
<td>Odema Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marilyn Feldman</td>
<td>Nellie Diamond</td>
<td>Hana Dubova</td>
<td>Our 95+ year old mom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachael Ceretti</td>
<td>Hana Dubova</td>
<td>Elena Dubova</td>
<td>Evelyn Anderson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Donahue</td>
<td>Emilie and Richard</td>
<td>Emilie and Richard</td>
<td>Our Friends at the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina Isaiah</td>
<td>Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti</td>
<td>Jennifer Mathews</td>
<td>Zeltner Lacey House!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena Finnegan</td>
<td>Family &amp; Friends</td>
<td>Bonnie Michelman</td>
<td>Connie Poggi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen and Jelle Schoen</td>
<td>Blanche Field</td>
<td>Lawrence Elisich</td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Albert</td>
<td>Susan Tresch Fierberg</td>
<td>Lawrence Elisich</td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Gida</td>
<td>Helena Finnegan</td>
<td>Carol Arnold</td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet Orcutt</td>
<td>Elaine Francis</td>
<td>Domingos Tenenica</td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Harris</td>
<td>FriendshipWorks Team</td>
<td>Ellen Berlin</td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Chi Zhou</td>
<td>FriendshipWorks Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela Mann &amp; David Barron</td>
<td>Susan Foster</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle Forbes</td>
<td>Adam Frank</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald Garlitz</td>
<td>Zigi Garlitz</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Biegler</td>
<td>Gary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlo Sardtten</td>
<td>Ruth &amp; Avra Grabel</td>
<td></td>
<td>Connie Packard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tami Gault</td>
<td>Ruth Grabel’s Birthday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IN MEMORY OF ...
People connect with FriendshipWorks for many reasons. Some make a difference in the life of an elder by referring them to one of our free services; others may be willing to be a friend by volunteering in one of our six programs; many help create new pathways in aging by fostering partnerships and community. For other people, they may make a difference by contributing financially.

In 1995, Dr. Becky Silliman reached out to FriendshipWorks for all of those reasons.

 HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT FRIENDSHIPWORKS?

When I came to work at Boston Medical Center and joined the Geriatrics section, and I became a home care doctor, Match-up Interfaith Volunteers, which later became FriendshipWorks, was always a part of the fabric. Our home care program has always been about teamwork, interdisciplinary care, and partnerships with those in the community. So whenever anyone knew about FriendshipWorks, it was because it had already been part of our practice.

WHAT ABOUT OUR MISSION CAPTURED YOUR INTEREST?

It started as a professional interest because FriendshipWorks was part of our team, and helping our patients live independently and more productive and happy lives than they would be able to without it. I’ve supported FriendshipWorks for a long time.

When I retired, I thought the horizon was not as far away, so it behooves one to think about their end-of-life plans and financial plans. As I did that, I thought, I could put everything in trust and wait until the end and let it be distributed however I say. But then there would be no joy or opportunity to see how the contribution was being used. So I thought there was a 3rd way—a middle way.

“I thought, Why don’t I give away modest amounts while I’m alive?” And, I will give those amounts every year to two organizations whose mission I believe in, whose organizations are doing good things and have great leadership. It’s just great fun because I know that it will be used well and it is needed. I know that whether it’s for inner-city kids learning to swim, or teaching people how to grow healthy food, or contributing to elder programs, or healing the environment, I can see my dollars at work, making a difference in people’s lives.
Your interest deepened into a serious financial commitment. Can you share about that and why felt it was so important to contribute?

Every organization that I’ve contributed to is relatively small. Giving to a larger organization may not make a huge difference, but for smaller organizations, it might. I have chosen missions and organizations that I thought would be a meaningful contribution to.

In your medical specialty, you were probably acutely aware of the issues surrounding aging and social isolation. How would you characterize the value that FriendshipWorks brings to the elder population?

I can’t say it any more eloquently than your volunteers or recipients. Their stories tell it all. I really enjoy getting the newsletters—because I enjoy reading the stories; they are wonderful.

Whether it’s getting to a doctor and negotiating that (Medical Escorts); or having young people’s lives being transformed by friendship (Friendly Visiting and Friendly Helping) and how they think about themselves, their lives, and older adults ... their stories tell it all.

I fundamentally believe, as an older adult who is retired, that I have the gift of friendship, financial security, and I’m healthy. But I know that keeping oneself active physically, mentally, and socially—all those are incredibly important to successful aging. What FriendshipWorks brings is a lot of help in all of those areas.

In my view, what the healthcare world does is important, but it’s a fraction compared to everything else. Because if you don’t have everything else, a pill is not going to do much. Medical care is important, but having a purpose like meeting or talking with a volunteer is essential. Having a purpose is key. For example, I know that I have to get myself ready because my volunteer is coming over, or is going to call or Facetime me. I have to get myself organized and ready to go. I have a purpose.

You also play music and know the benefits of that for health (brain, visceral connection). Can you talk a little bit about that?

I’ve been a flutist since I was 10 years old. When I was 44 years old, I decided I wanted to play the organ, not realizing how incredibly challenging that was! You have to move your arms and legs independently and read three staffs of music. Needless to say, it’s taken a lot of time to learn to play modest pieces. When I turned 50, I bought a home practice organ (104 pipes and stands 8 feet tall). I play with other medical professionals and sharing that music provides cognitive, physical, and emotional connections. Music can be calming, joyful, and provide a connection to memories.

One of the nice things about music is that it can be lifelong and in so many different ways provides joy to myself and others. One of the things I’ve been doing in my retirement years is advocating for arts education in public schools in Providence, Rhode Island. Music and the visual arts have been around since the beginning of time. Connection to the arts is part of our way of thinking and part of who we are in so many ways. The arts are so fundamental to life.

As a former medical practitioner, how do you view the MusicWorks program for older adults and the part that plays for their health?

Music is deeply in all of us. Whether it’s the memories, comfort, a window to God, or the social or physical aspects of it, music has the power to evoke a variety of feelings. It’s a fabulous way to connect people by getting into their souls and emotional beings, giving them some opportunities to be physically active. Music can provide context for younger folks to understand the times of a different era of the older adults with whom they are matched.

Can you talk about how FriendshipWorks enhances or intersects with others in the field of social isolation and Geriatrics?

So many of the service organizations (Visiting Nurses Association or Senior Centers or medical) are service organizations and are institutionalized. They have particular jobs that they have to do and fill an important role. However, there is a big difference between a paid provider and a volunteer who wants to spend time with you.

It seems to me that what FriendshipWorks does is so personal and fundamental. It’s about connecting people. It’s not following regulations and billable hours, etc. It’s meeting needs that are human and personal. There are a lot of cracks that need to be filled. And FriendshipWorks fills a lot of those holes that are essential to people’s joy, happiness, and fulfillment. A friend does a lot to complement what more formal services do.

What would you say to anyone considering a financial contribution to FriendshipWorks?

I would say do it! I would say that it’s incredibly cost-effective—it’s a solid investment. You can wait, but if you have the wherewithal now, do it. You never know what tomorrow will bring.
It’s Never Too Late to Consider a Legacy Gift!

Have you thought about including FriendshipWorks in your estate plans? If not, it’s never too late to consider a legacy gift to perpetuate your generosity, and to ensure that thousands of elders benefit from the organization’s many programs for decades to come. Legacy gifts help to ensure FriendshipWorks’ future.

Too often, planned giving is thought to be too complex and too hard to understand. There are many easy giving options—ranging from naming our organization as a beneficiary in your will to more complex trust arrangements. Please consult with your estate planning attorney to determine the right plan to achieve your goals.

Here are some simple approaches to consider:

**Gifts by Will or Living Trust**

Leave a bequest to FriendshipWorks of a set amount or as a percentage of your estate. You can also gift from the balance or residue of your estate, or make a beneficiary designation of certain assets. Benefits of leaving a bequest include (1) leaving a lasting legacy to be remembered, (2) lessening the burden of taxes on your family, and (3) possibly receiving estate tax savings.

**Gifts of Retirement Plans**

Consider naming FriendshipWorks as a beneficiary of your retirement plans. Your retirement plan may be worth more when donated to FriendshipWorks than to your heirs.

**IRA Distributions**

If you or a family member are 70 ½ or older with an individual retirement account (IRA), you can make a tax-free gift to FriendshipWorks directly from your IRA, reducing your taxable income. This is called a qualified charitable distribution.

**Gifts of Life Insurance**

Name FriendshipWorks as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy; this is a wonderful way to make a special gift to FriendshipWorks without dipping into your capital assets.

**Life Income Gifts**

Earn income for yourself or beneficiaries when you create a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) or Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT) to benefit FriendshipWorks.

For more information or to discuss these gift opportunities in greater detail, please contact Executive Director Janet Seckel-Cerrotti at jseckel-cerrotti@fw4elders.org or 617-482-1510 x127.

Please contact Cara Stuka at 617-482-1510 x147 with questions or for more information about making a recurring gift from your checking account or through payroll deduction.
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, Friendly Caller Volunteer

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

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

My friendly visitors really brighten my day. They have really helped me tremendously. — Elaine, Friendly Visitor 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, Medical Escort and Friendly Visitor 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

I’m 93 years old, so I found out just how important friendships are. — David, Friendly Caller Volunteer and recipient

I have a mutt, Daisy, who is a sweet dog and always very gentle. She loves older people. My grandmother was in rehabilitation facility and I went to visit her and brought Daisy. My grandmother loved having her there and she responded so well. So when my Grandmother passed away, I thought, I could carry on in her memory. I signed up with PetPals, and visited elder residences until the pandemic hit. One gentleman, Joe was 102 years old and he was very quiet. But when he met Daisy, he would pet her and tell me about going to the beach in Quincy and share memories. — Darcy, PetPals volunteer

My match has made me feel more connected to the community and led to a genuine friendship. It has been a wonderful experience from which we both benefit. I feel like I am able to make a difference in a match’s life, and I have likewise gained a true friend who teaches me more about the area and her own life experience. — Friendly Visitor volunteer

Being matched with an elder I was able to communicate and learn from their stories. I was able to learn about their passion and their struggles through life and that has definitely helped me become a more compassionate and patient person. — Friendly Visitor volunteer
Friendship Walks,
Friendship Talks,
That’s Why FriendshipWorks

The 6th annual *Walk to End Elder Isolation: A Virtual Gathering* takes place on **Sunday, May 16 at 10am.** Join us for music, special presentations, contests, and a message from the United Kingdom’s Minister of Loneliness!

Please join us for a morning of inspiration, excitement, before taking a safely distanced walk.

**Sign-up at** [www.fw4elders.org/walk](http://www.fw4elders.org/walk)