



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

Seniors in Service Continues

To Serve, Even Now

This marks our first issue of "GEARED UP News" since the global pandemic that changed everything. We're back – with a fresh, new look. And yet we never left.

Seniors in Service remained true to our mission: to provide solutions to community challenges by engaging volunteers aged 55+. Engaging volunteers is our specialty. Yet now, suddenly, our once-active senior-aged volunteers have become our community's most vulnerable. We quickly shifted to a model of intergenerational volunteerism, engaging volunteers of all ages to serve even more at-risk seniors, children, hungry families and veterans in close collaboration with community partners. And we immediately shifted to virtual service delivery, continuing to assist those who desperately needed our help.

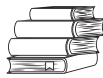
Our response to the pandemic targeted the tremendous growth in community needs:



TelePals has helped reduce social isolation for over 100 Tampa Bay seniors. Learn how we expanded to serve even more lonely individuals with intergenerational service on page 3.



We shifted to virtual service delivery, with client referrals and volunteer applications on www.TelePalNow.org and volunteer training delivered through virtual e-Learnings. Learn more about how in-home Senior Companions shifted to become TelePals on page 5.



Readers in Motion kept kids and parents engaged with reading challenges that helped them with e-Learning and inspired parent engagement. Read more about how children benefited on page 3.



Dining Out At Home worked with community partners, responding to the 300% increase in requests from low-income seniors for home-delivered meals. Read more about our impact on page 5.



Seniors in Service continued to provide volunteers with service opportunities to serve with local non-profits. Read more about one volunteer's efforts on page 4.

Much is still uncertain, but one thing has not changed: Seniors in Service remains committed to serving our community thanks to enormous generosity and kindness from our funders, individual donors and the priceless contributions of our local partners and community volunteers. We are *GEARED UP TO SERVE!*

Learn more at: www.SeniorsinService.org

Follow us on FB: www.facebook.com/seniorsinservice

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE!

Friday, Dec. 4th, 2020

Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon

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 813-932-5528 to become a Seniors in Service volunteer. Let us help you find the service opportunity of your dreams!



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A Message from our CEO

I hope that you and your loved ones are safe and doing well despite the challenges we've all faced during these strange times. We've experienced tremendous despair, yet we've also experienced an outpouring of generosity and kindness that leaves me with hope.

On a personal note, I lost my uncle this month. He was the "crazy" uncle, the one who always had an adventure story that would bring my family together with a chuckle and head shake. That was his special gift. Now his sudden, unexpected passing brought my family together differently, ending our COVID-19-imposed separation. We reunited (wearing masks) to honor his life, to face the reality of his death, to receive support from each other, to express our feelings, to accept that life goes on.

Similarly, the pandemic and most recent incidents of social injustice have suddenly and unexpectedly ended life as we know it. We have now come together to show support, to express our feelings, and to accept responsibility to improve life in our communities – an opportunity for a new reality that celebrates our differences, with equity and inclusiveness for all.

-Robin Ingles, CEO

Our GEARED UP Team

Announcing New Roles and Welcoming New Staff



Chris Noble,
Programs
Director



Pam Danwing,
Readers
in Motion
Program
Coordinator



Lorena Mielke,
Foster
Grandparent
Program
Coordinator



Rose Rolon,
Contract &
Compliance
Manager

Photo
unavailable

Michael
Fussner,
TeleHealth
Buddies Program
Coordinator



Nicole
Larkin-York,
Outreach &
Communications
Coordinator



Mariam
Achalaoune,
TelePals &
Senior
Companion
Program
Coordinator



Ann
Wilkinson,
Retired & Senior
Volunteer Program
Coordinator/Liaison
for Pasco County



Rita Sibaja,
Retired & Senior
Volunteer Program
Coordinator/Liaison
for Hillsborough
County

Service Moments

TelePals



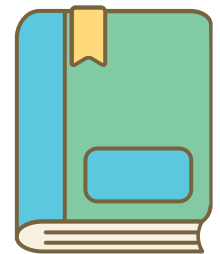
We launched TelePals over a year ago, with senior-aged volunteers providing friendly phone calls to lonely seniors. Now TelePals has gone intergenerational! High school and college students are offering comfort to elders with telephone reassurance while simultaneously building their own self-confidence and communication skills. Chelsea, a psychology student at USF St. Petersburg, is one of our newest volunteers. Chelsea joined TelePals to relieve her own stress and feelings of isolation caused by COVID-19. Chelsea is matched up with Rebecca, and remembers being nervous to call at first. However Chelsea, who has lived in the Miami area, noticed that she and Rebecca have the same (954) exchange. An easy segue to a conversation about their Miami connection! Chelsea enjoys hearing Rebecca reminisce about her Miami Adventures. Rebecca shares stories of her life, her family and living in Florida. Chelsea is poised to share information about resources or even to alert the TelePals staff if there are any concerns. She feels comforted knowing that she's helping someone feel more connected. She knows that their chats help both of them, as they navigate this new friendship in this new reality, together.

Readers in Motion (RIM) improves literacy for impoverished elementary school children by promoting increased parent engagement and increased reading frequency outside of school. Readers in Motion has been offering close, personal support during this time of mandatory e-Learning. Classrooms are our usual arena, but with that being paused for now, we went directly to the source to see how we could help. The result? Over 1,000 conversations with Readers in Motion families. We learned that the daily struggle for kindergartners and 1st graders was simply completing and submitting assignments. In collaboration with myON, we created a special "RIM Reading Challenge." The challenge

featured 10 books, all aligned with teachers' homework assignments. Our customized reading challenge was doubly encouraging kids to do their homework! Readers in Motion staff checked every single student's progress weekly – that's over 350 students! We provided ongoing support and reminders to parents. As a result, 247 students completed the reading challenge! As a bonus, each student who read at least 4 books from the list earned a brand-new book, *Waiting is Not Easy*, from the popular "Elephant and Piggie" series. Children were thrilled to receive this in the mail and saw how their hard work paid off.



Readers in Motion



Service Moments

Retired & Senior Volunteer Program



Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) connects people aged 55+ to the volunteer opportunity of their dreams! Now we're helping them find ways to continue serving our community while remaining healthy and safe. In partnership with Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care, RSVP Pasco helped connect Judy Diver and Wilderness Lake Estates Women's Club in Land O' Lakes to an opportunity to serve from their own homes, using their crafting skills for good. Seasons Hospice asked for help from volunteers in reaching out to hundreds of Tampa Bay patients and their families who are isolated and unable to receive visitors. They provided templates for easy-to-make "Thinking of You" pop-up cards with materials that don't require a special trip out to a craft store. Judy and the WLC ladies made over 200 "Thinking of You" cards that were delivered to Seasons Hospice. Thank you, Judy, for continuing to make a difference, even now.

Operation: Veteran Connect



Operation: Veteran Connect engages volunteers who are veterans or military family members and feel a special calling to serve others who've served our nation. Many are mobilized as AmeriCorps members to empower veterans on their journey to personal wellness as part of the VA's Whole Health Initiative. Before the pandemic, AmeriCorps members committed 20 hours/week for a full year, sharing Whole Health information with veterans who visit James A. Haley or Bay Pines VA Hospital.

With social distancing restricting their ability to serve at the VA, many, like Sarai Simmons, are finding new ways to make a difference. Sarai brings to life the AmeriCorps pledge to "Get Things Done". A busy pre-med student from a military family, Sarai shares why she wanted to help people impacted by COVID-19. "I was inspired by my mom who is currently a nurse manager. Her willingness and drive to help others has sparked a fire inside of me." Sarai saw the shortage on certain essential items and tells how she turned it into an opportunity to give back to the community that she loves. "One key shortage was masks for people to wear. My attempt to make face masks was quite challenging at first because I had no background in sewing. After many failed attempts, I successfully created a mask! At that time this was groundbreaking to me because I understood how important these masks are going to be to others throughout the community." Sarai reached out to a local church who had been donating masks and food items to those in need in the community. Thank you Sarai, for "Getting Things Done!"



Service Moments

Senior Companion



Senior Companion volunteers may have been unable to continue in-home visits, but they are still providing companionship to their clients as TelePals. Thanks to virtual e-Learning, Senior Companions are also able to continue building skills while serving clients, keeping both of them safe!

Foster Grandparent

Congratulations to our Foster Grandparent volunteer, Ms. Gloria

Howard for being selected as Lakewood Elementary's Volunteer of the Year! When Ms. Howard retired from her successful teaching career, she couldn't stay away. After 40 years as a preschool teacher and 15 teaching Head Start, she returned as a Seniors in Service Foster Grandparent volunteer, continuing to share her love for reading with at-risk children. Ms. Howard's ability to overcome challenges makes her a great role model for helping kids who face adversity. When a mandate was passed in 2005 requiring all Head Start teachers to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree, Ms. Howard rose to the challenge. She graduated in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education at the ripe young age of 62 years old!

Ms. Howard began serving at Lakewood Elementary as a Foster Grandparent volunteer in September 2019. She shared that this experience changed her life. Ms. Howard absolutely loves helping kids learn – not only to read but to love reading. Within the first month, Ms. Howard had clocked the highest amount of service hours of any volunteer in the school. Her passion did not go unnoticed. In February of this year, right before COVID-19 shut all schools down, Ms. Howard was awarded Lakewood Elementary's 2019-2020 Volunteer of the Year!

Like all our Foster Grandparent volunteers, she misses being in the classroom and can't wait to get back. In the meantime, Seniors in Service is exploring new ways to keep Foster Grandparent volunteers engaged so they can continue helping the children they love succeed.



Dining Out At Home



Seniors in Service is partnering with the Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas, Pasco County Senior Services, and Neighborly Care Network to support the 300% increase in requests from low-income seniors for home-delivered meals. Seniors in Service supports Dining Out At Home by building relationships with local restaurants and mobilizing community volunteers. Natalie's Restaurant in Pasco considers their participation "a golden opportunity to keep our business going while helping the community", says owner Vicky. "It is a great source of revenue that will keep us on our feet until business picks up...I really love this, helping the elderly. This is something that has to be in people's hearts." Thank you to all of our participating restaurants and our Dining Out At Home volunteers!

Partner Highlight



Suncoast Credit Union, Florida's largest credit union, announced a one million dollar donation to provide economic relief to those affected by COVID-19 in the communities the credit union serves. Seniors in Service was one of the benefactors of this generous contribution! "While we are focused on supporting our members financially, we feel a moral obligation to support other basic needs during this very challenging time. We admire and are inspired by other charitable organizations who are providing relief through private donations like ours," said Suncoast Credit Union President & CEO Kevin Johnson. Thanks to Suncoast Credit Union's \$50,000 match campaign, we were able to raise \$61,540! We are now geared up to serve even more people – from seniors who feel totally alone; to students also struggling with isolation who need community service hours; to home-bound elders who need home-delivered hot meals; to children suddenly thrust into e-Learning; and more!

Volunteer Highlight

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it's that good begets good. In a time of crisis, loneliness and fear, Seniors in Service volunteers have found ways to bring sunshine. Our volunteers Don and Connie Smith are a great example. They, along with their neighbor, Jackie Potts grew hope with just some tomatoes. The isolation stemming from mandatory stay-at-home orders sowed confusion and fear in this close-knit community. That changed, in part, when Sun City residents Don, Connie and Jackie stumbled upon Pacific Tomato Growers Packing House selling 25 pound boxes of tomatoes for \$5. Don stated, "I saw the advertisement and thought, 'Why don't we buy some and just give them to our neighbors?'" Don and Connie gave a box to Jackie, who gave tomatoes to her friends, who in turn wanted to give tomatoes to their friends, and the chain reaction continued. Don, Connie, and Jackie essentially played the world's greatest game of ding-dong ditch "We called our friends to let them know we were coming. Then we'd place them on the doorstep, knock, and run back to the car," Don explained. "I thought, this could be our mission. Let's do something good for people." Over the next few weeks, Don and Connie bought over 1,000 pounds of tomatoes, while Jackie helped deliver them to neighbors on the other side of Sun City Center. Thank you Don, Connie and Jackie for continuing to serve our community!



Thank you to our funders!

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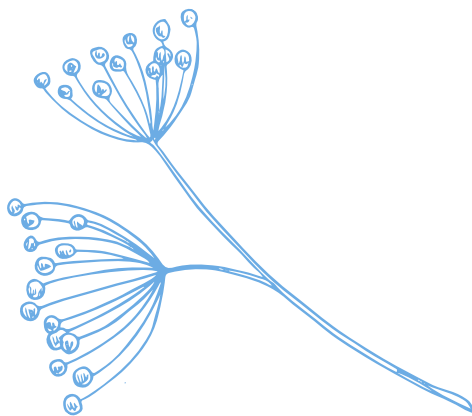
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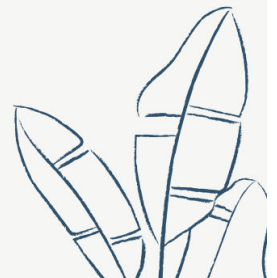


**Tampa Bay
Times**



Because together,
we're better.

Thank you for your
support.





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GEARED UP TO SERVE



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Humans of Tampa Bay



Social distancing does not mean social disconnection. Humans - as individuals and within organizations - are now more connected than ever. These are just a few of our newest connections that are changing lives:

Dr. Dexter Frederick is a practicing physician and founder of **BEST Academy**, a nonprofit that supports aspiring students of color pursuing medical careers. He inspires students to serve as intergenerational TelePals and offers guidance to our staff as we seek referrals from health care professionals.

Florida Blue supports transformation of Health Buddies to TeleHealth Buddies, helping at-risk elders who struggle with chronic disease manage their own wellness while remaining safe at home.

Community Foundation of Tampa Bay actively shares COVID-19 Nonprofits Needs List with donors and foundations, inspiring gifts large and small. **Snowbirds visiting from Tennessee** send a personal check directly to **Seniors in Service** to help seniors who, like them, are suddenly the most at-risk. **Katsadouros Family Foundation** and **Humana** fund our other critical needs, bolstered by Community Foundation match.

The **Tampa Bay Resiliency Fund**, formed by unique collaboration between **Pinellas Community Foundation**, **Allegany Franciscan Ministries**, **Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg** and **United Way Suncoast**, assists with COVID-19 relief efforts, such as expanding TelePals.

United Way Suncoast brings local nonprofits together during weekly zooms to share solutions, inspiring new partnerships and awarding COVID-19 Rapid Response funding.

The **Equity Amid Crisis Conference** hosted by **Community Foundation of Pinellas** brings together community stakeholders to mitigate growing disparities as a result of COVID-19.

Seniors in Service joins the **Digital Inclusion Working Group** led by **St. Pete Innovation District**, supporting efforts to provide our community's most vulnerable with technology – now a basic need for accessing essential services such as education, workforce development, social services, healthcare, important community information.

*Thanks to our newest connections, we are making a bigger difference.
Together, we're better.*