



For immediate release
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Interviews, photos & videos available

MEDIA ALERT: Upcoming 'pet' delivery this Thursday!



FriendshipWorks Delivers Connection and Comfort This Season

Boston, MA—While December is traditionally busy for many during the holiday season, it is particularly so as FriendshipWorks continues to connect older adults and volunteers for friendship and assistance. After nearly a year of physically distanced outreach, FriendshipWorks—as it has for 36 years—is ensuring comfort, connection, and community. This is particularly meaningful for many living alone this holiday season and extended period of the pandemic.

“The devastating impacts of social isolation have been documented. This underscores the importance of FriendshipWorks’ ongoing efforts to make safe connections between older adults and volunteers during this challenging time,” said Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, FriendshipWorks’ Executive Director.

To that end, FriendshipWorks will continue providing connection and comfort—in safe and new ways—to the most isolated older adults it serves throughout Boston, Brookline, Newton, Somerville, and Cambridge. This week will be capped with a ‘highlight’ on Friday, December 11th at 5 pm, when the iconic Prudential Center Tower in Boston glows in FriendshipWorks’ colors to promote its mission!

“During this pandemic, we have not changed what we do, but *how we do things* to keep people safe and in touch,” said Seckel-Cerrotti.

FriendshipWorks volunteers are providing friendship and support with phone calls, accompaniment to medical appointments, personalized cards, online visits, errands, and summer outdoor music concerts.

Now, our newest initiative is pawsitively wonderful! Our PetPals program will bring some elders an experience as close as possible to the comfort and touch of a pet, thanks to quality, soft-stuffed animals.

“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 developed and sent to facilities and residences that FriendshipWorks serves. The responses were overwhelming among the choices presented—stuffed animals would be loved. So FriendshipWorks developed the idea, received a grant for PetPals, and purchased 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.

She and her husband have already delivered more than 110 pets to three area buildings, with more deliveries scheduled this week.

“Staff from buildings like Sherrill House, Landmark at Longwood, and Mount Pleasant has 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,” she added.

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 feels like a good interim solution,” noted Hirsch.

As part of this December delivery, homemade cards from volunteers—another way people of all ages can participate with FriendshipWorks—will be included with each pet.

“This is truly a community effort between the cards, pets, and recipients, thanks to supporters, volunteers, and staff. It shows that friendship does work and connection comes in different forms,” said Seckel-Cerrotti.

To find out how to volunteer or support the PetPals program, please visit our website: www.fw4elders.org, call 617-482-1510 x131, or email: jhirsch@fw4elders.org.

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The mission of [FriendshipWorks](#) is to reduce social isolation, enhance the quality of life, and preserve the dignity of older adults in Greater Boston. We accomplish this by recruiting and training volunteers of all ages, faiths, and backgrounds who provide friendship, advocacy, education, assistance, and emotional support.