



For immediate release
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Interviews & photos available



FriendshipWorks Continues Connecting with Area Elders in New Ways

Boston, MA - In recent weeks, we've often heard: *Imagine Being This Isolated Every Day?* While daily social isolation is new for most Americans, it is a condition that impacts many of the 1000+ elders we serve every day. Ending elder isolation has been the vision of FriendshipWorks, a volunteer-driven, nonprofit, for 36 years.

Since 1984, FriendshipWorks' enduring mission has been to reduce social isolation, improve the quality of life, and maintain the dignity of elders in greater Boston through its programs and initiatives. This month, as FriendshipWorks turns 36-years old, the uncharted territory in which many people find themselves has not deterred FriendshipWorks from creating solutions to socially connect with our elders. During this time, the work of keeping older adults connected is more important than ever.

"While the negative impact of social isolation has been written about in the past year, prior to this public health emergency, most people could not connect personally to its consequences. Today, we are all living it, and that has shed light on the issue of the most vulnerable populations such as the elderly," stated Executive Director, Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, adding: "Our programs normally emphasize the importance of in-person interaction between volunteers and their elder matches. Yet during this unusual time, that contact needs to be different but just as meaningful."

FriendshipWorks' staff and volunteers have embraced the challenge of ensuring continuity of connection between volunteers and their matches and pivoted to meet those needs. These efforts include communicating with isolated elders through phone calls, emails, video visits, cards and letters, and keeping its Medical Escort program available for necessary appointments. Additionally, the staff is developing new ways to reach older adults.

The goal of FriendshipWorks is to continue to bring personalized connection, joy, and meaning to peoples' lives. Staff is coordinating PetPals volunteers to film videos and take pictures of their pets to share; musicians have produced bilingual MusicWorks CDs and DVDs to deliver and cards are being sent from our Relaxing Through the Arts program.

As a pioneer on the issue of elder social isolation, FriendshipWorks is taking a leadership role to partner, develop and share resources with a number of organizations, including AgeStrong Boston, AARP, and an array of medical, housing and human-service agencies. Supplemental online resources will become available to a wider community to foster collaboration, communication, and connection.

Unfortunately, the issue of elder isolation will be here long after this crisis passes, which is why support for FriendshipWorks' programs is crucial to facilitating social connection and friendships. But there are things people can do NOW to make a difference.

Join our 5th annual Walk to End Elder Isolation: A Virtual Gathering. This annual event raises critical funds for programming and highlights the persistent issue of social isolation and the importance of connection. Teams are being formed and our walk is starting now. We will all meet virtually for a fun-filled gathering on Sunday, May 17!

FriendshipWorks serves every neighborhood in Boston and Brookline. Their Friendly Visiting program is also in Newton and this summer will expand to Cambridge and Somerville. Last year, 450 FriendshipWorks volunteers provided more than 49,000 hours (the equivalent of 5-½ years) of unpaid service to elders at NO charge to them.

“Ultimately, we are a matching service,” says Seckel-Cerrotti. “By matching elders’ with volunteers ages 18 to 90, from all faiths and all backgrounds, FriendshipWorks brings friendship, support, and connection to older adults and their volunteers. This contributes to health, meaning, and comfort for people across the generations.”

To find out how to get involved and make an immediate impact go to: www.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.