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Contact: Helena Finnegan
hfinnegan@fw4elders.org
Interviews & photos available



FriendshipWorks Expands Friendly Visiting in Somerville & Cambridge

Somerville, MA - Social connection remains as critical now as it did seven months ago when the pandemic began. Connection is particularly vital for the health and well-being of older adults who are more likely to be isolated for extended periods of time. As weeks have turned to months and seasons have changed, this prolonged period of social distancing has made community and partnership essential, especially in reaching out to isolated populations.

Reaching out to connect is what has made the Friendly Visiting program of [FriendshipWorks](#) long-sought-after. Known for its compassionate model of creating meaningful connections between volunteers and older adults for friendship and assistance, FriendshipWorks has now expanded its program to Somerville and Cambridge.

“Serving older adults in these areas is something we’ve been requested to do for quite a while. So we’re pleased to partner with Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, which gives us the capacity to do so,” said Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, Executive Director of FriendshipWorks.

Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services (SCES) knew the importance of connecting older adults with volunteers for long-term friendships, so SCES reached out to FriendshipWorks for their expertise to grow the New Friends program with their Friendly Visiting model. This collaboration allows SCES and FriendshipWorks to increase reach and services to people ages 60+ in these neighborhoods.

“Isolation and loneliness impact many older adults and there’s a growing body of research that indicates these things are bad for your health,” said Colleen Morrissey, Director of Volunteers at SCES. “The pandemic has created even more need for resources that help our older neighbors stay connected, so we are thrilled this partnership will help us to reach more people in Cambridge and Somerville.”

Since 1984, FriendshipWorks, a volunteer-driven, Boston nonprofit has been matching volunteers to older adults, ages 60+, for connection, friendship, and assistance in Boston and Brookline. Two years ago, FriendshipWorks was invited by the [City of Newton’s Council on Aging](#) to expand their Friendly Visiting and Medical Escort programs in Newton and is enjoying its third successful year working with Newton.

Kara Jeter, Friendly Visiting Coordinator for Somerville/Cambridge, notes that since this summer, the Friendly Visiting program has been well-received and she has already made many matches between volunteers older adults.

“People who knew of, or read about FriendshipWorks, have been delighted that we are expanding the services, and are glad to have a new friend during this time, “ she said. “It’s been an important and positive step in an otherwise challenging year and FriendshipWorks is happy to be here,” Jeter added.

While daily social isolation is still new for most Americans, it is a condition that impacts many of the 1000+ elders FriendshipWorks serves *every day*. Ending elder isolation - creating connections has been the vision of FriendshipWorks, for 36 years. Its enduring mission has been to reduce social isolation, improve the quality of life, and maintain the dignity of elders in the Greater Boston area through its programs and initiatives.

Last year, thanks to FriendshipWorks’ 650 volunteers, older adults were able to experience new friendships; be escorted to attend medical appointments; receive assistance with tasks; enjoy music and art, and the unconditional love of a pet. During the pandemic, their programs creatively pivoted to phone and online connection; grocery deliveries; coordinated card-making and letter-writing initiatives; PetPals videos and outdoor MusicWorks concerts.

“Ultimately, we are a matching service,” says Seckel-Cerrotti. “By matching elders, ages 60-105, with volunteers ages 18 to 85, 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 in more communities.”

To find out how to make a referral or to volunteer for the Friendly Visiting program, please visit our website: www.fw4elders.org, call 857-248-3265, or email: kjeter@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. For more information you can follow us on [Instagram](#), Like us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

[Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services \(SCES\)](#) is a non-profit agency that supports the independence and well-being of older people in Somerville and Cambridge. For more information, visit eldercare.org, follow us on [Facebook](#), or contact the SCES Aging Information Center at 617-628-2601 or info@eldercare.org for free advice and guidance.