

MetLife Foundation
Older Volunteers
Enrich America
A W A R D S



2010

Presented by
MetLife Foundation
in partnership with the
National Association of
Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

2010 Awards

Ceremony

May 7, 2010

Washington Plaza Hotel

Washington, DC

Honoring 26
extraordinary
older volunteers
for outstanding
service to their
communities

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MetLife Foundation

MESSAGE FROM

Dennis White

President and CEO, MetLife Foundation

I am pleased to welcome you to this celebration honoring recipients of the 2010 MetLife Foundation *Older Volunteers Enrich America Awards*.

This year, we honor twenty-six outstanding older volunteers, who range in age from 59 to 95 years. Their stories, told in the following pages, illustrate the diverse ways older volunteers are effectively addressing local needs, from mentoring young people to connecting other older adults to health care and other vital services. They are changing lives and improving the overall quality of community life.

It is our hope that the stories will motivate other older adults to lend their time and talent to their communities. We also hope the stories will encourage more organizations to engage older volunteers in their programs, which are especially needed during these challenging times.

Now more than ever, volunteers have a critical role to play in building healthy communities. Please join me in congratulating the 26 award recipients and celebrating the many older volunteers nationwide who are reaching out and making a difference.

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife in 1976 to carry on its

longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement.

Grants support health, education, civic and cultural programs throughout the United States.

For more information about the Foundation visit the website at www.metlife.org.





Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

MESSAGE FROM

Sandy Markwood

Chief Executive Officer, n4a

We are so privileged to have the opportunity, for the eighth year, to honor the enormous contributions made by older Americans to their communities.

We received over 100 nominations and the most common message from those who told us about their volunteer was, “This is the person you are looking for.” More than 100 program directors, volunteer coordinators and managers all know that they have someone very special contributing to their program.

And they do—all 100+ nominees are outstanding volunteers making a significant contribution to the program they have chosen to work for. The selection process is very difficult. There are two levels of review and all reviewers say that it is so hard to choose because the nominees are all so impressive.

As we honor these outstanding 26 older volunteers today, we also want to acknowledge the many other volunteers who serve their communities in so many ways—and encourage all who benefit from their efforts to acknowledge, commend and thank them.

When you read the stories of our honorees, you will see the many different ways they use their life experiences to serve their communities, youth and family and other older adults. Perhaps there is an unmet need in your agency or your community—just waiting for an older volunteer. They serve well and faithfully.

We are grateful that MetLife Foundation shares our belief in older volunteers and makes it possible to recognize their incredible work at the national level.

We urge you to think about how volunteers can help in your community and join us in congratulating these 26 very special people.

*n4a is the leading voice on aging issues for the Area Agencies on Aging across the country
and a champion in our nation’s capital for Title VI Native American aging programs.*

For more information visit www.n4a.org.



Community
Champion
Awards

Older Volunteers
Enrich America



Honoring older
volunteers who
use their time
and talent to
make their
community a
better place
to live

NIKI TSONGAS
5TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

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Dear Barbara and Ira Smith,

I would like to congratulate you on being named gold honorees in the 2010 MetLife Foundation Older Volunteers Enrich America Awards. This award is well-deserved and I am pleased you have both been recognized for the work that you do to provide a better life to those in need through your organization, Household Goods Recycling of Massachusetts (HGRM).

Your efforts to help victims of fires and floods, women and children escaping abusive domestic situations, people coming out of shelters and halfway houses, war veterans, and recent immigrants to the U.S. provides a tremendous benefit not only to the individuals you assist but to the community as a whole.

I have heard of your ability to bring people from all walks of life together to help those who are going through a difficult time and to do it with respect, dignity and diligence. You should be proud of helping a variety of clients that represent a true cross section of American society.

Not only does your work benefit individuals in need, you also protect our environment by keeping truckloads of items out of landfills. As someone who cares very deeply about protecting our environment and promoting energy independence, I am grateful for all that you do in this area.

This award, although prestigious in its own right, is only a glimmer of the praise that you deserve for all the work you do. I look forward to hearing about your continued success. As always, if I can do anything to assist you in the future, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

GOLD HONOREE**Barbara and Ira Smith, Acton, Massachusetts**

Barbara (78) and **Ira** (79) **Smith** have been beacons of inspiration and hope for the hundreds of Household Goods Recycling of Massachusetts (HGRM) volunteers, thousands of donors and many thousands who have been helped when starting over their lives. The program began in 1990 in the Smiths' garage when they wanted to help a refugee from war-torn El Salvador who had arrived in the U.S. with nothing. A call to neighbors and friends yielded enough to furnish an apartment with goods left over. The Smiths soon realized that many others were also in need and set about meeting that need. Since launching HGRM in 1990, the Smiths have been tirelessly involved in the operation, management and promotion of the organization. They haul furniture, guide clients through the facility, encourage volunteers, maintain solid relationships with referring social service agencies and promote HGRM to local groups.



The Smiths continue to serve as volunteer co-Executive Directors of HGRM, managing everything from distribution of donated goods to working with their volunteer Board of Directors, who share their vision of providing a better life to those in need.

The Smiths came to this work late in life, in retirement. Ira had spent time in the military then worked in the private sector in management consulting. Barbara was a school teacher and homemaker who raised six children in the Acton area.

The Smiths have the ability to bring together people from all walks of life to help those who are going through a difficult time and to do it all with respect, dignity and diligence. They help victims of fires and floods, women and children escaping abusive domestic situations, people coming out of shelters and halfway houses, war veterans down on their luck and recent immigrants to the U.S. Clients come from more than 125 communities in the Greater Boston area (and beyond) and are referred by hundreds of human services agencies, government agencies and religious organizations.

The Smiths are proud that they do not focus on any one demographic and clients represent a true cross section of American society—every race, religion and ethnicity. The Smiths' work not only helps individuals and families in transition but keeps truckloads of items out of landfills, benefiting the environment.

Household Goods Recycling in Massachusetts (HGRM) in Acton, Massachusetts is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization that accepts donated household goods and distributes them free of charge to individuals and families in need. Begun by the Smiths in 1990, it matches the great need for household items with the generosity of surrounding communities and the commitment of the founders and their 300 volunteers. It now helps close to 4000 families a year to make a home. Volunteers are recruited and trained from surrounding communities and include retired persons, empty nesters, students and those doing community service assignments.

Charlie Davis, Omaha, Nebraska

Charlie Davis (82) has led a group of faith-based volunteers to repair homes as part of his “*Charlie’s Angels*” program in Omaha, Nebraska. He and his “Angels” meet weekly and, weather permitting, work on homes of low-income elderly and disabled homeowners on behalf of the Rebuilding Together for the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging. Rebuilding Together works closely with Charlie to refer qualified homes and provide support funds for materials and dumpsters. Charlie builds cabinets for kitchens and baths and recently has been able to modify cabinetry donated by others to fit into these homes. In the nine years he has volunteered, Charlie and his ‘Angels’ have donated 11,821 hours repairing 470 homes in the Omaha area.

Charlie’s Angels accepts and works directly to implement the mission statement of Rebuilding Together, Inc: “ In partnership with the community, rehabilitate the homes of low-income homeowners, particularly the elderly and disabled, so that they may live in warmth, safety and independence.” Through specific training provided by Team Captains, both skilled and laypersons can volunteer. Local businesses provide both in-kind and monetary support to meet the needs of the projects.

Edward Ferguson, Naples, Florida

Edward Ferguson (76) volunteers for the Collier County Sheriff’s Office in Naples, Florida. Using his Sheriff’s Office background, Edward helps victims cope with the crises they are facing by providing emotional support, acting as a liaison between the victims and law enforcement personnel, providing information and referrals to long-term assistance organizations and advocating on their behalf when needed. This is a unique role most effectively carried out by an individual with long-term professional experience in the agency. For the past nine and a half years, Edward has volunteered to put himself in extremely stressful and chaotic situations—many of which require being on call during nights, weekends and holidays.

The Sheriff’s Office Volunteer program utilizes local residents to meet the agency’s ultimate goal of protecting the community. Volunteers work in many facets of the agency, including Parking Enforcement, Community Observer Patrols and Administrative offices. The skills and interests of volunteers are considered when making an assignment. The volunteers play an integral role in keeping the community safe.

Deb Matthews, Bemidji, Minnesota

Deb Matthews (59) is a nine-year volunteer for the Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota Senior Nutrition Program in Bemidji, Minnesota. In times of economic hardship, Deb can be counted on to pull the senior nutrition program through with her generosity and commitment. Every year, she organizes a golf tournament that brings in more than \$75,000 in donations to benefit sick and low-income elderly. In addition to the nutrition and meals on wheels programs, she also supports early childhood development and education programs. Deb has contributed more than \$80,000 to help the nutrition program continue service to rural areas. She is also an active member of a group called “The Livingstone Ministries,” which contributes much of its time to visit and sing at nursing homes, conduct numerous fundraising events and minister to the needs of the homeless and people in every walk of life.

The mission of this program is to provide nutritionally balanced meals—through both group meal sites and home-delivered meals—to seniors age 60 and older with emphasis on serving low-income and minority populations and others who are at the highest nutritional risk. The goal is to keep seniors healthy mentally and physically, which allows them to live active independent lives for as long as possible and remain a vital part of their communities.

Mari Terbrueggen, Jacksonville, Florida

Mari Terbrueggen (71) volunteers for the Senior Life Foundation, Inc. in Jacksonville, Florida, where she provides rapid assistance to low-income seniors who are facing crisis in their own home. Crises range from immediate eviction to disconnect notices from utilities, to having to choose between food and medication. After retirement, Mari was appointed to the Mayor's Council for Elder Affairs, where she came face to face with the plight of low-income elderly. Along with other caring individuals, she established the Senior Life Foundation to help low-income seniors in crisis who had no place else to turn. Mari makes noteworthy contributions by devoting more than 45 hours a week to the Foundation, continuing to build partnerships and ensuring that the Foundation keeps its finger on the pulse of senior needs. Since 2002, the Foundation has helped more than 500 senior citizens and contributed more than \$200,000 in assistance.

This all-volunteer organization staffs an emergency helpline and provides rapid assistance to Duval County seniors (60+) in crisis who live in their own home or apartment and whose monthly income is \$1,000 or less. The Foundation empowers its volunteers to determine the eligibility and amount of assistance for each client and trains them to provide referrals to other agencies for longer-term assistance. The service objective of same day response is at the heart of its mission.

Anna Mae Tomka, Omaha, Nebraska

Anna Mae Tomka (73) is a volunteer at the 2-1-1 call center in Omaha, Nebraska. Anna Mae has volunteered from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday for the past 29 years. Over the years, Anna Mae has touched the lives of thousands of troubled callers by referring them to an agency or program for assistance with food, housing, transportation, utility payments and other emergency basic needs. Sometimes she is just the gentle voice on the phone giving solace to those who call. She has developed individualized skills necessary to help people problem solve and identify their actual needs. She does all this with a patient, respectful demeanor towards callers, as well as co-workers. Her passion and caring spirit reaches her co-workers and the thousands of lives she has touched.

2-1-1 is the national abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human services information and referral. 2-1-1 is an easy to remember and universally recognizable number that makes a critical connection between individuals and families in need and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. Help is available for vulnerable people (those who are elderly, disabled, non-English speaking, illiterate, incapacitated by crisis, etc.) and others who need help finding available services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



**2009 Silver Mentor
Honoree and Foster
Grandparent Archie
Thompson (90) of
Crescent City, California
celebrates his award
with his family.**

Older Volunteers
Enrich America



Honoring older
volunteers
whose energies
are devoted to
working with
youth and their
families

LEE TERRY

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

April 23, 2010

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COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY
AND THE INTERNET

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REPUBLICAN POLICY COMMITTEE

REPUBLICAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Dear Donald,

Congratulations on being named a gold honoree at the 2010 MetLife Foundation Older Volunteers Enrich America Awards. This is a wonderful honor and one that you are truly deserving of.

You have done the vital work of being a Big Brother to Alex, a young man who experienced a brain injury at birth and developmental delay. With your mentorship and support, Alex is now a member of the National Honor Society, and maintains a GPA of 3.6. Your impact is not only seen in Alex's successes, but in your community of Omaha, Nebraska. The fact that you helped raise over \$380,000 for the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Midland program is a true testament to how much this program means to you. Thanks for sharing your story with the community.

You are a true asset to your community and to volunteers nationwide. Thank you for your service. I know your story will inspire others to volunteer as well!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lee Terry".

LEE TERRY
Member of Congress

GOLD HONOREE

Don Bend, Omaha, Nebraska

Don Bend (60) has been a Big Brother to his Little Brother Alex for five years. Alex suffers from developmental delays and multiple disabilities due to a brain injury that he suffered at birth. At the time that they were matched, Alex was enrolled exclusively in special resource classes at school because he needed extra time and attention to complete his school work. His mother was worried about how he would perform in high school and enrolled him in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.



Today, Alex is a senior in high school. After beginning his freshman year enrolled in special resource classes, he has been completely mainstreamed into regular education classes since his junior year. Alex has been inducted into the National Honor Society and maintains a 3.6 GPA while also participating in both cross country and track. Alex's mother attributes much of his positive attitude, confidence, determination and resulting success to the time he spends with Don.

Don has been an outstanding Big Brother to Alex, fulfilling the role of caring adult friend, father figure and teacher. During the last five years, Don has fulfilled his commitment to spend time with Alex every Saturday. Don and Alex share a passion for golf and travel to different courses during the summer. Alex is a huge fan of Warren Buffett and because of his relationship with Don, he has been able to attend the annual Berkshire Hathaway stockholders' meeting and hear Warren Buffett speak in person. His relationship with Don has given him opportunities that otherwise would have been unavailable to him (including taking ballroom dancing lessons, as well as listening to Warren Buffett in person).

Don's volunteerism has helped the program to engage its recently formed Impact Circle, a group of individuals within the community who have committed to supporting the program at a level of \$5,000 per year and above. He and Alex appeared together to share their story and meet potential donors at the launch of the Impact Circle's 2009 campaign, helping to generate over \$380,000 in donations.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands is changing how children grow up in its community. It is the organization's mission to help children reach their potential through professionally supported one-to-one relationships with caring adults that have a measurable impact on youth. The children in the program are considered vulnerable to engaging in risk behaviors. They come from low income families, live in single parent households or with extended family, have a parent who is incarcerated or could benefit from having a positive role model. In 2009, the agency served over 1,100 children. Over the last 10 years, fewer than one percent of the children in the program have dropped out of high school, become teen parents or become involved in the juvenile justice system.

Raymond Unger, Saint Louis, Missouri

Raymond Unger (80) volunteers at the Bayless High School “Meal Runners” program in Saint Louis, Missouri. The program involves high school students and seniors who work together to deliver meals for the South County Senior Center. Senior drivers like Ray, who participate in this “cross-generational” service learning project, pick up students to help deliver meals to homebound seniors. Ray helps and encourages the student volunteers daily. He is so engaging and nonthreatening that students come to rely on him as a confidant. He has prevented two students from dropping out of school, and one of them will start college this fall. He finds out about their families and friends and is learning some of the many languages spoken by the students. In addition to driving for the five years that this high school program has existed, Ray is also a 20-year volunteer at the South County Senior Center.

The Meal Runner program started five years ago when the senior center approached the school to ask for help for their drivers with delivering meals daily to homebound seniors. Since most of the drivers are seniors themselves, the goal was to have a cross-generational service learning project. The success and contributions to the community, students, and drivers are many: clients love seeing the young people; drivers and students interact and become great friends; and the program has led to other projects between the senior center and the school district.

Doris Watkins, Omaha, Nebraska

Doris Watkins (90) is a volunteer at The Shelter, a domestic violence intervention program in Omaha, Nebraska. Grandma Doris, as she is referred to at the shelter, has been helping children for almost 29 years as their mothers struggle to transition from a life of violence to a life of opportunity. Grandma Doris is a welcoming face for children and mothers in transition. She assists with the children during group time, watches them while their mothers are taking care of business, reads stories to them, and always smiles and shows them and their mothers love. She knows that The Shelter is a life-changing opportunity for the women and their children to break the cycle of violence; and without patience, love and support, they will not be free. Doris’ work does not end there. She also volunteers for the Foster Grandparent program of the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging, where she is the longest serving Foster Grandparent in the Eastern Nebraska Program and also the longest serving volunteer in the history of Catholic Charities Omaha.

The Shelter is the Catholic Charities domestic violence intervention program, which provides a temporary safe place for women and children to escape family violence. It offers safety, care and counseling, and it helps the women find the services needed to regain control over their lives and make decisions about the future for themselves and their children. Since its beginning in 1978, The Shelter has served over 5,000 families in its residential program and thousands of abused women seeking help through its 24-hour crisis intervention hotline.

Team Spirit

Awards

Older Volunteers
Enrich America



Honoring older
volunteers who
assist other
older adults



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

ROB WITTMAN
FIRST DISTRICT
VIRGINIA

April 23, 2010

Mr. Jack Scudder
Newport News, VA 23606

Dear Mr. Scudder:

I write today to congratulate you on being named a gold honoree in the 2010 MetLife Foundation Older Volunteers Enrich America Awards. These awards were established to honor elderly members of our communities who distinguish themselves in various areas. Through your involvement with the MedTran program and the Peninsula Agency on Aging, you have shown selfless dedication to your fellow citizens, and I know that you are an outstanding representative of Newport News.

Your recognition in the "Team Spirit" category of the awards is fitting, as many folks in the Newport News area would not have been able to attend vital appointments had it not been for your generous gift of time and resources to transport them. You are very deserving of this award, and I commend you on this special occasion.

With kind regards, I remain

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert J. Wittman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress

RJW: gn

GOLD HONOREE

Jack Scudder, *Newport News, Virginia*

Jack Scudder (74) drove 10,129 miles as a volunteer for Peninsula Agency on Aging (PAA) in 2009 in order to keep Virginia Peninsula residents out of hospitals or institutions. He understands very well that the population is living longer. In 2006, Jack contacted PAA to become a volunteer driver for the MedTran program, which coordinates volunteers to transport the elderly to and from medical appointments. He said he felt it was “important to offer the skills he had left.”



Fifteen years ago, spinal surgery left Jack with a disability. He knew that for the rest of his life he would require two canes to walk. The experience made him more sensitive to the issues of mobility and aging, and he wanted to help other seniors. He now drives (usually every day) seniors to doctor appointments, dialysis and other medical procedures. These seniors have no way to get the medical attention they need, and PAA funds for transportation are very limited. In 2009, Jack donated 540 hours to drive the 10,129 miles and completed 135 medical trips—without stipend or reimbursement.

Jack rises at 5 am to take his wife to work so he can use their car to help others. In these last four years, Jack has helped PAA address an unmet need in the community. For those that cannot drive, life can be lonely and frustrating, and there are not enough community resources to help the elderly get where they need to go. Much of Jack’s day is spent making sure that seniors maintain regular appointments for their health and getting the medications they need to stay healthy.

Jack literally goes the “extra mile” with the seniors he transports. Having spent 20 years in the music and television business in Germany, he recorded more than 13 albums and CDs with his wife of 27 years. These tunes are from the “good old days,” and he plays the CDs as he takes PAA clients to their appointments. It has become a special occasion for his riders, and it eases the stress of medical appointments.

Under the auspices of the Peninsula Agency on Aging, (PAA) MedTran coordinates volunteers to transport low income, at-risk seniors to non-emergency doctors' appointments, medical tests and the pharmacy. These seniors have no means of transportation and benefit from the companionship of reliable volunteers who utilize their own vehicles. MedTran helps seniors “age in place” and live independently by increasing their access to health care. By providing transportation to medical appointments, MedTran volunteers help to delay or prevent hospitalization or institutionalization.

James Ayre, Equality, Alabama

James Ayre (72) plays a significant role in all three financial and personal management programs offered by Volunteer Connections. He is the coordinator and instructor for the basic computing class for seniors. He developed and implemented the class seven years ago, and it has reached almost 600 seniors in this rural Alabama community since that time. (Jim also devotes 10-12 hours a week preparing and instructing a computer class for Cub Scouts who do not have access to computers in their homes.) Jim serves as a trainer, preparer, and most importantly, as the computer specialist for the free tax assistance program, installing the hardware and software needed to process federal and state tax returns and advising the Tax Assistance Program Coordinators. Jim also helps coordinate the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Assistance Program during open enrollment when volunteers assist Medicare Part D recipients with the review of their individual prescription drug coverage plans. Finally, Jim serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors. Under his leadership, the program has thrived and expanded.

Volunteer Connections for Central Alabama, Inc. offers three programs to help older adults manage their lives and finances: Computing Basics for Seniors (training in computer skills in small groups, with one-on-one assistance when needed); Tax Counseling for the Elderly (assistance in state and federal income tax preparation and e-filing); and Medicare Part D Assistance (help in choosing the best Medicare Part D plan for an individual's needs).

Richard (Dick) Bear, Dover, Pennsylvania

Richard (Dick) Bear (71) has served as a volunteer for the York County Area Agency on Aging for the past 25 years. He has served in many capacities for the agency, sharing his talents and knowledge with others. He has served as a volunteer on the agency's advisory board since November 1999, including several years of service as Vice Chairman. Dick has also volunteered as a friendly visitor, a community educator, and a helper at special events (such as flu shot clinics, Farmers Market Voucher distributions and the York County Senior Games). Through Dick's volunteer efforts, he has touched the lives of many older adults and their families. Dick has a passion for helping older adults and is always willing to go above and beyond to assist in programs and activities to improve the quality of life for York County older adults and their families.

The York County Area Agency on Aging supports at least 10 volunteer programs that offer assistance and services to the older adults and other residents of York County. The programs include Friendly Visitor, Financial Counselor, Ombudsman, APPRISE, Office Support, Tax Assistance, Special Events, Delivery Drivers, Tour Guides, Advisory Board and Telephone Reassurance. The goal of the Area Agency on Aging volunteer efforts is to offer support to programs and to the older adults of the community.

Ruth Candeub Avins, Edison, New Jersey

Ruth Candeub Avins (82) has had a tremendous impact on her community, educating thousands of seniors across the State of New Jersey on the importance of stopping fraud, waste and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid. In 2002 when Jewish Family and Vocational Service of Middlesex County (JFVS) began to inform and educate seniors about fraud, waste and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid, Ruth was one of the first volunteers to offer her services to reach out to senior groups. For eight years, she has been reaching out to seniors, and for the last three years, she has been Assistant Coordinator of the Senior Medicare Patrol of New Jersey (SMP). Ruth has made noteworthy contributions to the SMP program: she has trained volunteers, written and edited the SMP newsletter and served on the Advisory Committee. Ruth has also helped individual seniors through one-on-one counseling sessions, in addition to her presentations. Ruth spends much of her time assisting the Coordinator of SMP, marketing the program to senior facilities and senior groups throughout the state. She is solely responsible for scheduling the many presentations that SMP conducts annually.

The Senior Medicare Patrol of New Jersey (SMPNJ) is a federally funded program of the U.S. Administration on Aging and is part of a national program to educate older adults about how to protect themselves from Medicare fraud. The SMP reaches out to Medicare beneficiaries across the state through group presentations and community events. The SMP relies on its volunteers to assist with and/or conduct these outreach efforts by speaking to senior groups in their local communities at senior centers, community centers and elsewhere. Volunteers also assist beneficiaries in resolving fraud-related inquiries and issues.

Marilyn Fantino, Charlottesville, Virginia

Marilyn Fantino (77) has devoted her life to the service of others. Her son remembers many lessons she taught him, but the principal one was to “always be grateful for what you have, there are many less fortunate.” She was the force behind the formation of the Food Bag Program in 2000. Marilyn’s philosophy is that “every senior should be able to look in the cupboard and find an array of nutritious foods for a meal. Seniors can’t run to the grocery store, or afford to order in or dine out. It is our responsibility to help those who are in need so they don’t go hungry.” Since the Program was formed in 2000, 10,000 bags of food have been distributed to the poor and needy in central Virginia, many of whom live in rural areas. Marilyn orders the food, recruits volunteers, trains packers and drivers and even does some lifting and carrying of heavy boxes. She is indeed a teacher in life, always willing to make any sacrifice to help others.

The Food Bag Program of the Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA) is an all-volunteer program providing bags of nonperishable food items to low-income seniors in the Charlottesville area of Virginia. In a partnership with the local food bank, volunteers meet once a month to pack food bags and deliver them to JABA’s community centers for distribution. In the 10 years of the program, thousands of seniors below the poverty line have been helped by this nutritious supply of food, including rural residents who often do not have easy access to food programs.

Mae Giesner, Scottsdale, Arizona

Mae Giesner (71) has had a profound impact on the people she has helped during the past 11 years as a volunteer in the Benefits Assistance Program (BAP). Navigating the Medicare system can be difficult and frustrating. In her kind and caring manner, Mae helps untangle and organize her clients’ medical bills, helps resolve billing issues, and even assists through the appeals process. Mae is a true Southerner, and her charming accent puts people at ease immediately. She guides her clients through the maze of decisions they must make in choosing the most appropriate insurance and drug plans. She volunteers for the BAP at the Area Agency on Aging office once a week, assisting clients by phone or in one-on-one counseling and at a retirement and assisted living facility, once a month. Mae contributes to the overall BAP Program in her capacity as a State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) counselor by making home visits to under age 65 disabled and homebound clients. She has manned the Medicare State Hotline, which takes calls concerning Medicare-related issues from all over the state of Arizona.

The goal of the Benefits Assistance Program (BAP) is to provide objective information about Medicare and other health insurance benefits for seniors, the disabled and caregivers. Specifically, BAP provides free personalized assistance in determining eligibility for income-related programs; provides information about Social Security, Medicare, SSI and prescription drug coverage; and assists in organizing Medicare and supplemental claims, as well as appeals and in resolving Medicare-related problems.

Sandra Jackson, Severna Park, Maryland

Sandra Jackson (68) is one of the three co-founders of Partners In Care (PIC). Her co-workers often comment on the “miracle of organization” that Sandy performs to ensure that more than 7,000 requests for rides per year by older adults to often-critical destinations are met and that daily efforts of volunteers driving 142,938 miles and working 25,903 hours per year are coordinated. As PIC’s head of transportation, Sandra ensures daily that it all happens and does it as a volunteer. Sandy is kind and attentive to everyone. In the past 15 years, she has worked tirelessly on behalf of seniors, recruiting a small army of 2,600 members with her unassuming, gracious leadership. She has written countless grant proposals, spoken to hundreds of groups, organized multiple fundraisers and served on numerous community boards and councils advocating for older adults and nonprofits. The core concept behind PIC is that everyone has something to contribute and will be appreciated for it. The program operates using a service-exchange/time-banking model, connecting people to help each other. Sandra has ensured that PIC’s programs combat social isolation and affirm every person’s value in the community.

Partners In Care (PIC), an all-volunteer nonprofit established in 1993, has been a major contributor to empowering older adults to age in place in Anne Arundel County, Maryland and beyond for 15 years. Volunteers attend orientation and training sessions held monthly and subsequently use their own cars to provide no-monetary-cost, arm-in-arm, door-to-door transportation for older adults (7,303 rides in 2009) or no-cost handyman repairs to keep older adults safe in their dwellings.

Virginia Lemire, Lincoln, Massachusetts

Virginia Lemire (73) is an outstanding volunteer who has consistently exceeded high standards of service to clients, with other volunteers and within her community. She is an exemplary Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders (SHINE) health benefits counselor and Medical Advocate for Minuteman clients, as well as a Safe Meds volunteer for the Concord Council on Aging. In addition, she initiated a very successful senior meals program in her hometown. She has made a difference to hundreds of seniors. Virginia first was trained as a SHINE health benefits counselor assigned to the Concord Council on Aging. Volunteer positions in this program are among the most time-consuming, intensive and highly skilled in the agency. SHINE counselors invest many hours for training to keep up with changing regulations and commit to a great deal of client contact. Virginia mentors new SHINE counselors and is well respected by her peers for her quick grasp of complex regulations and insightful questions. Virginia does not hesitate to act on behalf of her clients. She finds great pleasure in being able to save money for those who may be living “hand to mouth” and is tenacious in pursuing resolution in cases where insurers or providers have charged clients incorrectly.

Minuteman Senior Services, an Area Agency on Aging, helps families find practical solutions to long-term care needs. Its 550 volunteers enhance and leverage the work of paid staff by serving as visitors, shoppers, medical transport drivers, meal deliverers, long term care facility ombudsmen, money manager/bill payers and health benefits counselors. Others serve on advisory boards, provide administrative support or help with short-term assignments such as the Holiday Gift program.

Gertrude (Trudi) Myers, Denver, Colorado

Gertrude (Trudi) Myers (77) has served as a senior companion volunteer at Seniors Inc. for 12 years. During this time, Trudi has served in four different sites where she is loved and respected by all. Trudi has touched and improved the quality of life for approximately 1,000 at-risk older adults, those with disabilities and elder victims of crime. Trudi is currently serving at a low-income senior housing facility. When she found it a challenge to get residents out of their apartments to socialize and participate in activities, she created a breakfast program with complementary activities of special appeal to the residents, countering their preference for isolation. Trudi has been instrumental in encouraging others to volunteer with the Senior Companion Program; she has recruited 15 older adults to serve. Trudi has now started her first year on the Denver Senior Companion Program Advisory Council and is a real asset. She provides fundraising ideas and encourages Advisory Council Members to get involved in fundraising and visiting the program sites.

The Senior Companion Program is one of the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service. The mission: to provide meaningful retirement opportunities for individuals older than 60 by assisting other adults and seniors who need person-to-person support. Seniors Inc. has been a sponsoring agency of this program for 36 years, and during this time its Senior Companions have provided more than 2,400,000 hours of service to more than 124,000 at-risk senior citizens, those with disabilities and elder victims of crime. Partners include hospitals, senior centers, and facilities for adult day care, disability services and independent living.

Mary Anne Page, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mary Anne Page (78) is a walking advertisement for the value of the Meals-on-Wheels program and the value of being a volunteer. The program was four years old in 1988 when she joined. She immediately realized that one volunteer needed to learn the job of the program coordinator in case a substitute was needed if the paid employee had to miss work. She stepped up to the challenge and became that trained person, donning a hairnet and working in the kitchen to seal and sort the food trays, preparing them for each route. She is an excellent recruiter and trainer for drivers. And, in addition to faithful once-a-week delivery for more than two decades, she is on call as a substitute driver. She helped organize and keep up-to-date the driver's guide book for each of the routes. Her reliability with all the workings of the operation means that the meal recipients' needs are reliably met. Her particular skill is in organizing and recognizing practices that will be most successful—resulting in a smooth operation.

Southeast Minneapolis Meals-on-Wheels was organized to deliver nutritious hot meals to frail elderly and disabled members of the community. Volunteers handle all parts of the program, except the actual meal preparation and bundling for the routes. Volunteers deliver a meal at midday to each client, contributing to their well-being and independence by assuring they have a hot meal, a friendly face and a greeting at their door five lunchtimes a week.

Duane Phillips, Sacramento, California

Duane Phillips (62) started volunteering with the Senior Legal Hotline (SLH) in 2008 and has been a fixture ever since. Gradually increasing his hours, he now spends four-to-five hours a day, four-to-five days a week helping California's senior population. He truly exemplifies the best of what retired attorneys have to offer as SLH volunteers: consistency, reliability and rapport with other seniors who call for legal help. Duane is a dedicated advocate and one of the program's most dependable and reliable volunteers. The sheer volume of his contribution far exceeds that of all other steady, retired attorneys. Since joining the corps of volunteers, he has clocked more than 1,525 hours and worked on 740 cases, virtually all of them as primary counsel. Duane is the only SLH advocate to have attended a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sponsored training on pre-purchase counseling for new homebuyers. He has shared his knowledge on the subject with the rest of the staff. As a HUD-approved housing counseling agency, SLH is better equipped to assist clients with all their legally- related housing needs.

The Senior Legal Hotline (SLH) is a program of Legal Services of Northern California (LSNC). The program's main activity is taking calls from seniors throughout California and providing free information, advice and significant additional services on any legal issue. This service improves the quality of life for many seniors by empowering them with the knowledge they need to prevent scams and other forms of abuse. SLH's volunteer program is solid; and the retired attorneys who serve in it boost the capacity of the program, especially when budget cuts force staff reductions.

Joze Pihlar, Papillion, Nebraska

Joze Pihlar (77) has been a respite volunteer for almost six years and has provided more than 400 hours of care for individuals who have disabilities or are chronically ill. His care enables families to continue caring for their loved ones at home by helping to relieve them of the emotional stresses of full-time caregiving. His work has a direct impact on the community by providing an essential direct health supportive service. The community benefits greatly by allowing families to continue to care for loved ones in their homes. Joze is always willing to go the extra mile to be the best volunteer he can be, eagerly participating in training and always demonstrating his compassion. Recently, the caregiver of the person whom he visits publicly acknowledged how he has changed her life. She spoke with conviction about the quality of care and friendship he exhibited toward her family, and she described how the free time he provides for her has helped her regain her emotional health, enabling her to continue caring for her husband who suffers from Alzheimer's disease.

HELP Adult Services provides respite services and support to caregivers of chronically ill and homebound adults through the use of well-trained volunteers. The program helps to alleviate the emotional stress for caregivers, while also providing friendship and a watchful eye for the person in need. This program provides a critical service to the community by helping to keep adults with disabilities or impairments in a home environment and delaying the need for a skilled nursing facility, saving costs and improving quality of life.

Charles Pollard, Baltimore, Maryland

Charles Pollard (95) has been a volunteer at the Waxter Center for Senior Citizens for more than 25 years. He drives himself to the center five days a week for five hours a day. When he first became a volunteer, he took on the responsibility of greeting seniors who had mobility needs and assisting them to their destinations. His assistance has a positive impact on their lives, making them feel alive and less dependent. Charles assists with the Eating Together Meal Program by serving more than 50 meals a day for both breakfast and lunch to those who enter the center. He also initiated the Welcome Volunteer Committee, set up to help all new volunteers become familiar with the center and its volunteer positions. In addition, Charles holds occasional seminars with area elementary school children to give them a "blast from the past" and explore how things have changed since he was a young boy.

The Volunteer Program at the Waxter Center, a multi-purpose senior center, has been in existence for more than 35 years. Its overall goal is to give seniors in the community the opportunity to share their experiences and skills with others while maintaining an active physical, mental, spiritual and social lifestyle. The volunteers make significant contributions to the community by providing daily assistance and referrals to local companies and organizations for seniors.

Larry Rivers, Apple Valley, Minnesota

Larry Rivers (68) contacted the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging in 2005 because he wanted to volunteer. With a background in healthcare, a knack for problem-solving and a keen interest in serving seniors, he was attracted to the Health Insurance Counseling program through the Senior LinkAge Line®. After successfully completing the training, he received certification as a State Health Insurance Counselor. Larry's spirit as a volunteer health insurance counselor for the older adults in his community sets him apart. He demonstrates not only a clear knowledge of Medicare, but also an extraordinary ability to explain it in a manner that seniors understand. His genuine kindness and ability to connect with people proves so impressive that older adults seek him out. In addition to direct counseling, especially during the open enrollment period for Medicare Part D plans, Larry helps to train and mentor new volunteers to the Senior LinkAge Line® Health Insurance Counseling program.

The Health Insurance Counseling Program through the Senior LinkAge Line® strives to give older adults, caregivers and professionals access to information related to Medicare and long-term care choices. Volunteers meet with clients one-on-one to help them understand their Medicare benefits, file Medicare claims and appeals, review long-term care insurance policies, evaluate eligibility for medical assistance, identify Medicare Fraud and Abuse, and locate support resources in their community. Volunteers provide assistance to clients in libraries, community centers, senior centers and clients' homes when needed.

Betty Thacker, Knoxville, Tennessee

Betty Thacker (82) was one of the first people to respond to a plea in 1971 for volunteers to deliver hot meals to the homebound elderly in Knoxville, Tennessee. Thirty-eight years later, she is still active, not only in delivering Mobile Meals, but in serving on the Friends of Mobile Meals Advisory Board. A compassionate Betty Thacker dishes out hugs and cheery greetings as she checks on the well-being of the elderly on her Mobile Meals route. She has driven more than 22,800 miles and delivered more than 54,000 meals. She also follows through with getting assistance for the individuals on her route who have specific needs and is an advocate for all seniors. In 1997, she was one of the team of volunteers that originated a fund-raising effort to support a major expansion of the program to add almost 200 persons who otherwise would not have been served. This continues to be a viable fundraising program, and the team of volunteers became the Friends of Mobile Meals Advisory Board.

Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee Office on Aging administers more than 16 programs for seniors. The goal of the Office's Mobile Meals program, established in 1971, is to serve hot, nutritious, noontime meals, plus a daily safety check to frail seniors (age 60+), with priority given to those with the greatest need. Meals (an average of 820 a day) are served on weekdays, including holidays. Approximately 1,200 volunteers served last year, representing civic, faith communities and corporate employees, along with individual volunteers.

Hilda Woel, Silver Spring, Maryland

Hilda Woel (71) began with the Montgomery County Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in November 1985. Originally from Puerto Rico, Hilda and her husband, Ralph, were self-employed small business owners who raised a family in the area. Hilda was seeking opportunities to give back to her community in a manner that was concrete, would have an impact on the lives of others and might be considered "just a little different." She joined the small team who called themselves "ombudsmen" under a program that had just celebrated its tenth anniversary. Twenty years later, she participated in the program's 30th anniversary and contributed significant service during each year in between. Hilda has been assigned as the advocate for the 165 residents who live and receive care at Kensington Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Kensington, Maryland. Hilda has routinely visited the residents at this nursing home at least once a week for the past 25 years. In addition, she responds to complaints, calls for assistance, provides consultations to the facility staff about good care practices, investigates allegations of abuse and neglect and celebrates victories when resident rights prevail.

The Montgomery County, Maryland Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program operates under the guidelines outlined in the Older Americans Act. It includes recruitment and training of volunteers who work in the role of ombudsman representatives to investigate complaints and resolve problems for residents of nursing homes and licensed assisted living facilities. The program is hosted within the local Area Agency on Aging in county government. This is the most active and largest volunteer ombudsman corps in Maryland and considered to have exemplary practices.

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BLUE RIBBON PANEL

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Jeanette Wojcik, Faith in Action Caregivers, Inc.



COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARDS

2009

Frank Iszak

Silver Age Yoga
San Diego, CA

2008

Nolene Breen

Ada County Guardian
Monitoring Program
Boise, ID

2007

Richard A. Kloc

DAV Van Transportation
Program
Buffalo, NY

2006

Fran Heitzman

Bridging Inc.
Bloomington, MN

2005

Victoria Thornton-Lucas

RSVP
New York, NY

2004

Josephine Cooper

San Diego Food Bank
San Diego, CA

2003

Donald Maxstadt

Volunteer Home Maintenance
Program
Muncie, IN

MENTOR AWARDS

2009

Robert Burtwell

PALS Partners in Education
Venice, FL

2008

Frank Bittick, Ed.D.

Teen Aid Project
Coeur d'Alene, ID

2007

Mary Hopkins

Foster Grandparent Program
Sacramento, CA

2006

Ora Rakestraw

Foster Grandparent Program
Sacramento, CA

2005

Edward Jagen

Good Knight Child
Empowerment Network
Beltsville, MD

2004

Katherine (Kay) Schosger

Foster Grandparent Program
Corning, NY

2003

Charles Fernandez

Portage County RSVP
Plover, WI

TEAM SPIRIT AWARDS

2009

Beatriz Marino

SHIBA
Portland, OR

2008

Andrea King

Foss Home and Village
Seattle, WA

2007

Ann Williams

CO-AGE
Atlanta, GA

2006

Sol Goldstein

Rebuilding Together
Massapequa, NY

2005

Lucille Brock-Thomas

Faith in Action – Caregivers
“REACH OUT and TOUCH”
Agency
Jesup, GA

2004

Arthur Nichols

RSVP
Kalamazoo, MI

2003

Lillian Embick

Audiences Unlimited
Fort Wayne, IN

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