



2007

**MetLife Foundation  
Older  
Volunteers  
Enrich  
America  
Program  
Awards**

# Promising Practices in Recruiting and Engaging Older Volunteers

April 2008

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



*Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.*

**MetLife Foundation**  
*Older Volunteers Enrich America*  
**Program Awards**

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# Acknowledgment

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is pleased that MetLife Foundation has sponsored the 2007 *Older Volunteers Enrich America* Program Awards. The annual awards honor volunteer programs that are creating meaningful opportunities for older adults and strengthening communities. The awards for volunteer programs were launched in 2006 as a companion to the *Older Volunteers Enrich America* Awards for exemplary individual volunteers, which was initiated in 2003.

Through the program awards, MetLife Foundation has provided n4a with an excellent opportunity to recognize and showcase promising practices for recruiting and engaging older volunteers. “The growing older population represents a valuable volunteer resource,” said Sibyl Jacobson, president of MetLife Foundation. “We are pleased to join n4a in recognizing the programs profiled in this publication for excellence in recruiting and engaging older volunteers to build healthy communities.”

Sandy Markwood, n4a’s CEO, said, “With the aging and retirement of the baby boom generation, it is so important to recognize volunteer programs that are harnessing their abilities to reach out and engage this generation to help address community needs. We are delighted to partner with MetLife Foundation to disseminate promising practices of highly effective volunteer programs.”

n4a also wishes to acknowledge the members of the program’s Advisory Board for their valuable guidance and support:

- Ramonda Kyser, Program Development Officer, Faith in Action, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
- Donnia Smith, Director of Volunteer Programs, Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, Inc., West Palm Beach, Florida
- Christopher Toppe, Ph.D., Senior Social Scientist, Points of Light Foundation, Washington, D.C.
- Jackie Trainer, Program Manager, Senior Companion Program, Seniors Inc., Denver, Colorado

*The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) is the leading voice on aging issues for Area Agencies on Aging across the country and a champion for Title VI Native American aging programs in our nation’s capital. AAAs have more than 30 years of experience administering and coordinating services for older adults. For additional information about n4a, visit [www.n4a.org](http://www.n4a.org).*

*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. For additional information about the Foundation, visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).*

# Introduction

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), in partnership with MetLife Foundation, launched the *Older Volunteers Enrich America* Program Awards to recognize organizations that are effectively recruiting and engaging older adults in volunteer services.\* This booklet provides a snapshot of promising practices offered by our 13 winners — three **Awards of Excellence** winners and 10 **Awards of Achievement** recipients. These programs provide many ideas for harnessing the energy of older adults, who stand ready to “give back” to society with their volunteer time and energy, and to remain productive and involved in their communities.

Among this year’s honorees are programs that use an intergenerational approach to helping frail older adults remain in their homes by receiving volunteer assistance with transportation, grocery shopping or companionship. Other winning programs utilize older volunteers to tutor and mentor at-risk children, or provide respite care to family caregivers.

Some of the keys to successful programs include offering flexible hours for volunteers, providing opportunities that are fulfilling and that utilize the volunteers’ skills and interests, and reaching computer-savvy volunteers through websites and online bulletin boards.

Other winning volunteer programs note that “word of mouth” was their best recruiting tool, showing that if you build it, and build it well, they will come!

The purpose of *Promising Practices in Recruiting and Engaging Older Volunteers* is to disseminate proven approaches to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of volunteer programs through recruitment, training, retention and recognition of older volunteers, and program sustainability.

It is our hope that these programs serve as a model for other programs seeking to recruit and retain volunteers from the country’s growing older population.

\*The term “older volunteers” refers to individuals 50 years and older.

2007

**Awards of Excellence**  
**Volunteer Program**  
**Profiles**

# Interages

Montgomery County, Maryland

Number of volunteers in 2006: **179**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **59**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **82%**

Staff size: **6.75 full-time equivalents (FTEs)**

Year program launched: **1986**



## **Program Idea: Create volunteer opportunities for employed baby boomers whose volunteer time is limited to evening and weekend hours.**

Interages develops interactive, intergenerational and cross-cultural programs to assist at-risk children and youth, and frail and isolated seniors by offering tutoring and mentoring programs, basic reading instruction, homework help and language-learning activities. Programs operate primarily in Title I schools, serving disadvantaged students. Volunteers ages 50 and older are recruited and trained as second grade reading tutors, immigrant student mentors, geography enrichment leaders or high school current events discussion group participants. Paid staff support these volunteers by providing on-site support, lesson plans, materials and assistance.

A Program Coordinator pairs volunteers and students based on their personalities, interests and sometimes gender. Most volunteers must commit to 1-2 hours a week throughout the school year. There is flexible scheduling for adults who may travel for several weeks and are not able to commit to a full academic year. Interages also is testing volunteer opportunities for currently working baby boomers whose volunteer time is limited to evening and weekend hours. Such a project might involve extracurricular “passion projects” chosen by students who share the same interests as a senior volunteer and would meet with them at a local library.

Programs are supported through partnership with the County Department of Health and Human Services and the public school system, although the majority of funds are from the support of individual contributors, foundations and corporations.

**Recruitment.** The Program Director launches the annual recruitment season with an open house. Current volunteers receive door prizes for bringing friends to learn about volunteer opportunities. Opportunities are advertised in local newspapers and listed in on-line databases. Staff and current volunteers speak at community meetings, and direct mail solicitations are sent to targeted householders over age 50.

**Training and Retention.** Interages provides orientation and training prior to the school year and at the midpoint in the school year. It gives volunteers regular updates about all programs through a newsletter. Program coordinators provide feedback and encouragement, sending personal thank you notes at the end of sessions, as well as supportive notes if a volunteer faces health or family difficulties. Photos of each volunteer with his/her child are posted and notes or drawings by students are shared at each site. The schools provide certificates of appreciation. Experienced volunteers may expand their roles to provide administrative support at a site, act as the back-up program coordinator or informally mentor new volunteers.

**Accomplishments.** During the 2006-2007 school year, 584 children and 233 frail and isolated seniors participated in Interages programs at 37 sites in Montgomery County. In addition, an equivalent of \$118,789 of in-kind support was provided by 177 senior volunteers.

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# Legacy Corps

San Diego, California

Number of volunteers in 2006: **48**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **50%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **24**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **60%**

Staff size: **1 FTE**

Year program launched: **2001**

## Program Idea: Offer monthly sessions for volunteers to reflect on the program's impact on their lives.

Aging & Independence Services, the Area Agency on Aging for San Diego County, partnered with New Alternatives Inc. to create Legacy Corps San Diego, an intergenerational respite care service. Legacy Corps is part of a nationwide initiative of the University of Maryland Center on Aging and AmeriCorps. Legacy Corps San Diego pairs multigenerational service teams — comprised of at-risk youth and seniors — to provide free non-medical respite care for caregivers of homebound seniors. This program provides positive outcomes for the homebound senior, their caregiver, at-risk youth and the older adult mentor.

The skills and interests of a potential volunteer are carefully considered and evaluated through an extensive interview process. An at-risk youth will be paired with a mentor who shares similar interests and/or skills, and the two will together provide services to a homebound third party. Adults in the program commit to 450 hours a year of service; youth provide 150 hours. Volunteers can also meet their hours through other service, including training or assisting with recruitment and fundraising.



Aging & Independence Services provides technical assistance for the project, which is funded by AmeriCorps, Atlantic Philanthropies and New Alternatives Inc. The University of Maryland lends support for the gathering of research data, which has documented decreased levels of stress, increased satisfaction levels and improved emotional health among recipients of services.

**Recruitment.** A DVD highlighting the experiences of program volunteers is aired periodically on the County Television Network, and articles highlighting the program have appeared in local newspapers and the Aging & Independence Services monthly bulletin.

**Training and Retention.** Volunteers receive extensive training and support, with more than 20 hours of training, intergenerational team-building activities, CPR and First Aid certification, educational trainings on numerous health and caregiving issues, and a handbook. Additional monthly training and lifelong learning opportunities are available. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in conferences and events in the community, and in recruitment and fundraising efforts. The Program Director meets with each volunteer midway through the service year to review and celebrate accomplishments. A monthly stipend is provided to defray costs of mileage, etc. Monthly reflective sessions provide further opportunity for volunteers to ponder on the program's impact on their lives. Feedback and recognition are provided. Gift cards are given to those who have put forth outstanding effort. A monthly meal, with a speaker present, is provided, and every volunteer is given a pin.

**Accomplishments.** Since the program's inception, over 7,600 hours of respite have been provided to more than 45 clients in San Diego County.

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# Stroke of Hope Club

North Palm Beach, Florida

Number of volunteers in 2006: **35**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **88%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **2**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **100%**

Staff size: **0 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1984**

## **Program Idea: Expand the volunteer pool by allowing a minimum two-hour-per-month commitment and letting volunteers choose from a wide variety of roles.**

The Stroke of Hope Club, Inc. seeks to increase awareness about stroke prevention and provide information, support and education to individuals and families affected by stroke and aphasia (language difficulties created by damage to the brain). Aphasia Group Moderators/Mentors offer communication practice, memory exercises, social interaction and listening exercises, with five classes offered at two sites each week. Volunteers monitor an information desk three hours a day on weekdays, providing information and referral services. Caregiver support groups meet for two hours weekly at two sites. There is also a monthly one-hour support group.



Volunteers serve as “rehab buddies,” visiting stroke patients (“victors”) at local hospitals and/or rehab centers. Volunteers manage telephone lines, write, publish and mail a newsletter, and offer “communication coaching” and computer training through the Aphasia Center for two hours, four days a week. There is a Speaker’s Bureau, through which volunteers make community presentations about stroke and aphasia. Volunteers create brochures and process registrations for the Annual Stroke Conference for Healthcare Professionals and copy and collate “Hope Help Guides.” Volunteers work on the website, respond to e-mails and serve on the board.

Funding comes from Older Americans Act Title III-E, foundations, the Palm Beach County State Attorney’s office and monetary awards received for the program. The Stroke of Hope Club has been structured in such a way that if a particular funding source ended, the program would still be able to continue providing services.

**Recruitment.** Volunteers are recruited through community outreach, United Way listings, an annual professional conference and word of mouth. Volunteers typically begin with a minimum time commitment and quickly increase the amount of time they donate. The initial commitment is as low as two hours per month.

**Training and Retention.** Quarterly in-services are provided for volunteers. There is an annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, at which each volunteer receives a small gift and acknowledgment. Opportunities to recognize volunteers are pursued through local, state and national award programs (i.e., Area Agency on Aging volunteer recognition and the MetLife/n4a *Older Volunteers Enrich America* Awards program). Volunteers receive feedback from the Executive Director, and their insights and suggestions are welcomed. A wide variety of programs allow each volunteer to utilize his or her own personality and style.

**Accomplishments.** For over 20 years, Stroke of Hope Club, Inc. has provided programs and services, which are 95% supported by volunteers. The Board of Directors and Advisory Board consist of volunteers, with an average of 35 people attending monthly support group meetings. They provided weekly programs to over 75 “victors” and caregivers last year.

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2007

**Awards of Achievement**  
**Volunteer Program**  
**Profiles**

# Centers for Healthy Aging

Sarasota, Florida

Number of volunteers in 2006: **319**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **80%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **38**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **94%**

Staff size: **11 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1978**

**“We recognized early on that we needed to develop a knowledge base about local-level resources and strategies to recruit and engage volunteers, and also to tap into and harness the time and talents of the 55+ older adults that are retired in this community.”**

— Monica Strunk,

Director of Planning

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## **Program Idea: Create a public-private partnership to serve lower income persons 50+ who otherwise might not have access to health care.**

The Centers for Healthy Aging operates three health clinics and several satellite sites for low-income uninsured older adults ages 50 and over in Southwest Florida. The clinics are staffed with older volunteers who are physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and clinic aides. In collaboration with the Sarasota County Public Health Department, volunteer healthcare professionals work under a limited licensure agreement with the State of Florida. They offer primary and specialty healthcare, dental care and medication assistance, with an emphasis on prevention, education and screening programs. The Sarasota Clinic also provides services and/or medications to the homeless population.

Senior Friendship Centers, a private, non-profit organization established in 1973, operates Centers for Healthy Aging in two (Sarasota and Collier counties) of the five counties it serves. Increasingly aware that governmental funding will not be enough to meet the needs of older adults, the agency strives to be community driven and community owned. The Centers for Healthy Aging's programs and services help relieve loneliness, enable seniors to remain independent, improve quality of life and avert premature isolation and institutionalization. The program also provides adults age 50+ with meaningful opportunities to volunteer.

**Recruitment.** The Centers for Healthy Aging employs a full-time Volunteer Coordinator, who is responsible for recruitment, placement, retention, recognition and training. Friendship Volunteer Center, a nationally certified volunteer center, also assists with recruitment and matching, utilizing a database of over 5,000 active volunteers of all ages. Interests and skills are matched with numerous, varied opportunities: mentoring, speakers' bureau, home visits, etc. The communications staff speaks on a weekly basis at local community events, service groups or hospitals to reach potential volunteers. A descriptive brochure and website entries post volunteer opportunities. A monthly publication, *Prime Times*, has a distribution of 22,145.

**Training and Retention.** Defined job descriptions, flexible assignments and excellent supervision are features of the program. Formal orientation and ongoing training are provided, along with weekly training in a volunteer's field of expertise. There are bi-monthly staff meetings and opportunities for physicians to mentor medical students who are interning in gerontology. Annual performance evaluations of physicians and dental volunteers are completed, in partnership with the Department of Public Health. Physicians may participate in Quality Assurance activities, fundraising and serve on committees. There is an annual holiday party and an annual Senior Friendship Center Volunteer Recognition Celebration, during which volunteers are given certificates if they have provided more than 250 hours of volunteer service.

**Accomplishments.** Centers for Healthy Aging coordinates and supports more than 60 physicians, 15 dentists, 20 nurses and other ancillary medical personnel. During 2006, 4,845 individuals were served through 20,375 visits, and 319 volunteers provided 29,522 hours, equaling an in-kind value of \$1.5 million.

# Ethos Volunteer Services

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

Number of volunteers in 2006: **250**  
Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **20%**  
Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **11**  
Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **65%**  
Staff size: **1 FTE**  
Year program launched: **1977**

**“Our volunteers have more than proven to be a critical resource to the elders we serve and our agency. In the past year, Ethos’ volunteers have devoted over 5700 hours to vital services and projects.”**

— Dale Mitchell,  
Executive Director

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**Program Idea: Use a professional consultant to help with grant writing to ensure operational funding for volunteer service programs.**

Ethos is a Boston-based, non-profit organization whose mission emphasizes culturally competent home- and community-based care. Established in 1977, the Volunteer Services Program provides companionship, shopping assistance, telephone reassurance, medical escort, respite/caregiver support and Thanksgiving meal delivery. Older adults are volunteers and also comprise over half of the 15-member Board of Directors.

The target population is low-income homebound seniors (60+). Almost half the clients are minority (34% black and 15% Hispanic) and 47% are non-minority. Bilingual volunteers who speak Spanish, Haitian-Creole, Cantonese, Thai and Russian increasingly participate in the program, which emphasizes cultural competency and high-quality care. Volunteers typically spend 1-2 hours a week on home visits, 2-4 hours per week providing shopping assistance, including picking up prescriptions, or 3-6 hours escorting older adults to and from medical appointments. Medical escort is the most time-consuming assignment and requires a serious commitment from the volunteers. Supportive telephone calls are provided year-round on a daily basis to offer support and relief from loneliness. Elderly volunteers who themselves no longer leave home are able to contribute their services by making telephone contact with others in need.

A professional consultant assists Ethos with foundation research and grant writing, regularly pursuing alternative funding sources for the Volunteer Services Program.

**Recruitment.** Volunteers are recruited through direct mail to local non-profit organizations, churches, synagogues, senior clubs and community businesses. Public service announcements are placed in local newspapers and on television and radio. Presentations are given at senior housing meetings, social groups and fairs. Word of mouth is also important in recruiting volunteers. Skills and interests are matched to appropriate service needs, i.e., retired nurses and home health aides may be placed as medical escorts and companions. To engage more baby boomers, the Program Manager has been working with “Discovering What’s Next,” a program that helps midlife and older adults as they transition to retirement.

**Training and Retention.** Volunteers receive ongoing supervision, support and training. Quality assurance is monitored through close contacts with the clients served, as they are encouraged to report problems directly to the Program Manager or their case manager. The Program Manager maintains close relationships with volunteers via phone, personal cards, a newsletter and an annual volunteer recognition event. “Thank you” ads are placed in the local paper, with volunteers listed by name, and photographs and articles about the Volunteer Services Program are published regularly.

**Accomplishments.** Only partially state funded, Ethos raised almost \$100,000 in foundation grants during FY2006. The number of older adults served by volunteers reached 400, and there was an average of 550 volunteer hours per month. About 60 volunteers delivered hot Thanksgiving meals to 200 older adults.

# Experience Corps Literacy Project

Boston, Massachusetts

Number of volunteers in 2006: **315**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **95**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **92%**

Staff size: **12 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1997**

**“We connect community members of all ages while forging lasting relationships with local schools.”**

— Tara Finnegan,

Director of Resource Development

## **Program Idea: Invest in highly skilled staff to expand the program's ability to locate new funding sources.**

Experience Corps volunteers provide intergenerational mentoring and literacy instruction in elementary and after-school programs in Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Dorchester and South Boston. The Experience Corps program is hosted by Generations Incorporated. Within the next five years, the program expects to serve 50% of the student population at each partner site. Hundreds of older adults assist thousands of children, as Reading Coaches and in Classroom Literacy programs. Older volunteers are matched to students based on community location, background, shared interests or common birthdays. Recent research at Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions has found that the Experience Corps model improves key aging risk factors, such as declines in physical, cognitive and social activity.

Program funding includes tutoring and mentoring reimbursement from the U.S. Department of Education, and grants from Atlantic Philanthropies, AmeriCorps and the Community Development Block Grant program. Individuals and foundations also provide funding, with current support from over 45 institutions. Investing in highly skilled staff has expanded the agency's ability to establish new funding sources. Revenue has nearly doubled since 2002.

**Recruitment.** Peer-to-peer recruiting has been most effective, as active volunteers invite friends and neighbors to participate. Other recruiting efforts are done through AARP, churches and civic organizations. The program begins in mid-October of each year, and formal program evaluations are conducted each June.

**Training and Retention.** Fifty percent of volunteers who served in 2000-2001 remain currently involved. There is a seven-step training process and background checks for new volunteers. Each site receives daily administrative support from a site coordinator and weekly support from a staff Program Manager. Volunteers participate in trainings and social events throughout the year, including lectures and family outreach potlucks. Volunteers may serve in an administrative capacity as site program coordinators and Program Managers. The newly established Learning and Leadership Institute incorporates the experience and knowledge of older adult volunteers at every level of the organization. Recognition may come in the form of small thank you gifts, and all volunteers are honored in an annual end-of-year Member Appreciation Event, which features guest speakers. Modest stipends are offered to the most dedicated volunteers, as volunteers provide between 2 to 15 hours of service per week.

**Accomplishments.** In the 2007 program year, 578 children were served through the Reading Coaches Program and 69 classrooms (1,518 children) served through the Classroom Literacy Program. Participating students have improved their literacy skills by an average of 2.5 reading levels per year, compared to students not receiving instruction, who typically advance only one level. Two-thirds of teachers said they rely on volunteers for students who need extra help with literacy skills, and 80% said they would recommend the program to a colleague.

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# Faith in Action Care Program

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Number of volunteers in 2006: **246**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **96%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **80**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **81%**

Staff size: **2.5 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1985**

**“This mission (to promote successful aging and to enable older adults to live independently) is fulfilled by providing meaningful volunteer opportunities for older adults and providing direct services to frail older adults in our community.”**

— Samuel Matthews, Executive Director

## **Program Idea: Use an online application process on your website to make it easier for volunteers to apply.**

The Faith in Action Care Program, operated by Shepherd’s Center of Greater Winston-Salem, enlists older adult (age 50+) volunteers to provide home-based services to frail older adults in the community. Services include grocery shopping assistance and medical appointment transport, using the volunteer’s own vehicles, minor home repairs, respite care and visitation. During 2006, the program provided 2,103 transportation trips, 1,200 visitation or respite services, 378 home repairs (including 65 ramps) and 40 caregiver trainings. It recruited 80 new volunteers in 2006. The program reports positive evaluations by both clients and volunteers.

Approximately 10% of volunteers are still actively working, and this percentage is increasing. A visitation volunteer is asked to provide a minimum of only 1.5 to 2 hours weekly, and transportation volunteers are asked to be available a minimum of once a week. Volunteer travel time is intentionally limited, as volunteers are assigned to clients living nearby. Funding sources include program income, congregational and individual contributions, project grants and corporate support. Program funding increases at a 10-12% annual rate.

**Recruitment.** The agency website allows for on-line volunteer application, which has proven very successful. Local newspapers, congregational newsletters and bulletins also announce volunteer opportunities. Speaking engagements and displays also help to recruit volunteers. Volunteers are matched to assignments based upon their skills, interests and abilities. Home repair volunteers are more specifically matched by skill set.

**Training and Retention.** All volunteers receive an initial orientation and training session, followed by quarterly continuing education. Volunteers are given the freedom to change assignments or broaden their involvement, and are encouraged to sign up with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) for insurance and mileage reimbursement. Those not eligible for RSVP are enrolled in a stand-alone insurance program and are offered mileage reimbursement. A holiday event is held each December, with over 100 volunteers attending in each of the past six years. An annual volunteer appreciation luncheon is held in February. Over 220 volunteers and supporters have attended in each of the past six years. The program recognizes a volunteer of the year and provides gift certificates to local restaurants to extraordinary volunteers. The Volunteer Center, RSVP and other local organizations offer volunteer awards as well.

**Accomplishments.** The program responded to 3,726 service requests from older adults in 2006, which was a 12.2% increase over the prior year. About 240 volunteers invested more than 15,000 hours of volunteer time to provide essential support to 850 individuals and families. The program has received several awards and recognition.

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# ICS Senior Services

Pima County, Arizona

Number of volunteers in 2006: **425**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **93%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **133**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **80%**

Staff size: **3.5 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1985**

**“This program is a win-win situation, supporting vulnerable neighbors in our community, as well as providing opportunities for volunteers to fulfill their own lives by giving back to the community.”**

— Bonnie Kampa,  
Executive Director

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**Program Idea: List your volunteer service needs on the website of a local volunteer center, as well as your own website, to attract the technologically savvy baby boomers to volunteer.**

Interfaith Community Services (ICS) created the Senior Services Program to assist seniors, disabled individuals and people in financial crisis in Pima County to achieve stable and independent lives with support from volunteers, faith communities and the community at large. The program enables frail neighbors to continue living as independently as possible at home, through supportive services such as in-home evaluations, transportation, meal delivery, minor home repairs, caregiver relief and telephone contact. A strategic goal is to increase by 10% annually the number of services provided through the Health Advocacy, Caregiving Services and Mobile Meals programs.

All staff and many volunteers are considered part of the program's fund-raising and marketing team, generating funds and volunteers from faith communities, corporations and the general community. The Board of Directors meets monthly. Committee work involves both board members and other volunteers. Staff receive support for their professional development.

**Recruitment.** A Volunteer Coordinator oversees the recruiting, training and sustaining of over 600 volunteers agency-wide. Volunteers are recruited through outreach to faith communities, which include large numbers of people 50+. To attract volunteers who use computers, the program's need for volunteers is listed on the website of the Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona. Word of mouth referrals figure prominently as well. There is no hard-set expectation for the number of volunteer hours required and volunteers can even serve in the capacity of occasional substitute for regularly scheduled drivers, particularly in the Mobile Meals program. Nurses and social workers volunteer for the in-home evaluations of client needs.

**Training and Retention.** New volunteers attend a two-hour orientation, which is then followed by further training from the coordinator of the program in which they will participate. Skills and interests of volunteers are carefully matched, so that the experience will be most meaningful and successful, and volunteers can choose a different activity if the first match is unsatisfactory. Strong factors for retention are flexibility in scheduling, offering a wide range of activities, and responsiveness to volunteer feedback.

A county-wide voter-approved initiative allows for mileage reimbursement. A team concept for the largest service, which is the transportation program, is being planned, and will provide visors, magnetic car signs and key chains with a special logo. An annual recognition event honors volunteers. Awards are given to outstanding volunteers in several capacities, based upon nominations from other volunteers, program recipients, or staff. Staff members send personal notes to volunteers, and thank you notes from recipients are shared with volunteers.

**Accomplishments.** In 2006, more than 400 volunteers provided 26,417 services to approximately 400 recipients.

# Light Up Chicago Volunteer Program

Chicago, Illinois

Number of volunteers in 2006: **418**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **100**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **90%**

Staff size: **7 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1996**

**“While staying active, these seniors provide necessary resources and attention to other seniors with these same challenges.”**

— Joyce Gallagher,  
Commissioner

**Program Idea: Link a senior volunteer program to the local Area Agency on Aging to help ensure that the program will remain sustained.**

The Light Up Chicago Volunteer Program, operating under the umbrella of Chicago’s Area Agency on Aging, the Department on Aging, enlists older adults to help other seniors through community service in senior centers, nutrition sites and community agencies. Many of its programs have limited staffing, so the department relies on volunteers for the provision of some services. The Light Up Chicago Volunteer Program will remain sustained due to its intrinsic relationship with the Chicago Department on Aging.

The Light Up Chicago Volunteer Program has two goals: 1) keeping seniors active and engaged and 2) helping to meet the needs of other seniors. The program encourages seniors to remain engaged in their community through community service to others in need. While staying active, these seniors provide necessary resources and attention to other seniors.

Volunteer tasks include working at the reception desk or at special events, providing kitchen, dining or office assistance, selling items that seniors have made in the gift shop, providing computer training for other seniors, serving as ombudsman to receive and forward complaints people have in regard to nursing home management, and educating other seniors about Medicare fraud and health insurance.

Volunteers can also complete a Medicare education program and become certified by the Illinois Department of Insurance to provide Medicare counseling and advocacy to seniors.

The Light Up Chicago Program has no operational expenses, but paid staff are funded through corporate and federal grants. Six regional senior centers each have full-time Program Directors.

**Recruitment.** The department recruits seniors who frequent its senior centers and citywide senior events. Interested parties complete an intake form, and their interests and abilities are carefully matched to appropriate service areas. Assignments are also geared to a senior volunteer’s availability, with the average commitment being approximately 12 hours a week.

**Training and Retention.** Volunteers are given clear orientation, training and direction to meet and carry out their responsibilities. All volunteers are required to complete an orientation within the first six months of service, followed by training. Regular continued support, training and supervision are provided, and Program Directors meet with volunteers regularly to insure that they are in the most ideal position. Regional Centers provide periodic volunteer recognition events and gifts, and there is an annual all-city volunteer recognition event as well.

**Accomplishments.** Light Up Chicago Volunteer Program has high-yield results, having for over 12 years provided a means for seniors to help other seniors. Starting with about 12 volunteers serving around 600 seniors, the program has grown to over 525 volunteers serving approximately 5,000 seniors.

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# Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly

Hancock, Michigan

Number of volunteers in 2006: **1,800**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **40%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **115**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **80%**

Staff size: **6 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1982**

**“We offer to people of good will the opportunity to join the elderly in friendship and the celebration of life.”**

— Carol Korpela,

Visiting Volunteer Coordinator

**Program Idea: Ask the Board of Directors to provide financial support, fundraising, evaluation and oversight services.**

Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly is the only rural chapter of a national organization committed to alleviating isolation and loneliness in the older population. The volunteer-based, non-profit organization provides visitation, assistance with letter writing, lunch outings and assistance with grocery shopping to frail seniors. Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday dinners are provided for hundreds of older people, and a variety of social events, such as monthly birthday parties, are hosted. Firewood is provided to those who depend on it for home heating.

Transportation to and from medical appointments also is available. Volunteers are reimbursed when they provide medical transportation to a regional medical facility 100 miles away, but local medical transport volunteers are not reimbursed. Volunteer tasks include driving, providing assistance to and from the vehicle, helping with check-in at a medical office and picking up prescriptions.

The Board of Directors is instrumental to the continued success of the program — 90% of board members attend meetings and participate in committees, and 100% provide financial support. They also assist with fundraising events such as an annual auction, an annual sweepstakes event and a “new acquisition” appeal campaign. Successful board governance has kept the program active in the community for 25 years.

**Recruitment.** Volunteers are recruited from fraternal and professional organizations (carpenters, party planners, chefs and photographers), churches and senior fairs. The tendency of individuals over age 50 to feel a sense of responsibility towards their community creates a strong volunteer base, and approximately 40% of the 1,800 volunteers are 50+. Some prefer to assist in the office with receptionist work, mailings, small parties and activities. While most volunteer activities permit great flexibility in terms of time commitment, the Friendly Visitor program requires an agreement to visit at least twice a month for one year, to ensure positive relationship building between the volunteer and the client.

**Training and Retention.** The program attributes its 80% volunteer retention rate to excellent orientation and training and a comfortable work environment based upon friendship. An annual picnic is held for all volunteers, with particular recognition given to long-term service providers. An annual recognition lunch is given for medical transportation drivers, and an annual dinner for volunteers who visit clients at home. Each quarterly newsletter highlights an outstanding volunteer, and all volunteers receive a note of appreciation after their service.

**Accomplishments.** In 2006, Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly served approximately 2,100 homemade Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter meals, more than 4,000 friendly visits and 1,800 trips to medical offices. Approximately 400 bags of food were delivered to needy elderly, and their birthdays and holidays were celebrated in a spirit of loving concern.

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# NYC Foster Grandparent Program

New York, New York

Number of volunteers in 2006: **345**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **20**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **80%**

Staff size: **11 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1973**

**“The Foster Grandparent Program is proud of volunteers’ longevity of service and their consistent commitment to building New York City by focusing on at-risk children and youth.”**

— Lynna Carnegie,  
Director

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Director

NYC Foster Grandparent  
Program

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## Program Idea: Work in partnership with an array of organizations to develop volunteer placements.

The Department for the Aging, an Area Agency on Aging, runs the New York City Foster Grandparent Program that encourages older adults to assist children with special needs by volunteering in day-care and after-care centers, Head Start programs, kindergartens and elementary school programs. The Foster Grandparent Program was established nationwide by the Corporation for National and Community Service to offer people age 60 and older a paid non-taxable stipend to serve as mentors, tutors and caregivers for children and youth.

Volunteers must work a minimum of 15 hours per week and provide tutoring and assistance with reading and math readiness skills. Volunteers also read to children who are either patients in hospitals or who are awaiting legal determinations. The older volunteers work in therapeutic nurseries and also serve as Visit Coaches, facilitating family visits between foster children and their birth families, or as mentors to children in foster care.

The aging department has sponsored the program for 35 years, providing administrative support, in-kind contributions to personnel and volunteer expenses, and paying for two FGP staff telephone lines, fringe benefits for all staff, local travel, office space and equipment, printing and computer costs, and carfare expenses for foster grandparents. It works with over 100 volunteer sites that have been developed through partnership with public, non-profit and private organizations.

**Recruitment.** Culturally competent volunteers with interest in serving children and youth are sought through faith-based organizations, senior centers, service clubs, local community boards and government officials. Brochures are placed in libraries, supermarkets, social service offices and information is posted on the Department of the Aging’s website and at United Way.

**Training and Retention.** A Project Field Coordinator interviews prospective volunteers to identify skills and interests, and carefully matches them with a site. Volunteer site supervisors have centralized bi-annual training and technical assistance, supervision and guidance. A field coordinator visits each site monthly to help facilitate communication. Bonds between volunteers are forged at a 6-hour orientation and reinforced through group meetings and quarterly trainings. A team approach to assignments is encouraged and the program generally assigns more than one volunteer to a site. Each site formally acknowledges volunteers’ contributions annually, and an annual recognition luncheon offers awards and gifts.

**Accomplishments.** The program was selected by the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2005 as a “Program of Significance” for expanding literacy support to include children of prisoners and children in foster care. The program has over 400 foster grandparents approved to serve special-needs children. In 2006, the program served more than 500 infants, neonatal and newborns. Foster grandparents volunteered more than 65,000 hours to children in grades K-8, 2,000 of whom attended schools and nurseries served by the program.

# Senior Adults for Greater Education, S.A.G.E.

Richboro, Pennsylvania

Number of volunteers in 2006: **137**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **72**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **99%**

Staff size: **1 FTE**

Year program launched: **1999**

**“Promoting intergenerational connectedness helps to dispel misinformation and myths about disparate generations.”**

— Allison MacGahan,  
Associate Director

## **Program Idea: Allow volunteers to structure their own volunteer opportunity.**

The Senior Adults for Greater Education program places senior volunteers (age 55+) in three public school districts to assist students academically and to break down barriers between the youngest and oldest generations. Volunteers join students in completing community service projects, offer reading and math assistance, edit writing assignments and support English as second language students. They offer their expertise as speakers at school assemblies, judges at Science Fairs, or assistants at health and career fairs.

Intergenerational programs are offered at all grade levels, from elementary through high school, and include oral history projects, bingo games, choirs, spelling bees and a Thanksgiving meal.

A 16-person governing board oversees all activities and operates through three subcommittees — fundraising, marketing and educational programming — and a special advisory committee and honorary advisory committee to assist in further expansion and fundraising. The program developed an operating manual to allow new school districts to quickly implement the program.

The program recently received \$60,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and \$13,000 from board members, among other donations.

**Recruitment.** Many volunteers participate in Senior Fairs to recruit new volunteers. The program offers a wide variety of commitment levels and volunteers are encouraged to structure their own volunteer opportunity (i.e., a retired English teacher might work in a theater department, or a volunteer could start a knitting club). It also offers episodic volunteering events for those who do not yet want, or cannot offer, a weekly commitment. Examples include serving as a guest lecturer on a specific topic, being interviewed by students or helping with a community service project.

**Training and Retention.** The program fosters learning and education for volunteers. Students and teachers assist seniors in gaining computer and technical skills. An annual end-of-year volunteer appreciation event is held in each district. Volunteers may join the Advisory Board and the Fundraising Committee. Ninety-nine percent of teachers ask their volunteer to return, and 99% of volunteers choose to return to the same teacher again.

**Accomplishments.** In 2006, 137 volunteers gave over 150 hours weekly to school districts, totaling approximately \$101,000 in value. The program has had an impact on over 5,000 students in classrooms, as well as larger audiences at assemblies. The program received a Daily Point of Light award, which honors individuals and volunteer groups that help meet critical needs in their communities. Students have reported in surveys that more senior volunteers would bring even more benefit to their schools.

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# Senior Companion Program

Owensboro, Kentucky

Number of volunteers in 2006: **91**

Percentage of volunteers age 50+: **100%**

Number of older volunteers recruited in 2006: **38**

Volunteer retention rate in 2006: **100%**

Staff size: **2.25 FTEs**

Year program launched: **1976**

**“Well equipped Senior Companion volunteers are the human resources that enable our frail elderly recipients to realize their fullest possible potential.”**

— Robyn Mattingly,  
Senior Service Corps Director

## **Program Idea: Conduct ongoing strategic planning to address evolving needs of the community.**

The Senior Companion Program is administered by Audubon Area Community Services, and is federally funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service. It provides volunteer opportunities for low-income people ages 60 and older to support other seniors with physical, mental or emotional impairments. Volunteers must have an income at or below 125% of the federal poverty level.

The program is governed by a Board of Directors and an advisory council, which conduct strategic planning to address the evolving needs of the community. The program's goal is to maintain independent living and avoid premature institutionalization. In-home services are provided in a seven-county region, and include such tasks as friendship and encouragement, light housekeeping, laundry assistance, meal preparation, shopping and respite care. Volunteers may also serve as advocates, read to their clients, share a meal or accompany them on a walk. Some may assist with personal care, such as grooming, but they do not provide any type of medical assistance.

Senior companions serve a minimum of 20 hours per week and may not exceed 1,044 hours per year. The program is designed to benefit both volunteers and recipients.

**Recruitment.** Recruitment is done through the media, staff speaking engagements and brochures distributed at senior centers, community events, senior housing, churches and civic organizations. Most new volunteers are recruited through personal contact with active volunteers.

**Training and Retention.** Volunteers receive a 20-hour orientation followed by 20 hours of mentored training and four hours of monthly in-service training. Assessments are performed semi-annually and open communication between staff and volunteers is consistently encouraged. Volunteers receive numerous benefits, including a tax-free stipend of \$2.65/hour that is not subject to income limitations for Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, rent, etc. Mileage reimbursement is provided for own-vehicle use and senior companions are covered by a supplemental accident and liability insurance. Volunteers are also given a free physical exam annually.

An annual daylong gala recognition event honors all senior companions with a gift of appreciation. Volunteers may receive rewards of day trips to nearby attractions, and their pictures and stories are used in promotional materials. Monthly in-service trainings feature meals and door prizes. Memorial gifts are given when volunteers lose a loved one.

**Accomplishments.** In 2006, 91 Senior Companions assisted 227 clients with in-home services. Eighty two percent of 174 active clients surveyed stated that their independence had improved with the aid of their senior companion, and that they had been able to remain in their own home. A survey of family caregivers found that the respite care provided allowed 100% of the caregivers served to better maintain their health.

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# Highlights of Nominated Programs

The 2007 *Older Volunteers Enrich America* Program Award recipients were selected from many outstanding nominations submitted by programs nationwide. All offered lessons in volunteer management. Below are some of the lessons learned.

Older volunteers can be enlisted in diverse programs and places. For example:

- In Pasadena, Maryland, volunteers staff a resale boutique, the revenue from which supports volunteer door-to-door transportation and home repair programs (Partners in Care's Upscale Resale Boutique).
- In Atlanta, Georgia, a senior ensemble, part of a community theater company, creates original work that is shown in the theater. The ensemble also travels to senior living facilities to present its plays to audiences unable to get to the theater (the Horizon Theater Company's Senior Ensemble).

Other programs and settings using volunteers included:

- a legal services hotline for seniors
- a museum focused on local history
- a local historical society
- long term care facilities
- a residential veterans center
- a bookmobile and
- doctors' offices.

There were also lessons to be learned about the fundamentals of volunteer management from the many nominations.

## Recruiting and Matching Volunteers

- A Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) hands out small potted plants, with the program name prominently displayed, to older potential volunteers (Cardinal Ritter Senior Services, St. Louis, Missouri).
- A Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) uses "every tool available" to recruit new volunteers, including a contest in which the active FGP volunteer who makes the most referrals wins a food card for one of the local grocery stores (Appalachian State University, Jefferson, North Carolina).
- A Senior Legal Hotline sends volunteer solicitations to local active or retired attorneys over age 60. The same program also pairs retired attorneys with law students for the beneficial combination of years of experience plus youthful energy (Legal Services of Northern California, Sacramento, California).

## Retention

- A Faith in Action program uses retired contractors and builders to supervise work teams on home repair and modification projects. It also sends veteran volunteers to accompany new volunteers to their first assignment (Faith in Action of the River Cities, Inc., Huntington, West Virginia).
- In an RSVP program, volunteer representatives on the Advisory Board have direct input into the strategic management of the volunteer program (Douglass Community Services, Hannibal, Missouri).

## Sustainability, Recognition and Performance

- An Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serves as a program incubator, sponsoring the development of a school-based intergenerational program by donating staff, office space and supplies on an in-kind basis for three years until the program can garner operating support from other sources (Jefferson Area Board for Aging, Charlottesville, Virginia).
- A Faith in Action Health Coalition sought and won ongoing financial support for its program through a county-wide mill levy, the passage of which also offered validation and recognition (Faith in Action Health Coalition, Cavalier, North Dakota).
- When the volunteers working on an AAA-sponsored money management program were polled on the type of recognition event they preferred, most said they did not want any type of recognition. Therefore, the agency is planning a banquet for both volunteers and clients to celebrate the program itself (Senior Connections, the Capital Area Agency on Aging, Richmond, Virginia).
- A program has its bill-payers audit one another during a bill-paying session, using a checklist created by another volunteer (Senior Connections, the Capital Area Agency on Aging, Richmond, Virginia).

## Conclusion

We hope that reviewing *Promising Practices in Recruiting and Engaging Older Volunteers* has sparked some ideas for you to apply to your own volunteer program. Many of the innovations that have brought success to volunteer agencies are universal and can be adapted to the needs of any organization, in any geographical locale.

Perhaps the most important theme for a successful volunteer management program is to help older volunteers to serve to the best of their capacity. That means offering flexible schedules to accompany other time commitments they may have, providing opportunities that give a sense of purpose, and letting volunteers know how important they are to the organization or program. Even older adults with their own physical limitations can be volunteers, performing tasks such as making telephone calls to check on a homebound frail older adult.

Successful volunteer programs also report success with allowing their volunteers to serve on advisory and financial boards, or letting volunteers climb a ladder of opportunity and responsibility over time. Volunteer motivation is also important – even though these are mostly unpaid volunteers, they still have the same need for recognition and respect as paid workers.

Other great ideas for volunteer programs appear in the “Program Idea” box for each award winner. Here you will find excellent programming tips, such as:

- allowing volunteers to work in areas of their greatest passion;
- accommodating working baby boomers’ schedules and preferences for Internet-based volunteer information;
- seeking out the most qualified and skilled volunteers to help ensure your program’s success;
- ensuring that volunteers understand the importance of their volunteer experience and are recognized for their contribution;
- working with public and private partners to maximize your outreach efforts; and
- using a professional fundraiser to help raise funds to support your volunteer effort.

We thank and applaud every organization that submitted nominations, and hope that reading about these innovative programs taking place across the country will help inform your work.





*Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.*

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