



National Church Residences

EXCELLENCE THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

September 9th, 2020

Friends Foundation for the Aging
Susan Hoskins
P.O. Box 1081
Langhorne, PA 19047

National Church Residences received news of the grant made from Friends Foundation for the Aging on April 15, 2020. During this time the grant was awarded, the COVID-19 pandemic was already rapidly spreading throughout the United States. According to the CDC, “given their congregate nature and residents served (e.g., older adults often with underlying chronic medical conditions), senior long term care populations are at the highest risk of being affected by COVID-19. With seniors at the highest risk of serious complications, N[^] has been and continues to face its greatest organizational challenge to date: keeping our vulnerable population of seniors healthy, safe, and well during this time of extreme hardship. This has involved diligently implementing prevention, control, and care plans for all of our communities per guidance by the CDC (and updating plans as new information is discovered). Our dedicated building staff are putting their health and safety on the line daily, working longer hours, and taking on duties outside the scope of their job to implement control and prevention plans, clean and sanitize and care for residents who are in dire need.

Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted our organizational priorities to be focused on how to support seniors experiencing unimaginable hardship as they are sheltering in place. Now more than ever before seniors are in need of spiritual care, comfort and connection due to social distancing and shelter in place orders. Seniors are facing loneliness and isolation and are in critical need of the support the Resident Spiritual Care program offers with COVID-19 exacerbating the need further. The Resident Spiritual Care Program in the past has been implemented through the Program Lead establishing in person connections with local faith communities, hospital systems, divinity schools and ministerial associations to create a network of volunteers. This has resulted in these faith partners recommending a Regional Lead as well as volunteers to participate and be trained to provide specialized senior support through compassion and companionship to seniors of all faiths, with volunteers providing this support through one on one interaction and community events/activities that take place primarily in person. However, we are facing barriers due to COVID-19 as these faith communities are no longer on site and open to visitors. These relationships have always blossomed through face to face meetings and establishing an in person bond/partnership. With faith communities currently closed to in person visits, we have faced difficulty cultivating these relationships, hiring a Regional Lead based on recommendations, and recruiting Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators. This has caused a slowdown in the program; however through our Program Lead’s persistence, in recent weeks we have established connections with three large congregations in Pittsburgh area: Tree of Life, Covenant Church of Pittsburgh and Mt. Ararat Baptist Church. Their partnership has presented us with many potential candidates to fill the Regional Lead role as well provided us an array of volunteers to provide spiritual care and support through the Resident Spiritual Care Program.



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Our overall plan and goals of the program have not changed with seniors presenting a need for spiritual care and support now more than ever to uplift them during these most trying of days. In this proposal, we propose shifting *how* we provide this spiritual support as there are additional barriers in outreaching to seniors according to our original scope as they shelter in place. We are encouraged and excited by our proposal for moving forward and have chosen: **C. Here is Plan B of how we can redirect the funds to achieve the same goal.**

Plan B: Our overall plan has not changed and our program is needed more than ever before, however, we have had to shift methods due to various challenges faced by COVID-19. COVID-19 has slowed down our ability to cultivate relationships with local faith communities and outreach to residents through in person interactions. Due to COVID-19 the needs of the residents have grown with residents experiencing much greater social isolation and loneliness from sheltering in place. We quickly realized we must pivot this program to provide care to seniors through alternative methods that ensure safety yet still provide urgent spiritual support. Our Program Lead, Jim Zippay developed the following for our Pennsylvania properties as part of this program that is continually being offered to date:

- Weekly devotionals distributed by site staff to residents (through mail box or under doors)
- A hotline seniors can call at any time to talk to a chaplain available to offer nondenominational care and support
- A Daily Message of inspiration and hope that seniors can call in to listen to every day.

Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators are essential staff who are permitted within our buildings during this time utilizing proper PPE and safety protocols. We will have Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators undergo comprehensive training and be equipped with resources necessary to provide spiritual support but believe we can enhance what they provide to seniors even more through technology. As our program is centered on providing Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators to be available to support residents in person through encouragement, support, and prayer, we believe seniors are in dire need of connectivity as the pandemic continues to isolate them to their rooms and this prolonged disengagement has devastating consequences on their health and wellbeing. We propose reallocating budget funds to equip Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators and the Regional Lead with an Amazon Fire 7 tablet. By having the ability to interact with residents by helping them utilize the tablet to connect with family and friends, Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators can provide further critical connection during this time while building trust and getting to know the residents on a deeper level. This will lead Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators to have a greater opportunity to participate in people's lives and understand each individual's unique spiritual journey, overall leading to Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators having the ability to provide enhanced spiritual care and support. As this is a new component of our program, we propose piloting this virtual connectivity program first with 9 Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators and our Regional Lead with the Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinators deployed to our 3 communities in the Erie, PA with 130 units and 6 communities in the Pittsburgh Area with 415 units listed below:



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APPLE BLOSSOM PLACE (Facility Code: 0245)

5298 Crabapple Dr. Erie, PA 16509-3890

Total Units: 50

EASTLAKE WOODS (Facility Code: 0824)

4664 E Lake Rd Erie, PA 16511-1411

Total Units: 40

KEARSARGE PLACE (Facility Code: 0143)

1768 Zimmerly Rd Erie, PA 16509-1869

Total Units: 40

Erie Area 130 units

ELLIOTT HEIGHTS (Facility Code: 0236)

1110 Steuben St Pittsburgh, PA 15220-4743

Total Units: 44

GABLE RIDGE APARTMENTS (Facility Code: 0253)

8000 Beacon Hill Dr. Wilkinsburg, PA 15221-2593

Total Units: 50

PARKSIDE MANOR (Facility Code: 0607)

1306 Brookline Blvd Pittsburgh, PA 15226-1961

Total Units: 77

RIVERVIEW MANOR (Facility Code: 0050)

1500 LeTort St Pittsburgh, PA 15212-2166

Total Units: 99

SHALER OAKS (Facility Code: 0123)

1122 Mount Royal Blvd Pittsburgh, PA 15223-1079

Total Units: 49

SHARPSBURG TOWERS (Facility Code: 0651)

601 Main St Pittsburgh, PA 15215-2251

Total Units: 103

Pittsburgh Area 415 units



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Our original outcomes for the program were the following:

Resident Spiritual Care Program Outcomes:

- 60% of residents who participated in the program will indicate that their spiritual needs are being met
- 60% of residents who participated in the program will indicate their relationships increased through social interaction opportunities
- 60% of residents who participated in the program will indicate that their emotional outlook on life enhanced through greater personal peace, hope and sense of purpose

Due to the enhancements and changes in the program from COVID-19, we propose moving forward with having surveys to just assess the residents of the 9 communities who have access to a Volunteer Spiritual Care Coordinator onsite and the services provided through the tablet. Our outcomes will center on whether resident engagement and connectedness improved due to this project with 60% of those participating indicating improvement.

Along with this digital connectivity, we will continue to look for ways to provide connection and support to seniors as they face arguably the most challenging of days. We must continue to care for their well-being, provide encouragement and utilize this program to uplift and heal. We originally included events and materials with our program budget, however, foresee allocating more resources to this as well, as we explore providing musical troupes to communities and engagement materials to combat isolation.

Thank you for your partnership and helping us to care for our seniors during this very difficult time!

Sincerely,

Beth Vickio
Grants Administrator