



August 24, 2021

Ms. Susan W. Hoskins, LCSW, Executive Director
Friends Foundation for the Aging
Post Office Box 1081
Langhorne, PA 19047

Via email: shoskins@friendsfoundationaging.org

Dear Susan,

Thank you for helping Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSMNJ) provide 15 raised garden beds to the residents of Mt. Olive Senior Residence.

There were multiple concerns being addressed by this project. The first and foremost was the lack of social interaction among our residents due to the pandemic. Many of our residents were unable to leave their apartments, thus isolating them from their neighbors and loved ones. Because of the stay at home mandate, the opportunity for physical activity level also decreased. This project aimed to address both concerns.

Gardening has long been an opportunity for neighbors to gather at Mt. Olive Senior Residence. However, with an aging population it had become more difficult to tend to the gardens while kneeling or bending down; those confined to wheelchairs were also unable to take part.

With the assistance of Friends Foundation for the Aging (FFA), LSMNJ purchased and constructed 15 raised beds which allowed those individuals to continue to participate in this activity, while engaging new participants. This year, perhaps because of the pandemic, there was an increased level of interest and too few garden beds to allow all the gardeners their own area.

Because of FFA'S grant, LSMNJ's goal of providing accessible garden beds for all who wanted to take part was met. Success has been measured by the number of beds being utilized and the number of individuals taking part in the program. We have provided outdoor activity, an opportunity to gather as a community and a sense of accomplishment of growing one's own produce.

LSMNJ and Mt. Olive Senior Residence aims to include everyone. There are several different languages spoken at Mt. Olive, but gardening has no language barriers, and several ethnicities were represented. In addition, we are able to include those who are wheelchair dependent.

Our team was inspired to purchase similar beds for another LSMNJ property close by. Although a smaller number of beds, the results were similar. We hope to replicate a similar plan in an additional property next year. Our Pennsauken property has a large outdoor area where gardening can be a part of the social and educational calendar. Collaborating with a church in the area, we hope to engage the public, including different generations, to utilize the area alongside our residents and share in the produce that comes from it.

The following is the breakdown of expenses:

	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Fifteen raised beds and Stabilizers	\$2,550	\$3,899.25
Soil, seeds / plants estimated cost:	\$1,500	\$782.03
Delivery / assembly, labor estimated cost	\$400	.00
Total	\$4,450	\$4,681.28

This project exceeded the budget by \$231.28 due mainly to the unexpected cost of stabilizing rocks for the uneven grounds. However, the cost was covered by activity fees that could have already been allocated to the garden project had we not added the additional beds. Our local garden supply center graciously offered discounted prices specifically for this project. Their generosity also helped to offset the unexpected costs.

As in past years, gardening supplies, plants, soil, etc. will be part of the activities budget. Having supplied the new beds, gardening has been made possible for those who couldn't reach the ground. We fully intend to continue the tradition going forward.

The response and support of FFA has been seamless. The extra effort and attention given to LSMNJ made all the difference. Having missed the initial deadline for submission, we were concerned that we would need to put this project off for another year. However, your quick response and willingness to waive the full proposal process was very generous. The fact that FFA took the steps to allow us to move forward made this project possible. We are very grateful for your partnership.

Sincerely,



Alison Lauck
VP, Philanthropy