

Program Reporting Guidelines

Grantees of Friends Foundation for the Aging are asked to make periodic reports to the Foundation as a condition of the agreement. Mid-year check-ins will be done by phone/zoom. You may also be asked to present to the board at the Annual Meeting. Final reports must be submitted prior to making a new request.

Please use the following as a template but feel free to add to it on matters that may be of interest to FFA. Limit 3 pages. Please reach out if you have questions. Return the reports to: Friends Foundation for the Aging shoskins@friendsfoundationaging.org. These questions should echo the ones asked in the proposal, so you can be brief.

1. What problem were you addressing?

Loneliness is a problem seniors face more than most other age groups, and it is one that can powerfully impact their physical and mental well-being. Lost family members and friends, chronic health problems, and hearing loss can all exacerbate loneliness. Social isolation is associated with a 50% increased risk of dementia, a 29% increased risk of heart disease, and a 32% increased risk of stroke. Loneliness among heart failure patients in particular is associated with a quadrupled risk of death, 68% increased risk of hospitalization, and 57% increased risk of emergency room use. (All data in this paragraph from *Loneliness and Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions*, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2020, cited on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website).

Although living in a supportive senior living community can ameliorate some of the impacts of loneliness and boredom, this was largely undercut by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Barclay Friends puts a high priority on engaging activities and social interaction for our residents, as we know how much these contribute to our residents' happiness and health. Unfortunately, especially early in the pandemic, our residents were isolated for their own safety, many alone all day, even during meals.

Our goal was to address this loneliness and isolation with gardening, a relatively safe outdoor activity even during the pandemic, and one known to create very positive physical and mental health outcomes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, community gardens are "collaborative projects on shared open spaces where participants join together in the maintenance and products of the garden, including healthful and affordable fresh fruits and vegetables." AARP also shares research indicating the numerous health benefits of gardening for older adults, including Vitamin D exposure for healthy bones and improved immune system function, stress reduction, low-impact exercise, and decreased dementia risk. AARP cites a study of over 2,800 individuals over age 60 that showed a decreased dementia risk of 36% specifically from regular gardening.

2. What change did you expect to create? How? What were the desired objectives, outcomes and outputs of the program and progress made toward each during the reporting period?

Barclay Friends collaborated with West Chester University's "Green Team," a group of college students seeking to make a positive impact on both the environment and their community. With the help of their students, we created 18 new raised beds.

Eight of our residents made a particularly valuable contribution by starting seeds for the employee garden in efforts to save money. The seedlings they provided for the raised beds thrived and saved considerable money from our purchase of plants. They also were able to feel a part of the project and give back to the people who work very hard taking care of them! We plan to do the same thing again this year with our residents in Preston.

3. How did you measure success--both quantitative and qualitative? A chart of objectives, actions, and results is helpful. Include numbers and demographics of people touched by the work. Explain your organization's efforts toward diversity, equity and inclusion.

The primary objectives were to build 18 new raised beds, to partner with the Green Team to bring their energy and ideas to the project, and to significantly increase our ability to contribute to our community through food donations. All of the beds are completed and expected to last for years. The Green Team provided the labor for the project as well as their ideas, including the use of environmentally friendly materials and techniques. We outperformed our original goal of 400 pounds of donated food for the Chester County Food Bank, actually donating more than 600 pounds of food in the beds' first season, a substantial increase over past yields. This enabled our staff and residents, as well as the Green Team members, to feel that they were truly making an impact on food insecurity in our community.

Barclay Friends residents will benefit from the enhanced beauty of our campus and the fresh food we will produce each year. This project will create benefits for many years to come, as our staff and residents continue to maintain the beds and donate food to those in need. The Barclay Friends chef is also excited to have his own garden bed this year, a benefit that will trickle down to the residents in the form of fresh, homegrown ingredients in their meals.

We continually work to improve diversity at the board and leadership staff level. Our direct care staff represent a diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds including white, African Americans, Africans, and Haitians. We have made recent progress in increasing diversity on our leadership team. Our board does not fully reflect the diversity of the overall workforce; however, the board's Governance Committee is actively examining ways to positively impact equity, diversity and inclusion on our board through a continuing effort to recruit more diverse candidates whenever there is a board opening.

4. Please note any collaborations that supported your work and/or ways that you leveraged resources. How did this project engage and empower staff from all levels of your organization?

Two community collaborations were key to achieving the goals of this project: West Chester University's "Green Team" and the Chester County Food Bank. Barclay Friends' residents very much enjoyed interacting with the students and with Food Bank staff and volunteers. The WCU students contributed their own perspective to the value of the project, while the Food Bank spoke to the importance of the donated produce, especially during such a financially uncertain time for so many in our community. Our own staff expressed their appreciation of the raised bed gardening, such as Cathy Dugan-Tripler, Title Executive Assistant: "Going out to the garden was therapeutic. I would also garden with my co-worker and we were able to get to know one another better." These moments are even more important in a time of exceptional staff stress due to COVID-19.

5. Please share any unanticipated outcomes or barriers encountered. Indicate any changes in the program's goals, strategies, personnel or timelines and the reasons behind the changes.

The WCU students came to this project with a deep commitment to environmental sustainability, and so were very involved in the conversation about the materials that would be used for the raised beds. Ultimately, we chose a wood and plastic composite that would be safe for the gardeners and the produce, while also lasting for many years.

6. How do you plan to share and replicate your results?

We will share photos of our raised beds and information about the Green Team and Chester County Food Bank partnerships, as well as our key funders for this project, in press releases to social media and on our social media outlets.

The raised beds will be maintained in the future by our staff and residents, and we intend to continue our partnership with the Food Bank to make a lasting impact on food insecurity in Chester County.

7. Include a project financial statement (budget and actual) for the reporting period. Please explain significant variances from the original budget and reasons for the variances (with corrective measures if overages), as well as plans for future sustainability.

Thanks to the support of the Friends Foundation for the Aging, we were able to complete the expansion of our horticulture program and create raised beds that will serve our residents and our community for decades to come. We spent less than anticipated on staff salaries and more than anticipated on materials and construction, in part because of students' recommendations for more eco-friendly construction materials. The program will not need much financial support to continue, and we plan to continue to engage staff, residents and West Chester University students in the maintenance of the raised beds.

8. Feedback on your interaction with FFA would be helpful. How have we helped? Made it harder? What else can we do to facilitate your work?

We appreciated the Zoom call earlier this year, which gave us the opportunity to describe the project's success, explain our challenges along the way, and pave the way for a simpler reporting system. We have also enjoyed the opportunity to host FFA representatives at Barclay Friends so that they could see the raised beds and our beautiful gardens – and our happy residents – firsthand. Hopefully, now that the pandemic appears to be subsiding, we may be able to host another visit soon.

9. Additional comments:

Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, some of the educational group activities that we hoped to conduct last year were not held. We hope that as the pandemic continues to ease, we will be able to hold those programs soon for the benefit of our residents.

