

Lutheran Settlement House Full Proposal – Friends Foundation for the Aging

Executive Summary

Lutheran Settlement House (LSH) respectfully requests a grant of \$35,000 from the Friends Foundation for the Aging to support the continuation and expansion of our Senior Community Center, which serves low-income older adults in Philadelphia. Many of the older adults we serve live in the neighborhoods surrounding our headquarters in Fishtown—historically working-class areas that are rapidly gentrifying, causing living costs to rise exponentially. Coupled with the stress, isolation, and major shifts in the way people live caused by COVID-19, our Senior Community Center members have struggled over the past two years to maintain their sense of community and their mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Through a robust combination of services including physical activities, nutrition services, and mental and physical health support, LSH’s Senior Community Center aims to provide our members with the means, resources, and skills to age at home—leading long, healthy lives in their own communities. With the support of the Friends Foundation for Aging, we propose to expand these services in order to engage a greater number of younger older adults, increase accessibility, reach, and community connections, and continue our current programming.

Project Details

Lutheran Settlement House respectfully requests a grant of \$35,000 from the Friends Foundation for the Aging. Our plan for the grant is two-fold: to sustain our current programming with older adults, and to expand our services to reach younger older adults in the Baby Boomer generation. Our work with older adults aims to support healthy aging at home, and focuses on the physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being of low-income older adults in Philadelphia, specifically those from the Fishtown, Kensington, Port Richmond, and Frankford neighborhoods. Through focus groups, surveys, and one-on-one conversations with already identified older adults in our community, we will learn their needs and interests, and use their feedback to guide future program growth and outreach.

Fishtown, the Philadelphia neighborhood where LSH is located, is a formerly-working class neighborhood that has rapidly gentrified over the past decade. These changes have resulted in soaring housing and living costs and an erosion of the community structures that many of the Senior Community Center members relied on throughout their childhood and early adult years. As long-time residents from Fishtown and the surrounding communities are priced out and preyed upon by predatory developers, we seek to provide as many avenues as possible for this population to stay in their neighborhoods surrounded by their communities, services, and in their homes or nearby 55+ housing. According to the most recent Census data, an average of 26% of all residents in the zip codes surrounding LSH – where most of our older adult clients hail from – are between ages 50 and 80, or predominantly Baby Boomers. This means that over a quarter of the residents in neighborhoods near LSH are either retired or nearing retirement age, and may need the additional support we offer as they make that transition.

This need is increasingly urgent, since data shows that as more Baby Boomers reach retirement age, Social Security payments may not be enough to provide sufficient income for a generation that is set to live longer than previous generations. While retirement is meant to be an enjoyable, exciting, relaxing time, these rising costs of living and low fixed incomes mean that for many low-income older adults, retirement is either out of reach completely, or a road to greater financial burdens, higher medical costs and debt, and lower overall quality of life.

We believe that all older adults should be able to age with dignity and respect—their health intact, surrounded by friends and loved ones, and with opportunities to live independent, full lives for as long as possible. All those who reach retirement age deserve access to the services and support they need to age at home. Our Senior Community Center goals reflect this commitment by focusing on physical and emotional wellbeing, bolstering feelings of self-efficacy, and engaging older adults across generations.

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In order to promote healthy aging, we will use funding from this grant to support the continued implementation of a range of activities that promote physical wellbeing, such as weekly cooking and exercise classes that encourage a healthy lifestyle. We also host a Master's of Social Work student intern who serves as a Health Advocate—working one-on-one with clients to develop individualized health and wellness plans and provide weekly check-ins and resources. Additionally, we offer monthly workshops, which in the past have covered a range of topics such as pain management, pre-diabetes management, chronic disease management, and fall prevention.

However, we know that mental wellbeing is just as important as physical health, which is why we also offer an array of programming focused on bolstering older adults' mental health and feelings of community connection. Aging, especially for low-income Americans, is already an isolating and sometimes difficult process—living on a fixed income or being unable to retire at 65, experiencing loss of loved ones, mobility issues, and even cognitive decline—all contribute to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression. Over the last two years, COVID-19 has exacerbated these existing feelings for far too many older adults. Unable to see friends or relatives, many of our members were stuck at home without even access to the internet or a computer. And while we helped many of them connect to the internet, we know that social media, Zoom, and phone calls are a flimsy replacement for the real, face-to-face contact that is so important for reducing isolation. In order to combat this isolation, we plan to utilize funding to continue providing programming focused on reducing isolation and building community, including game nights, movie nights, dancing, and day or overnight trips. We are actively researching ways to engage a greater number of community members in this programming.

Our programs are very popular with many of the neighborhood's older residents. However, we know that there are a large number of Baby Boomers who are retiring and would benefit from our services, but have found that they are not interested in many of the activities traditionally associated with "seniors." Rather, they have expressed a wish to stay active and volunteer, and we have begun exploring different ways to reach this generation. Since many Baby Boomers do not consider themselves "senior citizens" or resonate with that language, we are in the process of reimagining what our currently-titled "Senior Community Center" can become in order to be a space where Baby Boomers want to spend time. Many of our current Baby Boomer members not only make use of the pantry, technology tutoring, and benefits assistance services themselves, but are also very enthusiastic about volunteering in the Senior Community Center or Food Pantry. In fact, we have a number of volunteers in this age group who work with the older members to help them sign in and receive services. This creates a way for these generations to bond, form community connections, and support each other—bolstering both groups' physical and mental wellbeing, and establishing invaluable social networks. With support from the Foundation, we will continue to develop active, engaging programs targeting this generation and bringing more Baby Boomers into the LSH community.

In order to bring this high-quality programming to the Senior Community Center, we partner with a number of organizations throughout Philadelphia. Our largest funding partner is the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), who also provides workshops for our clients focused on aging-related topics including those mentioned above. Additionally, we were recently awarded a grant from the NextFifty Initiative, a Colorado-based foundation that focuses on fighting ageism and ensuring healthy, stable futures for older adults. NextFifty has been a crucial partner to support not only our programmatic endeavors, but also our current Senior Community Center re-branding process. This re-branding process is part of a larger, agency-wide re-brand that includes updating our logo, language, and overall visual identity to better express what LSH is and what we value as an organization. For the Senior Community Center, this means developing language and a visual identity that appeals to a wider range of older adults who may not connect with "Senior"-focused language or activities. We will also create

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updated materials about our activities so the community is more aware of what we provide, especially as we expand our programs in response to our learnings and the needs identified in community and client focus groups. This expansion is of the utmost importance, and as we continue the research and focus group phase of this development, we hope to partner with the Foundation to understand what our community wants and needs, and how we can best engage them.

We evaluate the Senior Community Center through surveys distributed to members on a bi-annual basis, one-on-one conversations with members, and by tracking overall retention of program participants. It is of the utmost importance to us to deliver high-quality programming that meets client needs, and will ensure that we are doing so through the use of qualitative and quantitative surveys. For workshops on health-related topics, we use pre- and post-surveys about participant knowledge of and comfort with the material, how much they feel these metrics have improved after the workshop, and if they feel more comfortable applying workshop material to their own lives. For programming such as art and fitness classes, we will engage members in surveys and conversations that gauge their enjoyment of the activity, likeliness to return, and what they enjoyed about the class. We also understand that with establishments such as our Senior Community Center, word-of-mouth is one of the best indicators of program success. Many of our Senior Community Center members have friends, family members, or neighbors who may be interested in joining, and we know that as long as people keep returning, and bringing guests with them, our programs will continue to be successful and fill a need in the community.

Lutheran Settlement House is abundantly qualified to operate our Senior Community Center. Established in the 1980s, the Senior Community Center serves adults over age 55 of any race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, income level, or ability. Over the past 40 years of dedicated programming for older adults, we have offered a variety of activities focusing on health and wellbeing, including daily meals, exercise classes, cooking classes, game nights, and group outings. In order to encourage more Baby Boomers to come to the Center, we have expanded our programming to suit the more active, community-involved needs and desires of this age group, and plan to continue to do so.

Through all of our programs—our Senior Community Center, Food Pantry, Bilingual Domestic Violence Program, and Jane Addams Place family homeless shelter, we strive to bolster the mental and physical health and wellness of all of our clients, including a sizeable population of aging adults. In fact, many of the older adults who now utilize our services themselves once visited LSH with their own parents, who came through our doors for meals, education services, housing assistance, and community activities. Thanks to our longevity, we have strong community ties and know that our Senior Community Center is more than just a place for the occasional activity or uninspired meal. This center is a second home to the members, many of whom participated in digital programming during the first 16 months of the pandemic, and were the first to return to in-person services at the end of June. We do not take this loyalty, or the strong affiliation our members feel with our programs, lightly. Our services for older adults are crucial to our mission and purpose, and we know that our members are an integral part of the fabric of our organization as a whole.

DEI and Alignment with FFA Values

LSH is committed to an agency culture and approach to services that is inclusive, accessible, and representative of those we serve. Our services are offered in multiple languages, including English and Spanish, and we partner with immigrant and refugee organizations to ensure we provide culturally appropriate services. Clients are not asked about their immigration status, or required to verify income to receive services at LSH.

At the staff level, we budget annually for diversity and social justice trainings for all staff. Members of our leadership team who identify as white meet on a monthly basis to discuss anti-racism learning and

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accountability. The leadership team as a whole also focuses on an anti-oppression learning component in one leadership team meeting per month. Topics for these discussions vary, and include racism in housing, impacts of gentrification, inequity in food systems, and more—all focusing on the pressing needs of our clients and our commitment to racial and gender diversity and justice. We also recently launched an organization-wide Anti-Racism Committee, which works with staff of all levels to identify areas of need and develop anti-racist policies and practices within the organization. Anti-racism work and board diversity were both identified as priorities in our planning process for our new strategic plan.

All programs use feedback from participants to help guide programmatic decision-making. Our staff, leadership, and board represent the community we serve in some regards, yet there is always room for improvement. We are actively recruiting new board members who represent diverse perspectives, including sexuality, race, gender identity, and age. DEI is also a standard part of our recruitment and hiring practices. Diverse perspectives at all levels bring new ideas and ensure blind spots are addressed.

Lutheran Settlement House admires the Friends Foundation for the Aging’s commitment to its core values, which reflect our own passion for providing services to some of Philadelphia’s most marginalized communities. Our work in all programs serves a diverse population that crosses gender, race, religious, and socio-economic lines, and the majority of our clients are low-income people of color. In our Senior Community Center, all participants are low-income older adults seeking community supports. Our program encourages intergenerational collaboration through not only our various volunteer opportunities for the community to engage with our older adult members, but also cross-generational membership within the Senior Community Center itself, as Baby Boomers continue looking for ways to remain connected to their community after retirement. The Foundation’s value of “Potential to Create Change” also resonates with our work, as our programs for older adults aim to provide affirming, uplifting services that encourage healthy aging, physical activity, and mental and emotional wellbeing.

We also value sustainability and leveraging different resources as our programs develop, ensuring that no single program is reliant only on one single funding source. Within our program model, this goes hand-in-hand with collaboration—as we leverage a number of community partners, funders, individuals, and volunteer groups to create programs that are truly able to meet the needs of the whole person and their family at any stage of life. We regularly host volunteers from companies including Aramark and Clairivate, as well as individuals, and universities such as the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, and Drexel University. These volunteers assist in facilitating existing programs, serving meals, organizing our food pantry, and creating new activities. For example, we recently worked with a Music Therapy PhD candidate from Temple University, who facilitated a music therapy workshop for Senior Community Center members and the general public. This partnership was highly successful, and we look forward to inviting her back soon.

As a settlement house, we pride ourselves on offering multiple services under one roof—ensuring that all of our clients, including our Senior Community Center members, are able to access food, counseling, activities that promote physical health, and safety. For example, older adults experiencing elder abuse can come to use through the Bilingual Domestic Violence Program, and subsequently utilize our food pantry and Senior Community Center to receive nutritious food, social supports, and a range of other services. We look forward to continuing to implement this life-saving programming with the support of the Friends Foundation for the Aging. We are confident that through this partnership, we will be able to provide Philadelphia’s low-income older adults with the resources they need to not only survive, but age safely, happily, and healthily at home—surrounded by their friends, loved ones, and a community of support.

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Lutheran Settlement House Senior Community Center Budget

| Personnel | Total |
|---|---------------------|
| CARES Program Director and Counselor Salary | \$47,006.00 |
| Volunteer Coordinator Salary | \$40,000.00 |
| Senior Services and Nutrition Director Salary | \$57,139.00 |
| Senior Services Activities Coordinator | \$37,332.00 |
| Senior Services Office Manager | \$35,971.00 |
| Senior Community Center Kitchen Coordinator | \$31,400.00 |
| Senior Community Center Counselor | \$34,343.00 |
| Facilities and Maintenance Manager @15% | \$4,992 |
| Deputy Executive Director @10% | \$8,700.00 |
| Executive Director @5% | \$6,000 |
| Total Personnel | \$302,883 |
| | |
| Program Costs | Total |
| Activity and Class Instructor Fees | \$20,000.00 |
| Stress Management Presentations | \$1,240.00 |
| Evaluation Costs | \$7,000.00 |
| Branding and Marketing | \$30,000.00 |
| Total Program Costs | \$58,240 |
| | |
| Indirect Costs(10%) | \$36,112.30 |
| Total Project Budget | \$397,235.30 |