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**Friends Foundation for the Aging (FFA)
2022 Grant Proposal**

Executive Summary:

Please accept this request for \$10,000 in support of the Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN) program, the core initiative of Interfaith Caregivers of Greater Mercer County (ICGMC).

NHN's goal is to promote the independence, dignity, and wellness of homebound elderly and disabled adults (care receivers) by matching them with supportive and caring volunteers (caregivers) who assist with the tasks of everyday life. All of the free services provided through NHN are meant to support those who wish to age in the familiarity of their homes or have no other choice but to age at home. The carefully screened and trained caregivers provide relief from the impact of societal inequities experienced by the elderly, especially by those of color. Focused on increasing the overall quality of life, NHN caregivers provide access to healthcare and other wellness-based initiatives, regular access to fresh groceries, and alleviate the strain of loneliness and isolation.

The pandemic has created an urgency to which we must respond. The increased rates of aging in our community are well-documented, along with the mental, physical, and financial stress of the family and friends who are able to serve as caregivers. These trends forecast a long future of dire health outcomes if not addressed.

ICGMC's humble roots were planted deep in the heart of Trenton almost 30 years ago. Though our services have expanded, our focus has shifted to expanding our services in the areas of most need. We have been challenged by the slower-than-expected re-opening of society, but have begun to rebuild our volunteer base, with a special focus on attracting bilingual caregivers. We appreciate the complex and unique needs of each area and are actively engaging community leaders in our plans. Compelled by the many stories we hear, we are determined to respond with the same dedication, compassion, and resourcefulness that has made the program a success for almost three decades.

MISSION: Promote the independence, dignity and wellness of homebound elderly and people with disabilities by matching them with supportive and caring volunteers who assist with the tasks of everyday life.

www.ICGMC.org

Interfaith Caregivers of Greater Mercer County (ICGMC) is seeking \$10,000 to support the Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN) program.

The Problem - There is a growing need to provide caregiving support for elderly and disabled adults in the greater Mercer County area. The pandemic has left those who were previously in want of assistance in dire need. Faced with financial limitations, ambulatory challenges, and transportation issues, our homebound are frequently forced to make choices that impact their quality of life, compromise their health, and may ultimately contribute to premature death.¹ For this population, the forced isolation of the pandemic created a perfect storm resulting in an overwhelming amount of physical, social, and emotional needs. Though no stranger to loneliness, the isolation experienced during the past two years has exacerbated the existing need to support this vulnerable population.

The slower-than-expected re-opening of society has presented challenges to the full restoration of our most essential resource – our volunteer workforce. Due to individual circumstances, many of our volunteers stepped away from their service during the pandemic. The variable COVID transmission rate has left volunteers, many of whom are also seniors, hesitant to return to activity. We are continuously recruiting volunteers, trying our best to recruit from areas with the most need.

By addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in the community, we find the community, as a whole, is strengthened. The typical neighbor who receives our help is an 80+ year-old woman who lives by herself, as most of our care receivers are 80 years of age or older (58%), female (82%), and live alone (62%). NHN serves the senior and adult disabled individuals of Greater Mercer County. Assisting this group relieves the physical, financial, and emotional stresses of the family members or friends who regularly provide care for them. Our volunteer caregivers also stand to benefit as the mental health gains from volunteering are well-known.

A Local Solution – Neighbors Helping Neighbors – All ICGMC programs are provided for free to alleviate economic disparity, increase access to healthcare and healthy living, and help stretch limited financial resources. The NHN program is the heart of the agency’s efforts. This initiative provides free caregiving services to our most vulnerable neighbors. These screened and trained volunteers provide free, non-medical caregiving assistance that includes transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, companionship, meal preparation, and indoor/outdoor chores.

All volunteers complete a rigorous interview, background check, and training seminar. Once volunteers are trained in the role of “caregiver,” they are intentionally matched by common interests and location with a vulnerable member of the community, the “care receiver.” This process is designed to create relationships that are mutually beneficial and sustainable. Though ICGMC has created these matches for almost 30 years, we are now seeing published research that supports this very practice as an intervention to reducing mortality risk due to loneliness in older adults. Our volunteers and care receivers appreciate the match process as friendships are easily formed – many lasting for years.¹

Due to public health and safety concerns, the types of services offered to care receivers in 2021 were restricted to those deemed essential and limited the amount of contact between caregiver and care receiver. In 2021, NHN volunteers served 237 homebound elderly and adults with disabilities. Some highlights include: 2,202 hours of grocery shopping, so people could stay safe at home but enjoy the nutritional benefits of fresh groceries; 1,100 hours of transportation ensuring the avoidance of virus exposure on public transportation while maintaining medical care; 3,535 hours of combatting loneliness through phone calls/visiting. As pandemic restrictions ease, we are working toward a full restoration of services to include our music program “Home Song” as well as more time spent helping with in-home chores. An expanded

volunteer base is necessary to help provide this full range of services. As the need for services is ever-increasing, our volunteer recruitment efforts must be ever-expanding. As such, our volunteer coordinators remain busy recruiting, screening, training, managing, and retaining an active and growing volunteer workforce.

These in-demand services offer care receivers the dignity of choice. The individuals who call often have no other option. They may be without family support, struggling to meet basic living costs or both. NHN volunteers are a vital link between a potentially isolated care receiver and the community at large.

Action Plan

1. Recruit 60 new volunteers, restoring the volunteer caregiving team to pre-pandemic levels, maximizing the value of the return to in-person recruiting events; with a priority of outreach through partner churches and congregations, health and resource fairs, senior/community centers, and other volunteer drives;
2. Provide additional virtual and in-person volunteer training, engagement and recognition opportunities designed to strengthen retention and increase volunteer satisfaction with role and caregiving activities;
3. Identify new and strengthen relationships with existing faith partnerships, the key to multi-community engagement for both residents in need and volunteers for service;
4. Return to a full range of caregiving activities, offering more service options as safety restrictions have eased and enabled more in-person services – thus increasing overall benefits and outcomes for care receivers.

Partnerships – Our programs engage hundreds of local volunteers each year through strong relationships with 25 faith-based congregations of diverse creeds, and over 20 community group partners throughout Mercer County. These collaborations produce a coordination of services, prevent a duplication of care, and allow us to most effectively serve our care receivers. We work to maintain diversified funding sources with the intention to not only exist but flourish. To this end, we are always seeking to build new friendships and work together to better serve the community’s vulnerable. The 2021 budget’s source distribution reflects the inclusion of pandemic money awarded by the government, but for reference: 52% Government (Federal, State, County), 28% Foundations and Corporate Grants, 12% Fundraising, 6% Individual Gifts, and 2% Congregations. The top faith communities ranked by volunteer activity are: Our Lady of Sorrows-St. Anthony Parish (Mercerville), St. Gregory the Great Church (Hamilton Square), Independent Volunteers/No Affiliation, St. Ann’s Church (Lawrence Township), St. Raphael’s-Holy Angels Church (Hamilton Township), and Shiloh Baptist Church (Trenton).

Measuring Our Impact – The impact of the efforts of NHN programming is captured both quantitatively and qualitatively, according to a thorough evaluation schedule. We take care to regularly engage each of our constituents with the means to provide feedback. Each evaluation point serves to inform us of our progress, allowing for necessary adjustments for improved outcomes.

Though a detailed evaluation plan is available, the tools most likely to provide the clearest result are our annual surveys. Caregivers and care receivers alike are asked a series of questions using a Likert scale, forced answer questions, and open-ended questions. Care receivers self-report their opinions on topics such as “ICGMC services helped me to remain living independently in my homes” and whether they have experienced “a reduction in isolation and loneliness due to ICGMC services.” These ratings give us benchmarks on which to construct our measurable goals.

An additional measure of community impact is the financial impact as measured by the Independent Sector. In 2021, ICGMC’s value totaled \$330,653 of free services added to the community.

Organizational History and Promise – Our roots lie in the dedication of a few passionate faith leaders who, 28 years ago, identified a need in the City of Trenton to address the struggles of their elderly neighbors. Organizing their efforts and facing increased demand, a seed grant was obtained from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to provide free, essential, non-medical assistance to the homebound. Over the years, the work of the few spread to the many, and today’s Interfaith Caregivers of Greater Mercer County (ICGMC) grew to fill the community’s needs.

We credit our long-term success to the innovative blend of national caregiving, interfaith service and retired senior volunteer models. Taking the most useful aspects of these three national models (with the addition of a state-sponsored wellness program), allows for a strong response to the unique needs of our residents, and has positioned the agency to share our best practice elements with neighboring county leaders and agencies seeking replication.

Since the start, ICGMC has recruited, screened, trained, and managed over 2,300 volunteers who have given almost 330,000 hours of free services to nearly 3,700 county residents. The NHN staff is determined to respond to the needs of the community with the same dedication, compassion, and resourcefulness that has made the program a success for almost 30 years. To continue providing our services for free, we have increased our fundraising activities. Our diversified fundraising program has been augmented with new fundraising events and requests. We will continue the conservative budgeting practices our donors have historically appreciated. Fortunately, rebuild efforts will also be supported by a new two-year federal grant focused on increasing services and volunteer levels in the county’s low-income and minority/Hispanic communities. This award will allow us to potentially hire a new part-time bilingual staff member dedicated to this initiative, as we work to rebuild to our pre-pandemic average of 20,000 service hours per year.

Organizational Inclusion of DEI – As an organization, we embrace the constructs of diversity, equity, and inclusion as essential to serving the homebound by intentionally seeking out those who are underserved, vulnerable, and in need of assistance. While we collaborate with many different religious institutions, all services are provided without proselytization or regard to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, income, or national origin. Though we are an Equal Opportunity Employer, we need to truly value and recognize the role each plays in the sustained growth and desired culture of ICGMC. We challenge ourselves to acknowledge that an appreciation of diversity is not limited to categorical status and strive to create a diversity of thought. Our organizational model heavily relies on small group communication, giving our volunteers regular opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences. This model contributes to our inclusive culture as volunteers receive the support they seek and the agency is able to adopt suggestions or useful feedback.

ICGMC is firmly embedded in the communities we serve. Containing 12 diverse municipalities, 31% of the population of this region speaks a language other than English at home and 22% are foreign-born.² This rich, multicultural heritage provides us with a coalition of diverse faith communities, from where ICGMC originated. Maintaining diversity and inclusion as organizational values will strengthen the likelihood of long-term success. Because of the clearly diverse population we are hoping to serve, creating an approach that includes cultural awareness and sensitivity will be central to each piece of our programming efforts as we expand into areas of express need, maintaining an awareness of those with language barriers due to nationality or disability. Our new rebuild grant and current funding request will further aid in these goals.

1. Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (2020, July). *Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation among Older Adults*. Education Development Center. www.edc.org

2. U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *Age and Sex, American Community Survey 5-year Estimates Subject Tables*. www.data.census.gov



2022 Proposed Program Budget

NHN - 2022

INCOME	TOTAL - NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS
Individual Contributions	\$ 22,148
Corporations/Foundations/Congregations	\$ 130,489
Government Grants	\$ 161,730
Fundraising and Events	\$ 28,825
Earned Income/Interest Income	\$ 155
Other Income	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 343,347
EXPENSES	
Personnel: Management, Program and Fringe	
Salary and Wages	
Admin Staff	\$ 108,537
NHN	\$ 48,913
PHB	\$ -
RSVP	\$ 70,905
Payroll Taxes	\$ 20,552
Health Insurance	\$ 9,561
Payroll Service Fees	\$ 2,680
Angel Fund	\$ 3,000
Project Healthy Bones	\$ -
Volunteer Recognition Event	\$ 3,500
RSVP	\$ 900
Other Program (Volunteer, Outreach and Training) Expenses	\$ 4,467
Background Checks - Volunteer	\$ 1,570
Marketing & Promotion/Outreach	\$ 1,868
Employee HR advertising	\$ 406
Occupancy Expenses:	\$ -
Rent	\$ 19,490
Utilities	\$ 2,924
Cleaning Service/Supplies	\$ 4,467
Fundraising Expense	\$ -
Telephone/Telecommunications/Internet	\$ 2,924
Printing & Copying	\$ 1,218
Supplies	\$ 2,924
Equipment, Repair & Maintenance	\$ 81
Licenses, Regulatory Fees/Dues, Registration	\$ 731
Staff Development & Training	\$ 325
Consultant Services:	\$ -
Communications Consultant	\$ 10,150
Auditor	\$ 4,467
IT/Technology Consultant	\$ 406
Postage, Mailing Services	\$ 952
Travel - RSVP	\$ 200
Banking Fees/Financial Services	\$ 487
Insurance:	\$ -
General Liability	\$ 10,926
Volunteer Liability	\$ 487
Directors & Officers	\$ 975
Workers Compensation	\$ 812
Depreciation	\$ 1,299
Misc. & Meetings	\$ 244
	\$ -
Total Expenses	\$ 343,347