

Friends Foundation for the Aging

Year-end Report & Reapplication Proposal Form

(limit 3 pages)

Date: September 11, 2024

Organization: The Bright Side Family

TIN & Formal organization name: 22-3148274 Geriatric Services, Inc.

Contact name, phone, email: Elizabeth Davis, 201.530.7571

Amount requested: \$35,000

Project title: Portable Assisted Living Services (PALS) Program

Please answer the following questions clearly and concisely:

- 1. What is the problem you identified? Has it changed?** There is a growing awareness of the challenges faced in subsidized senior housing due to the aging-in-place of older adult populations. In 2021, AARP published a report called "Affordable Housing as a Key Piece of Older Adults' Long-Term Services and Supports". It speaks to the promise of programs like New Jersey's Assisted Living Program (ALP) through which housing with services can serve as a platform for helping low-income older adults remain in their own apartments while reducing the likelihood of the need to move into restrictive and high-cost institutional settings. In addition to addressing the needs of low-income seniors in subsidized housing, ALPs support the buildings' housing managers whose training is often limited to managing the rent up process and maintaining the physical plant, not managing the needs of frail older adults. In Bergen County, several thousand low-income seniors reside in subsidized housing. Being a low-income senior is far more common than most people realize. According to the National Council on Aging, more than 25 million Americans over the age of 60 are living in poverty. This equates to \$29,425 a year for one person, which is \$2,452 a month or \$81 a day. At this income level, these older adults struggle to managing rising costs of housing, health care, food, and transportation. Even more challenged are seniors living in subsidized housing where the average resident is 79 years old with an income of \$10,018 according to Chris Hawkins, Senior Living.org expert on Senior Care and Assisted Living. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, 90% of seniors living in the NYC and Northern New Jersey region cannot afford housing costs and assisted living care which combined cost approximately \$91,000. Yet, according to LongTermCare.gov, almost 70% of adults aged 65 and over will require long term care services at some point and the likelihood of needing care increases significantly after age 80. This problem is one that will continue to grow as the population of older adults in subsidized housing continues to age-in-place yet the number of assisted living program providers is actually shrinking.

- 2. What actions did you take to address the problem?** New Jersey is one of few states that licenses assisted living programs to address the needs of older adults living in subsidized

housing and allow them to age-in-place within their home while avoiding costly, premature nursing home placement. Our organization began providing affordable facility based assisted living in 2003. We receive increasing numbers of calls from subsidized senior housing providers seeking an affordable option for their residents who were no longer independent. This led us to research options and we learned about the ALP model. In 2014, The Bright Side Family obtained a license as an assisted living program provider and began serving tenants at Westwood House, a 182-unit senior building. In 2019, we expanded PALS into Garfield Housing Authority's Golden Tower, a 100 unit senior building and then, in 2021 began serving residents in Garfield Housing Authority's second senior building, Belmont Gardens with 135 units.

3. What did you learn? Will you make any changes in the coming year? We have learned important lessons during the program's existence: it takes time to break through denial on the part of older adults who perceive themselves to be more independent than they are; although Medicaid MLTSS covers 100% of the costs of this program, there is tremendous resistance on the part of residents to spend down resources to less than \$2000 in order to qualify for MLTSS. As a result, many residents put off applying for Medicaid until a crisis occurs. In addition to these challenges, NJ's Managed Medicaid system makes seeking and secure reimbursement difficult and time consuming and includes some policies which unfairly impact ALPs. Our Westwood House based program typically serves 25 – 30 residents, a census that we consider healthy and financially viable. After many years serving that building, we have established a strong relationship with the building's management who truly support the program's operation and growth. Unfortunately, this is not the case at Garfield Housing Authority, a public housing authority where the management is off site and have not demonstrated a sincere interest in the well-being of their residents. They do not value or support PALS in the same way yet the need for PALS is great. This year, we will focus on building stronger relationships within the Garfield community which could help the program's growth. If, however, we are not able to grow this program and build a census of at least 20 residents, we may decide to close this site and look at private, non-profit senior buildings where we can establish a healthier, more viable program. We are also active members of the NJ ALP Provider Coalition and are in communication with NJ's Department of Human Services as we advocate for Medicaid policy reform including an increase in the Medicaid asset limit from \$2,000 to \$40,000.

3. How have you engaged any partners/collaborators in implementation or funding? Have you considered how to sustain the program? As above, we are active members of the ALP Provider Coalition, working with our State legislators, Department of Human Services and our member organization, LeadingAge, to advocate for Medicaid and regulatory reforms that will positively impact ALPs. We also continue in our efforts to build relationships with local health care and social service providers as well as community officials to building awareness of the ALP model and bring resources to our program and residents.

4. How do you know your actions had an impact? Please describe those who participated, outputs and outcomes. Stories or photos are welcome. Our program benefits residents enrolled in many ways, physically, socially and psychologically, by providing a safety net around them ensuring they have the support and care they need. Some examples of impact:

- Four residents notably benefited from education and assistance in managing their diets and medications, particularly for diabetes and hypertension.
- Six residents received emotional and physical support while dealing with serious illnesses like cancer or hospice care for a family member. One received support during her own chemotherapy while another worked through her feelings of dealing with a son on hospice.
- Four residents were aided through personal transitions and changes, such as dealing with a mastectomy, moving environments, or coping with dementia. One became more comfortable with relying on PALS staff during her mastectomy and another's stay in her apartment was extended due to dementia support.
- Five residents gained more independence with assistance in daily living skills like online food shopping, meal preparation, and general household management.
- Five residents experienced improvements in socialization, mental health, and adhering to daily routines. One saw an increase in showering, grooming, and socialization. One resident stated, "I feel much better and look forward to seeing my psychiatrist regularly."
- Four residents received assistance in scheduling and attending appointments with new medical doctors and psychiatrists. One hadn't seen a doctor in years and received help in starting a medication routine and education on diabetes and diet, leading to significant weight loss. Another was encouraged to visit a doctor, leading to a cancer diagnosis and treatment. One resident stated, "I would have never gone to see any doctor if I didn't have PALS".

We have also extended health screening, social and educational programming to non-PALS residents in the buildings we served and are seeking funds to expand these services since many need more support and engagement than is offered within the buildings. See attached note from Westwood House management.

5. Is there anything else you would like FFA to know about this project? FFA funding has been hugely helpful to our PALS program in supporting the cost of a full-time social worker. While most ALPs do not have a full-time social worker on staff due to financial constraints, we have found that a social worker brings enormous value to the program and building residents. With support of grant funding, PALS employs a full-time social worker and benefits from MSW and BSW student interns, who the social worker supervises, who collectively provide counseling, advocacy, education, recreation, information and referral and other needed services within our buildings. Educating residents, their families and health care providers about ALPs is an ongoing project requiring a variety of strategies to encourage residents to take advantage of services before a crisis so that they can benefit from the preventive nature of ALP care. There are many identified residents among the buildings we serve who are in need of or are considering PALS, but need additional counseling and information before they are ready to commit.

6. Feedback on your interaction with FFA would be helpful. Are there ways we can help beyond the grant? We truly appreciate Susan Hoskin's interest in and enthusiasm around this model. Her attendance at some of the ALP Coalition meetings and a recent site visit demonstrate her commitment to understanding our work and challenges. Beyond what FFA has already done, we always appreciate learning about similar programs and services, research that might impact our planning and introductions to other like-minded organizations and professionals with whom we might network.

Include a simple program budget/actual with income and expenses (eg. staff, program supplies, travel, etc) for both last year and next. Three columns: last budget, last actual, next budget.

Has your 501c3 status changed? No.

ATTACHMENTS:

Budget

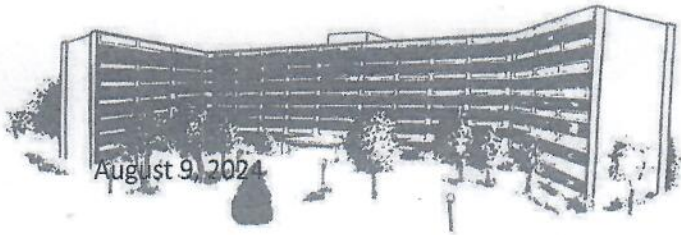
Letter from Westwood House Management

Letter from PALS family member

PALS Program Budget Report 2023 - 2024

Revenue Source	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Program Service Revenue	\$151,976	\$135,270	\$155,000
Direct Public Grants - 2023 Actual and 2024 Proposed	\$68,850	\$120,000	\$130,000
Government Contracts/Payments (including Medicaid)	\$1,259,876	\$1,003,000	\$1,277,500
Fundraising and Private Donations	\$7,500	\$83,435	\$25,000
TOTAL	\$1,488,202	\$1,341,705	\$1,587,500

Expense	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Personnel	\$1,414,750	\$1,225,750	\$1,450,000
Consultants/Professional Fees/Trainings	\$21,500	\$11,510	\$15,000
Materials & Supplies	\$29,000	\$12,500	\$17,500
Facility/Contracted Services/Utility Costs	\$20,000	\$22,375	\$25,000
Miscellaneous	\$11,650	\$1,650	\$5,000
General & Administrative	\$38,000	\$67,920	\$75,000
TOTAL	\$1,534,900	\$1,341,705	\$1,587,500



WESTWOOD HOUSE

100 Madison Avenue • Westwood, New Jersey 07675

201-666-1778

Ms. Lorraine Joewono, Director
Bergen County Human Services Department
Division of Senior Services
One Bergen County Plaza, 2nd Floor
Hackensack, NJ 07601-7076

Dear Ms. Joewono,

The management of Westwood House, a 182 unit subsidized senior apartment building in Westwood, New Jersey is very pleased to support the Bright Side Family's application for funding for its PALS Program, which currently provides assisted living services for 27 of our residents. We are especially pleased that they have requested additional funding with which to provide wellness, recreational and socialization activities for all of the residents in our building.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Westwood House made the difficult decision to close the Riley Center, a senior center previously supported with Federal and County funding which, for many years, had provided our residents with access to a range of social and recreational programs. Many of our residents are still reluctant to go to outside community programs and events for fear of becoming ill, and many are also challenged to find appropriate, safe and accessible social and recreational programs to participate in.

During the pandemic and continuing to this day, the PALS staff have brought in programs and activities for the residents, tapping into volunteers from the community and working alongside our management team to host parties and celebrations. We understand that, with additional County funding, PALS would be able to offer a more regular program of wellness programs, health screenings, social, cultural and activity programs, educational programs and more than they have been able to offer thus far

The PALS nurses, social workers and direct care workers are a tremendous asset in our building. They provide needed counseling and support for our residents as they age-in-place and their needs are changing. We are appreciative of the partnership we have forged with PALS and enthusiastically support their application. Their increased capacity will be of tremendous benefit to a large population of very low and extremely low-income residents.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, or if you would like more information.

Sincerely,

Valeria M. Hartman
Executive Director



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excited to meet a new spouse and welcome a new grandchild or great grandchild into her family. She was always kind, and loving and I don't ever remember her being "mad" at anyone... unless it was about ICE CREAM. She was addicted to ice cream and some of the only harsh words she ever uttered were because one of her children or grandchildren brought her the wrong flavor! Mom was the most wonderfully quirky, endearing person. She loved her Hallmark movies, she loved gambling in Atlantic city, and she drank coffee that was hotter than the surface of the sun. She also had a real sixth sense, especially where her family was concerned and often knew about things before she was ever told - we called it her "witchy" powers!

Though her life was filled with many joys, she was also faced with many hardships, especially with regard to her health. She battled cancer 3 times and underwent many treatments, operations and rehabilitations. Our family is so grateful to the many health professionals who worked with our Mother, especially the aides and nurses (or "angels" as she called them) who are part of the PAL's programs at the Westwood House. In her special way, she turned many of them into friends and we are truly grateful for their love and support.

Our family would also like to thank her many friends, neighbors, and staff at The Westwood House. She loved her apartment and you all helped to make her home something she was very proud of.

Our mother leaves behind an overwhelming legacy of family and love, which is a testament to the way in which she lived her life. We will all miss you very, very much. But it brings us peace to know that you are home with the Lord and reunited with many of your friends and family and we know that you are somewhere in heaven, together again, with your "Navy Man" our Dad. Rest in blissful peace sweet mother.