

**Friends Foundation for the Aging
Year-end Report & Reapplication Proposal Form (limit 3 pages)**

Date: March 15, 2025

Organization: Lutheran Settlement House

TIN & Formal organization name: 23-1352365, Lutheran Social Mission Society

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Amount requested: \$25,000

Project title: Aging with Options: Supporting Wellness Among Older Adults in Philadelphia's River Wards Neighborhoods

What is the problem you identified? Has it changed?

At Lutheran Settlement House, we talk a lot about helping people envision and step into the life of their choosing. In our Center for Older Adults ("The Center"), this conversation often revolves around the concept of "Aging with Options." As older adults in our community encounter some of the challenges that come with aging, we want to assure they have as many options as possible.

Because maintaining health and wellness as we age can be difficult, many of the services in The Center focus on the factors we know drive wellness—physical activity, social connections, and health access, information, and advocacy. To that end, in 2023-2024, with funding from the Friends Foundation for the Aging, we piloted a Community Health Worker-led EnhanceWellness (EW) program. [EnhanceWellness \(EW\)](#) is an evidence-based program that connects older adults with a personal health coach to improve their physical, emotional, and social well-being. Based on the Chronic Care Model, EW is participant-centered and uses motivational interviewing techniques and validated assessment tools.

What actions did you take to address the problem?

With support from FFA, LSH piloted a Community-Health Worker-led EW program. FFA funding allowed us to expand our Health Coach position and provide health education workshops focused on the most salient issues in participants' Health Action Plans, and open to all 175 Center members.

In addition to 1:1 coaching, during the grant period, we hosted a number of health workshops and presentations including:

- Diabetes Presentation hosted by Penn Diabetes
- Managing Chronic Pain workshop series hosted by Pennsylvania Corporation for Aging (PCA)
- Mindfulness & Stress Management Weekly Series hosted by our Health Coach
- Weekly nutrition and healthy cooking classes hosted by the University of Pennsylvania's Agaston Urban Nutrition Initiative
- Cholesterol Presentation hosted by our Nurse Practitioner consultant, Ayesha Pride
- Stroke Prevention Presentation hosted by our Nurse Practitioner consultant, Ayesha Pride
- A busy calendar of health and wellness activities including weekly fitness, yoga, Zumba Gold, chair yoga, Qigong, line dancing, and music therapy classes and workshops
- Intro to Mindful Self Compassion workshop hosted by Anny Allen, LSW, PhD

What did you learn? Will you make any changes in the coming year?

Through our pilot, we learned several key lessons:

- The EW program needs the full-time attention of one staff member with expertise in social work and the social determinants of health.

- The foundation and spirit of EW resonates with our members, but the paperwork and rigid structure of Health Action Plans create barriers to participation.
- Members thrive in supportive social settings and often prefer environments where they can learn, share, and take action alongside friends, including settings like our mindfulness-based stress reduction and chronic conditions support groups.
- Members value expert-led presentations, such as sessions with Penn Diabetes

Therefore, to better align with our members' needs and preferences, we are seeking to evolve our coaching program to focus on:

- Community-Based Support: Facilitating more peer support groups and interactive discussions focused on health and wellness.
- Expert-Led Learning: Inviting more health professionals to host workshops and health education sessions at The Center.
- On-the-Ground Support: Maintaining a regular presence in The Center to encourage informal check-ins with members who are less likely to schedule appointments.
- Expanded Outreach & Care: Offering more mobile support and advocacy – visiting members in their homes and in hospitals and rehab centers, when needed.
- Targeted Engagement: Strengthening connections with marginal members—particularly men who prefer socializing informally in the lobby—by building on existing rapport and ensuring they feel empowered to seek resources, referrals, and support.

To better reflect the role, and our emphasis on collaborating with members to improve wellness, we also plan to rename the Health Coach position to “Community Wellness Advocate.” By evolving our program in these ways, we believe we can create a more inclusive, responsive, and effective support system that meets our members where they are—fostering both individual well-being and a stronger community in The Center.

How have you engaged any partners/collaborators in implementation or funding? Have you considered how to sustain the program?

Our partnerships with the University of Pennsylvania Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative, Penn Diabetes Program, and PCA have enabled us to provide members with expert health education and advice. Additionally, our ongoing partnership with Nurse Practitioner, Ayesha Pride has facilitated regular access to personalized healthcare information and support. Last year, Ayesha spent one day/month in The Center, hosting open “office hours” and offering health presentations and workshops that complemented the EW work led by our Health Coach. With our new emphasis on expert-led health education and group learning, we anticipate building even more partnerships with a broad range of health educators in our community.

The funding we received from FFA helped us attract additional funding from foundations like the Sarah Ralston Foundation. We are continuing to study the impact of this evolving program with a multi-year grant from the Sarah Ralston Foundation and support from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) Foundation. We're excited to continue growing this work with the support of donors and funding partners!

How do you know your actions had an impact? Please describe those who participated, outputs and outcomes. Stories or photos are welcome.

Last year, our EW program engaged 34 older adults in individualized health coaching and relationship-development. Attendance at the presentations and workshops described above, ranged from 8-10 members per weekly session for our Mindfulness & Stress Management Group to 22 attendees in PCA's Chronic Pain Workshop series. Below, we've included a breakdown of participants' race/ethnicity, gender, and age.

Race/ethnicity:

- 65% identified as white
- 20% identified as Black/African American
- 15% - unknown race/ethnicity

Gender:

- 71% identified as female
- 29% identified as male

Age:

- Ages 60-65: 21%
- Ages 66-71: 30%
- Ages 72-77: 21%
- Ages 78-83: 19%
- Ages 84-89: 6%
- Ages 90-95: 3%

Since our pilot began, we've seen significant improvements in several key health dimensions in our annual Center-wide survey:

Dimension	Indicator	2023	2024
Awareness of community-based resources	Members report feeling more knowledgeable about how to get the resources they need	70%	78%
Takes action to address personal needs	Members report being more physically active	82%	89%
	Members report eating healthier meals	83%	89%
Improved Social Connections	Members report having healthy relationships with friends/family	87%	94%
Overall wellbeing	Members report The Center has a positive impact on their overall wellbeing	88%	94%

While these data show the reach and some of the outcomes of our growing program, they don't tell the whole story of its impact. And, no one tells the story of our work better than our members themselves. A few months ago, a tooth infection snowballed into a larger infection and landed one of our Center members, James, in the hospital for three-weeks and then a rehab center for another few weeks. When James returned to The Center, he mentioned that Ayesha, a member of our health coaching team, had visited him at the rehab center. When he shared the story of her visit, he said he could tell that Ayesha had come to check on him, but also to make sure that the rehab team knew he had people who cared about him; so often, older adults are overlooked, especially if they don't have children or other family visiting and advocating for them. Ayesha's friendly face and supportive questions helped James get the healthcare he needed, but even more so, her presence made him feel like a loved and valued member of a community. Which is exactly what he is.

Is there anything else you would like FFA to know about this project?

We're thrilled to have the opportunity to continue evolving this program based on our learnings and our members' needs and preferences.

Feedback on your interaction with FFA would be helpful. Are there ways we can help beyond the grant?

We really appreciated the opportunity to connect with Susan at the mid-point of our grant period and again during the proposal planning process. Her feedback and encouragement were incredibly helpful.

Has your 501c3 status changed?

No, our 501c3 status has not changed.

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.

Please see attached.