

**Friends Foundation for the Aging**  
**New Grant Proposal Form**  
Limit 4 pages

Date: 9/15/2025

Organization: West Chester Area Senior Center

TIN: 23-2149355

Formal organization name: West Chester Area Senior Center

Contact name, phone, email:

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Address: 530 E. Union Street, West Chester, PA 19382

Amount requested: \$15,000

Project title: Senior Center Food Program Expansion

Summary Description (maximum 25 words):

WCASC is requesting support from the Friends Foundation for the Aging for a planned expansion of our food programs to improve quality and healthfulness.

Please answer the following questions clearly and concisely.

1. What is the problem you have identified?

The West Chester Area Senior Center is committed to enhancing the well-being of our senior community. Our organizational mission is to enrich the lives of our senior neighbors through friendship, activities, education and nourishment. To further the last part of our mission, we have long provided breakfast and lunch for the seniors we serve. During the pandemic, when the need for a safe haven for vulnerable seniors to access food became acute, we opened the Corner Cabinet. Since that time, high inflation and stagnant benefits have made affording healthy food a serious challenge for seniors, especially those on fixed incomes. Together, our daily meals and Corner Cupboard are an asset to our community's seniors, offering healthy, accessible food in a safe, welcoming, communal place.

**Daily Meal Programs:** WCASC serves breakfast and lunch are served every weekday. We offer a free continental breakfast and hot lunch, which is often the most substantial meal our seniors will eat that day. Breakfast is free, and lunch is provided for a voluntary donation of \$2. Most

seniors eat for free throughout the year. The breakfast and lunch congregate meals promote socialization and friendship and help decrease seniors' isolation. We provide about 10,000 meals every year.

**Corner Cabinet Food Distribution Program:** WCASC's Corner Cabinet offers seniors weekly free choice shopping each Wednesday with access to fresh produce, protein, breads and grains, nonperishables, and well-balanced frozen meals. We average 425 visits to the Cabinet a month. On average, each senior leaves with 50 pounds of food weekly. In addition to food, we offer personal items such as soap and shampoo, household supplies and pet food (through a partnership with the Henry's Helping Paw Fund).

While we are proud to host daily community meals that play a major role in keeping our area seniors well fed and socially connected, we feel there is room to grow in terms of the quality of food we offer. Our seniors would benefit from healthier options and more substantial nutrition at breakfast. Many of them come to us in the morning to participate in one (or more) of our many fitness classes. A full breakfast and a healthy lunch with plenty of fresh produce would provide them with better fuel for their activities.

## 2. What is the solution you propose to address the problem?

WCASC plans to expand our breakfast and lunch programs to include healthier options. This initiative aims to improve the nutritional intake of our seniors, promoting better health and overall quality of life. Many of our seniors tell us that their physician has recommended eating more whole grains, lean proteins and fruits and vegetables. To that end, we want to adapt our food programs to their needs. We also want to increase food donations from our community to ensure that every senior visiting the Corner Cabinet leaves with an array of healthy, easily prepared options for meals at home. Together, these improvements can greatly enhance the nutritional value of the food seniors access at our facility, which for many represents a substantial percentage of their overall food supply.

## 3. What actions will you take?

The goals we seek to attain and the activities we will undertake to achieve these goals are intended to:

1. **Enhance Nutritional Value:** Introduce a greater variety of nutrient-dense foods, including fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Highlight the importance of fresh produce with a salad bar offered at all lunch sessions.
2. **Promote Healthy Eating Habits:** Educate seniors on the benefits of healthy eating and provide resources to help them make informed dietary choices.
3. **Provide Fuller Meals:** Expand our current continental breakfast options to include full, hot breakfasts, including hot cereals and eggs to improve meals' nutritional value.

By expanding our breakfast and lunch programs to include healthier options, the West Chester Area Senior Center will take a significant step towards improving the health and well-being of our senior community. We are among Chester County's foremost senior centers, and the impact

of our food program improvements can potentially provide a blueprint for other senior centers seeking to improve their members' health. WCASC would greatly appreciate the partnership of the Friends Foundation as we seek to accomplish our food program improvements by the end of calendar 2025.

#### 4. Describe the population to be served.

The West Chester Area Senior Center serves approximately 800 seniors (60+) every year. While most seniors who come to WCASC are from greater West Chester (73%), we have no residency requirements and serve many seniors from other areas including Malvern, Coatesville, Exton, Downingtown, and Glen Mills. Most seniors are non-Hispanic White (77%), while 10% are non-Hispanic Black, 3% are Hispanic, 2% Asian, and the rest Other or Unreported. More than a third (37%) live alone. While we welcome seniors of all age ranges, more than 70% of our participants are aged 70 or older. More than 7% are aged 90+. All data in this paragraph is for our current calendar year (1/1/2025-7/31/2025).

While we do not collect income range data for those who enjoy our community meals, our Corner Cupboard data shows a high level of poverty among our population. A survey of Corner Cupboard participants revealed that 50% have household income below the federal poverty level. For 15% of those who utilize the Corner Cupboard, the food they receive there each week represents all of their food supply for the week.

#### 5. Are there partners/collaborators for implementation or funding-who? Has the solution been tried by other organizations?

Most senior centers have a meal program, although many focus only on lunch at the primary meal they serve to their participants. Hot meals with balanced nutrition are typically the plan; however, very few senior centers offer a salad bar. Senior centers that do offer breakfast typically offer a continental breakfast, as we currently do. This does offer seniors a chance to gather in community and enjoy a meal together; however, the nutrition offered is usually limited to cold cereal, pastries, and fruit. By pioneering hot meals at both breakfast and lunch offering better nutrition and a salad bar full of healthy options, we hope to improve the health of our senior community and serve as a template that other senior centers can learn from.

WCASC collaborates with a range of partners to supply our Corner Cupboard with the food our local seniors need. Our new Executive Director, Leah Reynolds, comes to us from seven years' service as the Chief Executive Officer at Kennett Area Community Service, an organization known most for its exceptional Food Cupboard. She brings with her a plethora of connections with food stores, growers, and community groups that can help increase the quantity and quality of the food donations to our Corner Cupboard.

WCASC receives some funding for our community meals from the Chester County Department of Aging, a collaboration that requires us to return to their office to fees we collect for lunches (a \$2 optional donation from seniors and \$5.70 per non-senior guest). We already receive funding for our food programs from a number of private funders, including the W.W. Smith Charitable Trust, Giant Foods, the Leo and Peggy Pierce Foundation, the Rotary Club of West Chester, and

Emergency Aid of PA, Inc. Our team will be approaching several new funders for our food program expansion this fall, such as the Wawa Foundation, the Huston Foundation, and the Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation.

6. How will you know your actions are having an impact? How will you measure outputs and outcomes?

WCASC uses the Copilot database to track the data of seniors coming to visit the Senior Center and the meals that they enjoy there. We will measure the success of our Food Program Expansion by:

- Measuring the number of people who eat breakfasts and lunches at the Senior Center, comparing it to our baseline measure to determine the success of our marketing efforts to gain new participants.
- Surveying our seniors to gauge their satisfaction with the food program once it is launched, and their determination of whether they feel it has improved their health.
- Expanding the number of seniors who enjoy community meals at the Senior Center. We have a major publicity push planned for the coming months across traditional and social media to inform area seniors of the many benefits of participating in Senior Center activities, including our meals. The expanded meal options will be part of the informational campaign and we hope they will be helpful to draw more isolated seniors into our community, where they will benefit from participation in our healthy meals and other programs.

Please see attached program budget for the planned expansion of our food programs, with line items focused on the healthy food expansion noted in **boldface**.