



**THE HICKMAN FRIENDS SENIOR
COMMUNITY OF WEST CHESTER**

**A PROPOSAL TO
FRIENDS FOUNDATION FOR THE AGING**

Submitted by:
The Hickman
400 N. Walnut St.
West Chester, PA 19380
September 11, 2020

I. Executive Summary:

Invoking the spirit and keeping the inner light aglow in our residents is crucial during this unprecedented time of solitude. The Hickman has been under quarantine since March, only allowing staff and medical professionals to enter our community. Our residents have been unable to welcome loved ones into their homes or leave our campus. At times they have been isolated in their suites.

Currently, we are hosting small group activities and providing limited, outdoor visits between residents and two of their family members. However, if the virus surges again, we may have to cease these programs.

The Hickman is respectfully requesting \$25,000 to implement a new program that will encourage in-person contact. Studies have shown human interaction is vital for the mental and physical health of seniors. We believe the new program will engage our residents and provide deep conversations that they desperately want and need.

II. Organization's History and Competence for this Effort:

Since 1891, The Hickman Friends Senior Community of West Chester has provided a safe, affordable, and thriving living option for seniors in Chester County and beyond. Founded on Quaker principles by two trailblazing women, The Hickman remains an independent community offering exceptional and innovative programs to our senior population.

Our personal care community is comprised of two buildings, with 109 resident suites, 22 of which are located in our secure memory care neighborhood. We continuously enhance our amenities and introduce new services to meet the needs of our current and future residents.

III. Project Details:

1. What problem are you addressing?

At the start of the pandemic in March of this year, we focused on keeping our community COVID-19 free and protecting our residents and staff members from contracting the novel coronavirus. One of the first measures we established was placing our community under quarantine, only allowing staff members and medical professionals to enter our buildings. Our residents, average age is 87-years, were no longer able to welcome visitors and they were not permitted to leave our campus. In addition, residents had to remain in their suites, having meals delivered to their rooms.

According to The National Institute on Aging, "Research has linked social isolation and loneliness to higher risks for a variety of physical and mental conditions: high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease, and even death."

Understanding the importance of human contact for our residents made the decision to quarantine extremely difficult, but we had no choice. We were tasked with the onerous job of keeping our residents safe from contracting COVID-19, while also preventing them from experiencing issues associated with isolation.

As *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* explain, older adults who interact with others are more likely to have higher levels of physical activity, greater positive moods, and fewer negative feelings, while The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley reports that people with high levels of social activity have shown a lower cognitive decline rate.

Creative methods to keep our residents engaged and contented were quickly developed. Staff members provided hallway serenades and assisted residents in conducting virtual visits with loved ones. These and other activities helped alleviate their loneliness, however more was needed.

Since March, protocols concerning our residents' travel within and out of our community have constantly changed. After ending self-isolation, we began hosting small group activities and conducting once a week, 45-minute visits between residents and two of their loved ones. During these outdoor visits on our patios, our residents and their loved ones remain 6 feet apart and where masks.

Although our residents' ability to spend time with others has increased, it still does not compare to their pre-COVID lives. They continue to long for more one-on-one human connection. Our residents also realize that if the virus should spike again, we will have to unfortunately revoke current practices, and revert to isolation.

As many experts are predicting a rise in cases this autumn, we want to prepare for this next wave. We have developed a new program that would increase our residents' in-person interactions, while producing three items that would benefit them, their loved ones, and our staff members.

We want to hire three temporary program coordinators to visit with our residents and develop the following:

- Memory boxes that will be displayed at the door of our residents' rooms;
- A community book that will provide information on current residents (two copies will be needed for display in both of our buildings); and
- Electronic files of their information.

Through this process, the coordinators will cultivate relationships with our residents, leading them to deep conversations regarding their pasts, as well as their current interests and feelings. The combination of one-on-one engagement and the opportunity to freely express their inner thoughts through meaningful discussions, will help their cognitive states during this unprecedented time.

As one of our residents, who asked to remain anonymous, mentioned, "This has been a very difficult period. I miss seeing the volunteers who visited on a regular basis. The thought of having a person who will spend time with me and let me reflect on my life would greatly help my soul."

We maintain a holistic approach to caring for our residents, focusing on their minds, bodies, and spirits. Adding this new program will significantly improve their lives and provide three distinct items for their benefit.

2. What action(s) will you do?

The coordinators will meet with our residents and learn about their personalities, past experiences, and current feelings and interests. Besides meeting with our residents, the individuals may also contact their loved ones for additional information. The information collected will be used to create the memory boxes, community book, and the electronic files.

If a resident or her/his loved one does not feel comfortable with in-person visits, we will arrange to have them done virtually. All information collected will be approved prior to usage for the three projects.

Finally, we hope all our residents, total current occupancy is 70*, will participate. However, if anyone is opposed to this program, we will honor their decision. We will work with any resident to modify the program, so they can still receive visits and if they wish, still complete one or two of the projects. We will base the level of participation on our residents' comfortability toward the program.

3. What other organizations will you partner with on this project?

We have not established a partnering organization for this project, but we are open to having students from West Chester University or another nearby institution apply for the coordinator positions.

4. What outputs do you expect?

- Forms will be developed for the coordinators to record information about each resident. The document will also be used to reflect on our residents' cognitive state during the course of the program, helping us understand the impact of the visits.
- Quality time is spent with all current residents.
- Information and items are collected for the memory boxes, community book, and electronic files.

5. What outcomes do you expect – what change will occur, what impact will it have?

- An overall decrease in our residents' feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- Memory boxes are constructed and displayed outside of residents' suites.
 - The boxes will also serve our residents, especially those in our memory care neighborhood, to easily identify their rooms.
 - To create an inviting and cohesive feel to our community, in addition to placing boxes next to our 109 resident suites, we would like to order 25 additional boxes to be displayed by staff members' offices and workspaces. This will allow employees to display personal pictures and tokens that represent them, providing residents the opportunity to learn more about their caregivers.
 - After a resident has passed, the items in the memory box will be displayed during his/her community memorial service. After the service, we will wrap the items and present them to the resident's loved ones.
- Two copies of the community book are completed and displayed in each of our buildings.
- Electronic files based on information in the book will also be shared.
- Current residents will have the opportunity to learn more about their neighbors and find commonalities, which may initiate conversations and lead to new friendships.
- Potential residents will be able to gain a better understanding of our senior population, helping them in making the decision to choose The Hickman as their home.
- Families and friends of our residents, may review the items to gain better insight on their loved ones' neighbors.
- Staff will have the ability to learn more about our residents, which will be helpful in caring for and communicating with them.

6. How will you measure outputs and outcomes?

- All visits are completed.
- All information and items are gathered for the projects by the approved date.
- All projects are completed and implemented by the approved date.
 - Memory boxes are installed with items that are important to each resident.
 - Residents, their loved ones, and staff members are using the community book and electronic files to gain information.
- The last visit conducted by the coordinators will include a "final interview" that will be used to receive feedback on the experience from the residents and/or their families.
- A review of the documents used throughout the program to determine the cognitive impact the program had on our senior population.

7. How will you sustain the project after the grant period?

We will sustain the project after the grant period by having our Community Life staff update each item as residents leave or join our community. Information about the program and the three items will be included in move-in packages. Our staff members will schedule visits to complete the form and collect items for the memory box.

We will also encourage our three coordinators to remain in contact with our residents after their work is completed. Although we will provide them a small stipend during the program, our hope is they will continue their relationships with our residents for years to come.

8. How will your results be shared and replicated?

We will document the process of the program and share the general results, along with templates of the forms, with any interested community. *Information collected on our residents will not be shared.*

9. How does this project fit with Friends Foundation values?

This project fits perfectly with the Friends Foundation's *community* and *equality* values:

- Community – Providing outcomes that will allow residents to learn more about one another will make our community stronger. Easily accessing knowledge of neighbors will assist residents in expanding current relationships and establishing connections with others.
- Equality – Through this program we are encouraging residents to express their inner feelings and beliefs. This is their opportunity to share their interests and thoughts on past and current situations. Based on their comfortability, they may communicate as much or as little about their personal information. We will only use what they and/or their families approve.

10. Project budget and timeline.

Project Budget: We anticipate the total expense of the program to be \$28,887. The Hickman has applied \$3,887 toward the program. Please see the attached budget for details.

Project Timeline: We anticipate this being a four-month program, with tasks being completed weekly once funding is received. We have developed the following timeline:

- Week 1: Write job descriptions and place notice for Program Coordinators.
Develop detailed instructions and information gathering forms for visits.
Order memory boxes and supplies needed for constructing two community books.
Discuss program with residents.
Identify, make contact with, and prepare family and friends to support our residents during the course of the program.
- Week 2: Collect resumes and begin the interviewing process for the coordinator positions.
- Week 3: Finalize program materials (instructions and forms).
Develop visitation schedule. Visits will be planned on weeks when residents are not scheduled for family visits. This will ensure their one-on-one engagement is occurring more often over a longer period of time.
- Week 4: Hire coordinators and schedule their employee onboarding/training.

- Week 5: Complete employee onboarding/training for all three coordinators. Introduce the coordinators to the community (residents and staff). Visitations begin.
- Weeks 6 – 10: Coordinators will complete the following:
 - Four half hour visits with each participating resident;
 - Meet with residents' family members and friends as needed;
 - Gather information and items for the three projects; and
 - Begin preparing the projects.
- Weeks 11 – 15: Review information collected during the visits and ensure everything is properly completed and determine if the program was a success – the impact the program had on our residents' cognitive state. Coordinators complete the projects and present them to the community.
- Week 16: Memory boxes are installed, two copies of the book are displayed (one in each building), and the electronic files are updated.

We will continue our conversation with Friends Foundation as we develop the program and work through the timeline. Once the program is completed, we will provide a detailed report.

*Our occupancy fluctuates throughout the year. To ensure we are prepared to support all our residents at the time of the program, we based the proposal and budget on an occupancy of 100 residents.