

DECEMBER 2022

NORTHFIELD LIVING

Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr. Campus
North Shore Senior Center



North Shore Senior Center

MEETING THE NEEDS OF OLDER ADULTS SINCE 1956

Photo by Amy Krause



Best Version Media

A Gem IN THE COMMUNITY



Knitting Club

By Paul Clements
Photos by Amy Krause

According to *Profile of Older Americans*, a report published last year by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the population age 65 and older in the United States increased from 39.6 million in 2009 to 54.1 million in 2019, a 36% increase. By 2040, they project there will be 80.8 million older persons and by 2060 the number will reach 94.7 million. Meanwhile, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's July 2021 estimates, here in Cook County, roughly 807,000, or 15.6% of residents are age 65 or older, which then would project out to 1.1 million residents by 2040 and more than 1.6 million by 2060.

With so many pressing needs both nationally and locally, government agencies and their resources are spread thin, and needs-based solutions are still evolving. One North Shore organization, however, has been meeting the needs of older adults since 1956, even through the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Shore Senior Center (NSSC) serves and engages more than 24,000 older adults and their families each year throughout Chicago's northern suburbs, including Northfield, Wilmette, Winnetka, Kenilworth and Highland Park. As a nationally accredited organization, NSSC offers a comprehensive suite of services to older adults, from the most independent to those needing

more support. NSSC's mission is to foster the independence and well-being of older adults, enhance their dignity and self-respect, and promote their participation in and contribution toward all aspects of community life. Offerings range from social services and specialized care for people living with dementia and other forms of memory loss, to wellness programs and opportunities for people to socialize and volunteer in a number of different ways.

Tish Rudnicki, MSW, is the Executive Director and Board President of NSSC. Appointed in 2019, Rudnicki brings more than 30 years of experience helping older adults live healthy and fulfilling lives. "North Shore Senior Center is a well-known gem in the field, both from a state and national perspective," Rudnicki said. "One of my mentors was the prior Executive Director and when he was leaving the organization, he called and said I needed to interview for this job. I had been at the Kenneth Young Center for 29 years and had no plans to leave. I had an incredible career there, initially serving older adults and then at the end serving as the Chief Program Officer overseeing all of their medical, psychiatric, child, adolescent, adult and older adult services. I loved Kenneth Young, I loved the people I worked with, and I still believe strongly in their mission. However, the opportunity to come and work at this incredible place was really more than I could pass up."

More than church basement bingo

Speaking from the Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr. Campus in Northfield, Rudnicki said, "It's interesting. I would say our most popular programs are obviously the ones that happen here in this building, yet the most important work we do is outside these walls through our social services programs. Yet, what we talk about all the time internally is the push-pull of what people think of North Shore Senior Center. Obviously, everyone thinks of this building, and the classes and lectures we offer. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. The bulk of the work that we do is in the 23 communities we serve helping people stay in their homes and in the communities they love. That is really where we make an impact on lives.

"When people think of a senior center, they often think of church basement bingo," Rudnicki said. "NSSC is so much more, which is why we are accredited by CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) and the National Council on Aging's National Institute of Senior Centers—because we're not just a building with activities; we are everything that makes up our organization." NSSC is also recognized by Guidestar as a premier non-profit and it ranks as a Chicago Tribune Top Workplace for three years running.

Just walking into the Center is an experience. The design and architecture of the facility is uplifting, and the buzz of activity is energizing. It's very refreshing to walk into a facility where you can immediately tell that the staff and volunteers enjoy their work. The Nielsen Campus includes The Shop at the Center, which not only offers an assortment of classic and contemporary gifts, but also features hand-crafted items lovingly made by their Sewing Bees Club, including beautiful baby quilts, sweaters, hats, booties and afghans; the Fitness Center, which welcomes all ages; a gym for group fitness classes; an Art Studio outfitted with a kiln; a Technology Assistance Lab where volunteer tech experts help people solve laptop, smartphone or tablet issues; a lending library; and the House of Welcome Adult Day Services for people living with memory loss and their caregivers.



Visitors to NSSC's website at (<https://www.nssc.org/>) will see there are eight buckets of service categories, each with a comprehensive list of specific services.

- ♦ Support and Resources
 1. Friendly Visiting
 2. Home-Delivered Meals
 3. Homemaker Services (assistance at home)
 4. Free Lending Closet
- 1. Lifelong Learning Programs - Sign up for a wide variety of classes, including:
 1. Film, Theater and TV
 2. Culture and Society
 3. Computers and Technology
 4. Money Matters
 5. Daytrips and Concerts
- ♦ Counseling Services
 1. Counseling and Therapy
 2. Counseling for Caregivers
 3. Options Counseling for Life Changes
- ♦ Family Caregiver Support
 1. Caregiver Support Groups for spouses, partners and family members
 2. Dementia Family Support Group
 3. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
 4. Memory Loss Day Program and Parkinson's Disease Support Group
- ♦ Memory Care Programs
 1. Alzheimer's Caregiver Manual
 2. House of Welcome Adult Day Program
 3. Memory Cafe
 4. Virtual Programs



Art Studio

FEATURE STORY, CONT

+ Fitness and Wellness

1. Fitness Center - open to all ages M-F 7AM-3PM and Saturdays 8AM-1PM
2. Fitness Center Membership, Personal Training and Group Classes
3. Two NuStep cross trainers, a unique upper body ergometer designed to create a well-rounded workout

1. Adult Protective Services: Provided to residents of the 14 communities that make up Maine, New Trier and Northfield townships. Each year APS investigates roughly 200 cases of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation, with exploitation being the most frequent offense. All APS notifications are confidential and free of charge.

+ Personal Money Management

1. Verifying Medical Claims
2. Tax Organization and Coordinating with CPA's
3. Working with elder care specialists, attorneys, trustees and executors
4. Mail Management, Organizing Paperwork, Monthly Bill Paying

Social services offices are located in Northfield and Niles, with satellite locations in Glenview, Evanston, Highland Park, and six area hospitals. Senior & Family Services

can be reached by calling 847-784-6040.

"NSSC is non-residential, so many of our services connect people with the help they need: someone to come into their home and do some light cleaning or cooking, home-delivered meals, caregiver support, bathing assistance, anything you can imagine an older person would need to remain in the home," Rudnicki said. "One of the services I especially like to recommend is our free Lending Closet that's open to all, with no geographic or age boundaries. So, for example, if you had surgery and you needed a walker, a wheelchair, or a cane during your recovery, you can borrow one for up to three months.

"We also offer counseling to help people better manage stress, anxiety, loneliness, grief, loss, and life changes. Our Memory Cafe offers a safe space for people with memory loss and their caregivers to gather with others experiencing the same things."

The House of Welcome Adult Day Services' Day Program offers structured, therapeutic, small-group activities in a homelike setting for people living with memory loss. Participants enjoy meaningful activities and friendships, while caregivers benefit from time on their own. Family caregivers are also provided supportive case management services as well as a support group.

NSSC offers other support groups and resources for family caregivers. "The support groups are a great place to learn about the

federally funded and supported services that caregivers are eligible for that most people have no idea are even out there for them, like respite care which provides care at home so family caregivers can benefit from some time to themselves," Rudnicki said. "Let's say you want to go on a vacation for a week and you need someone to stay at home with your mom; we can help you access Title III funds that will pay for a caregiver to stay with your mom or for a stay in a facility while you're away."

While NSSC doesn't charge for many of its services, it is an access point for state and federally funded services. A 501(c)(3), the organization's funding comes from private donors, foundations, federal grants, state grants, and the contracts it has that allow it to bill the state for the services it provides in the community.

"We turn no one away," Rudnicki said, "If we're not able to meet someone's needs, because there are certain restrictions based on our state contracts, then we refer you to the place that you need to be. For instance, we provide Adult Protective Services for Northfield, New Trier and Maine townships. For nearby Lake County communities like Highland Park and Highwood, we cannot provide those particular services to those residents, but we can refer them to an agency that will."

NSSC's response to COVID

NSSC closed its doors on March 13, 2020. By March 24, its entire staff of 100+ was fully working remotely, and all of its classes were on Zoom. Rudnicki said, "We serve 24,000 older adults in the community, and by that date, I would say 25% of them had already been called personally by someone on staff. So it was really pretty tremendous how the staff came together during that unprecedented and stressful time to take care of the people we serve.

"Most of the people we serve through social services are living at or below poverty, which people don't believe when we talk about our service area. Our normal work came to a halt so we could focus on making sure our participants had food or they were connected to a pharmacy to get their medicine. I am really proud of the work we accomplished and that we didn't lay off any staff, nor did we lose any staff except for one retirement."

Money Management Services





Day Trip

Moving forward together

Last year was a big year for NSSC as it celebrated its 65th anniversary after dealing with COVID for the previous two years.

“We felt so fortunate last year that we were opened up enough to celebrate a milestone anniversary and hold our biggest fundraiser,” Rudnicki said. “The first year of COVID, we held a virtual Gala, and the following year we had to postpone our in-person event. So last year was very special for us to be back together again to celebrate what we had successfully been through. I am really proud of the work that the entire team did during that time.”

Staff is retained when people enjoy working together, and they feel their work has a purpose and makes a difference. Rudnicki and her Director of Marketing and Communications Amy Krause exemplify the ideal, coming to work every day happy and ready to serve older adults and their families.

Krause, who joined NSSC in 2016, said, “Working with older people was an absolute calling, and I feel fortunate to work at a place like NSSC where the work is meaningful and impactful. Tish coming on board has been a big shift in a very positive direction for the organization. I think it’s important to note that her social work background and all the experience she gained over the years has been a huge benefit to the organization and those we serve. Under her leadership, we recently developed an ambitious three-year strategic plan that will guide us from the challenging throes of the pandemic into a strong and sustainable future.

“If there’s a silver lining from the pandemic for NSSC, I would say that we are now offering a more enhanced experience for our participants. They can choose to come here and be part of something in person or they can stay in the comfort of their home and login online and still be part of a community. This is true for our fitness programs, Lifelong Learning classes, support groups and counseling. We offer a lot more options for people to connect in a way that works for them.”

Rudnicki added, “Today, we’ve landed in a place where we have enriched our programming and we have maintained the vibrancy of the Center, which is so important. We want the community to know that we are here if you want to connect with others through our in-person, virtual or hybrid programs, or if you need assistance as you navigate the aging process. We welcome you to join us in whatever way best suits your needs.”

For more information, visit the NSSC website at <https://www.nssc.org>

To Contact the NSSC:

- ♦ Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr. Campus/Main Number: 847.784.6000
- ♦ North Shore Senior Options: 847.242.6270
- ♦ Email: info@nssc.org
- ♦ Volunteer Services: 847.242.6257
- ♦ Senior & Family Services – Niles Office: 847.864.3721
- ♦ Fitness Center: 847.784.6003
- ♦ Senior & Family Services – Northfield Office: 847.784.6040
- ♦ Development: 847.784.6020
- ♦ Lifelong Learning: 847.784.6030
- ♦ Marketing & Communications: 847.784.6056
- ♦ House of Welcome Adult Day Services: 847.242.6250



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