Building a Caring Connection as a Friendly Visitor

David Brown died in June 2015 at the age of 94, and his daughter, Sharon Rossmark, is grateful that Gary Feldmar was a consistent presence during her dad’s final years. “Gary was a great part of my dad’s life… you’d think they were next door neighbors!”

As a volunteer with the North Shore Senior Center Friendly Visitor Program, 76-year-old Gary was matched with David, a veteran of World War II. David lived at Northbrook’s Crestwood Place Senior Apartments and had occasional visits by a social worker from the Center. Though legally blind from a war injury, David had lived a long, fulfilling post-war life in downstate Illinois, moving closer to Sharon just ten years ago. But with that longevity had come increasing isolation—he had outlived many of his friends and neighbors. So after consulting with his daughter, they reached out to the North Shore Senior Center to arrange for a Friendly Visitor.

Few could predict this would be such a good match. Gary grew up in a white, middle- to upper-class neighborhood, never served in the military, and by his own admission was neither involved in a cause nor had been friends with any persons of color. David, an African-American, was raised in the segregated South, was among the troops who landed on Utah Beach during the Normandy D-Day invasion, and lived with racial indignities for decades.

The two hit it off the first time they met, and the visits continued unabated for nearly five years. A couple of months after David’s death, Gary choked back tears when he commented, “After successful treatment for stage-four cancer, I went into the program with the purpose of giving back, enriching someone else’s life. But David enriched my life so much.” He went on to describe how he benefited from being David’s volunteer companion: “We talked about his upbringing. My upbringing. I never had known anyone who had experienced racial prejudice personally, so I learned a lot about the impact of the Civil Rights struggle on an individual.”

Sharon attested to the significant impact Gary had on reducing her dad’s loneliness and giving him vital social interaction. “As Dad got older, he became less motivated to go out and meet others,” she said. “Gary was a great mainstay. It helped my dad to have a new friend.” Often expressing appreciation for Gary’s visits, David would carefully guard the time they had scheduled, Sharon explained.

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Tierney Wilson, the North Shore Senior Center social worker who coordinates the Friendly Visitor program, said that the volunteer companion can engage the senior in a variety of activities—e.g., card games, crafts, taking a walk, creating a photo album. But the most important aspect of the relationship is socialization. Whether sharing memories, chatting about a hobby, or just laughing, the senior is happy to have someone to talk to. Friendly Visitors are neither personal care providers nor trained counselors, but they do provide valuable companionship to seniors who have limited social support.

In addition to residing in a nearby township, eligibility criteria for having a Friendly Visitor include being age 60+ and open to case management services from the Center. Referrals to the program are often made by social workers at a hospital, home health, or hospice program as well as by family members and clergy. Tierney determines the best match for each situation and monitors the relationship to ensure ongoing satisfaction.

New volunteers are always welcome in the Friendly Visitor program. Just contact Kathy Schimmelpfennig, Manager of Volunteer Services, at 847.847.6063, and you’re on your way to establishing a meaningful one-on-one relationship with a homebound senior near you.

Tell the story of a lifetime. Yours!

North Shore Senior Center is partnering with Personal History Interviews to give your family the opportunity to pass the story of your journey or that of someone you love down from generation to generation. With a video created by the expert team of Ron Blivas and Dan Gelfond, trained and renowned interviewers for the Spielberg Foundation’s Shoah Project, you’ll have a life portrait filled with honesty, depth and passion. There's nothing like it—a documentary your family will treasure for the rest of their lives.

**Living Legacy Package (project cost: $2,500):**
- A two-hour interview in the home of the person whose life and times are being preserved.
- Choice of 25 photographs to include in the video with option to pick the precise moment photos appear.
- Five master DVDs of their legacy production.

*Mention North Shore Senior Center and not only will Personal History Interview donate $250 back to the Center, but participants will also receive 15 additional photos and five additional finished DVD’s (a $200 value).*

**Living Legacy Plus Package (project cost: $4,000):**
- A two-hour interview in the home of the person whose life and times are being preserved.
- Choice of 50 photographs to include in the video with option to pick the precise moment photos appear.
- Ten master DVDs of their legacy production.
- Additionally, other family members can speak about important moments they have shared with the central subject or simply tell them how much they love them for an extra hour-and-a-half of on-camera time.

*Mention North Shore Senior Center and not only will Personal History Interview donate $400 back to the Center, but participants will also receive 15 additional photos and five additional finished DVD’s (a $200 value).*

To learn more, call Dan Gelfond at 847.940.9999 or visit www.personalhistoryinterviews.com.
Ensuring Participant Well-being

CARF accreditation awarded—once again!

How can you be sure North Shore Senior Center provides high-quality services for your family member at House of Welcome Adult Day Services?

Do you wonder whether a CareOptions assessment will provide the information you’re seeking?

Do you know whether Social Services programs are stagnant or continually improving?

The stamp of approval granted by CARF International—an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services—provides reassurance that the Center meets high standards of operation and service. As an impartial review process, CARF accreditation is validation of our commitment to excellence and the well-being of the people we serve.

The first accreditation was awarded in 2003, following a search for the most appropriate entity to review the Center, given its range of programs and services. At each reapplication thereafter—including this year—the Center has received a three-year reaccreditation, CARF’s highest recognition. In 2009, Mind Matters, our program for people with early memory loss, was awarded an “exemplary conformance.” This award is given to innovative and creative programs that have outstanding outcomes or exceed the standards.

In early spring, CARF examiners spent three days conducting an on-site survey—reviewing paperwork; observing programs; questioning and talking with staff; and interviewing stakeholders (e.g., volunteers, program participants, referral agencies, and donors). The focus of their review was continuous quality improvement as well as participant satisfaction.

Julie Lamberti, LCSW, is director of program evaluation and quality assurance, and guides the goal-setting process for the Center. Julie said, “CARF standards provide a framework for us to measure, analyze, and improve services. It’s a great way for us to learn and demonstrate that we are doing well.”

To donors, whether individual, foundation, corporate, or municipal, CARF accreditation shows that we are opening ourselves up to an external review that ensures quality of services and efficiencies of administration. Accreditation indicates that the Center is meeting a set of standards recognized internationally and is adhering to local, state, and national regulations.

Because the Center has CARF accreditation, there also are financial benefits to program participants: the potential for long-term care insurance reimbursement for adult day services.

According to Julie, though, “It’s not all about CARF! We go through the process to support our focus on providing excellent services and ensuring that the people we serve are satisfied with the services they are receiving.” After each survey, CARF reviewers have provided a report that made recommendations for improvement and offered suggestions to think about incorporating. So in reality, the CARF process is continuous. “The report helps guide our self-study and evaluation,” commented Julie. “What goals we set, what outcomes we expect, how we evaluate effectiveness, and what we can do to improve services.”

The CARF accreditation process is collaborative and supportive, with surveyors who are active practitioners in the field. “It’s good for staff to see the good we’re doing,” said Julie, “to hear from other professionals that we’re doing good work and also to see what needs to be improved. There are always things to look at, change, and improve to ensure high-quality services and client satisfaction.”

―Julie Lamberti
Holiday Giving Tree Brightens Recipients’ Lives
A Simple Tag Can Make All the Difference for a Senior in Need

When Jean Burrow talks about North Shore Senior Center’s Giving Tree, one can’t help but want to join her team. Her enthusiasm, commitment, and deep understanding of the program’s importance are infectious. “Many people are unaware of the conversations that occur between the seniors in our community and our social workers who discover during their visits what their clients may need,” says Jean, who with her husband, Bob, has been contributing to the Giving Tree for eight years. “Many people can’t shop for items that can greatly enhance their lives.”

Not unlike many demographic groups, some seniors have limitations. But small gestures, like taking a tag from the Giving Tree, can enrich the lives of both the recipients and givers alike. “For me and my husband, accommodating requests for specific items like a lap robe, radio, fruit basket and any number of things that will make life easier is so meaningful,” says Jean, who before retiring worked for years in the advertising and real estate industries. “Providing something tangible is especially gratifying.”

The Giving Tree, a long-standing North Shore Senior Center tradition, is set up in the Atrium of the Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr. Campus each year in November. Decorated with handwritten tags listing the holiday wish of a senior in need, the Giving Tree is emblematic of the Center’s—and its dedicated members’—commitment to helping seniors in need. “Many of us are really good shoppers,” adds Jean, “and it’s incumbent upon us to help others who can’t help themselves.”

What makes the Giving Tree particularly successful is its accessibility. Members, staff, volunteers and visitors can select one or more tags, purchase items, wrap them in all sorts of creative ways and know that their gifts will be personally delivered—prior to the holiday—by one of North Shore Senior Center’s Social Services team members. Last year, more than 455 low-income older adults received holiday gifts from the generous donations of those who selected tags from the Giving Tree.

“Of course it’s the right thing to do, but it’s also a great way to recycle gently used items,” states Jean. “New is always great, but for people who are downsizing and don’t want to necessarily toss something away, say a beautiful blanket or a robe that was never used, the Giving Tree is a wonderful option. And it’s so easy, too. Add some chocolate and you may have really made someone’s day.”

As you prepare to enjoy the festivities of the holiday season, we ask that you keep these elders in mind. Like all of us, they have the need to know that people care about them. To learn more about making a Giving Tree donation, please call 847.784.6000.

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Tribute Giving: 
A Meaningful Way to Honor the Important People in Our Lives

People all over the world give gifts in other people’s names—whether it’s to honor a loved one who’s passed away or celebrate the accomplishments of a grandchild, parent, or a colleague. The North Shore Senior Center makes it easy and meaningful to recognize the people in our lives who make a difference—in someone else’s life or our own.

“Tribute gifts are a great way to support our services and programs and honor or memorialize a special individual,” says Teri Ruiz, North Shore Senior Center Donor Database Specialist. “And the reasons for giving are endless—you can celebrate a friend’s birthday, acknowledge a life cycle event, remember a beloved family member with a memorial donation; what matters is the gesture.”

The money given through tribute gifts is put into the general operation of the Center, including, for example, programs and services provided by the House of Welcome. Plus, North Shore Senior Center sends out acknowledgment letters to donors. “Tribute giving, even with small gifts, helps people feel that they are an essential part of our organization,” says Teri. “We believe this increases our tremendous sense of community here.”

Those who make tribute gifts—as well as the list of honorees—are acknowledged on the Center’s website. “We know that people give from their hearts, not because they want to be recognized,” says Teri, “but we think it’s important to let people know who’s giving as well as the individuals who are being honored. It’s really a wonderful way to personalize a donation. It makes everyone feel good.”

Ways you can make your donation:

- Make your donation via PayPal by visiting www.nssc.org, clicking on Donate Now, and referencing your tribute information in the notes section on the transaction.
- Send in your tribute gift by using the downloadable Tribute Gifts Donation Form and mailing it to:
  Att: Patrick Price
  North Shore Senior Center
  161 Northfield Rd.
  Northfield, IL 60093
- Call us at the Center to make your tribute gift by credit card to: Teri Ruiz, Donor Database Specialist at 847.784.6018.

North Shore Senior Center: Celebrating 60 Years of Service!

“It is fascinating to think that North Shore Senior Center will turn 60 years old—the age at which we most closely associate with becoming a senior. As all things that are celebrating this milestone, we have gained a tremendous amount of expertise and breadth of knowledge. For North Shore Senior Center, that means that we are an exciting and vital resource for older adults, from active to home-bound, and their families. We are excited to celebrate this milestone with you over the next year.”

—Jordan Luhr, Executive Director, North Shore Senior Center
Victoria Braund, M.D., will share her perspective on brain fitness and memory loss at the North Shore Senior Center annual meeting on January 12, 2016. Dr. Braund is a fount of knowledge about issues of aging. That proficiency comes from years of experience and a solid foundation in the field:

- She is board certified in geriatric medicine and internal medicine.
- She has been in practice for 20-plus years.
- And her professional responsibilities include director of the division of geriatrics at NorthShore University HealthSystem, assistant clinical professor at University of Chicago, and medical director of Symphony of Evanston.

Dr. Braund has had an affinity for older folks for as long as she can remember. She grew up around her grandparents and was a candy striper in a hospice unit. Even in her teen years, Dr. Braund had a special rapport with seniors. She was drawn to the medical field, and had an “aha moment” when reading a New England Journal of Medicine article about the new medical specialty of geriatrics. (The first certifying exam in geriatric medicine was offered in the United States in 1988.)

Among Dr. Braund’s favorite activities is teaching new generations of doctors as they do their geriatric rotation. She laments, though, that so few physicians go into the field. They feel obliged to make enough money to pay off student loans, and that doesn’t happen easily in geriatrics. Dr. Braund laughed as she said, “You go into geriatrics because you love it, not because you have business acumen!”

We’re all getting older. Each of us copes with illness, disease, or injury at some point. And some of us live—or will live—with progressive memory loss. “I wish I had better news,” Dr. Braund said. “That we had done it, solved it, and there’s no more dementia. But dementia is proving to be a tough nut to crack. There is no cure.” She continued on a positive note, “But there are interesting things coming out in research about the impact of diet and exercise.”

At the annual meeting in January, Dr. Braund will be talking about lifestyle modifications you can make—like healthful choices in your 50s, 60s, 70s—to age as well as possible. You can’t reverse the aging process, but you can take steps that will help you embrace life at any age!

For more information, contact Molly Conley at 847.784.6050 or mconley@nssc.org.
Financial Wellness Lunch & Learn

Wednesday, January 20, 2016
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Arthur C. Nielsen, Jr. Campus—Golder Dining Room
161 Northfield Road, Northfield, IL 60093


Guest speakers Ronald Webb (Peck Ritchey, LLC) and Michael Wise (Morgan Stanley Wealth Management) will address how best to maintain financial and legal security from the time of retirement and beyond. The fundamentals for retaining financial security include: preserving capital and income, meeting tax payments and considering legacy planning; the impact of a financial plan as part of a road to retirement; importance of creating an asset allocation; a review of the types of investments that many retirees own today; and a discussion on annuities, life insurance, and long-term care solutions. From a legal perspective, topics explored will be the Illinois probate process and methods to avoid probate; when and why estate planning is an important part of a client’s planning process; an overview of the estate planning process (for both incapacity and death), including the use of trusts and powers of attorney; how asset protection can play an important role in the estate planning process; and a general discussion of Federal and State estate tax and methods used to reduce or eliminate estate tax.

Presenters: Ronald Webb, Peck Ritchey, LLC and Michael Wise, Morgan Stanley Wealth Management

This event is open to North Shore Senior Center members, volunteers, and staff as well as the general public. Admission and luncheon are complimentary. Space is limited to 60 participants. RSVP is required.

RSVP by January 13, 2016

to Molly Conley at 847.784.6050
or mconley@nssc.org

Financial Wellness Breakfast & Brew

Saturday, January 23, 2016
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.
Chase Bank—Winnetka Branch, Lower-Level Conference Room
791 Elm Street, Winnetka, IL 60093
(Parking is available behind the bank, off Green Bay Road.)

“The Entrepreneurial Spirit During Retirement”

As more and more members of the Baby Boom generation have entered into or are approaching retirement, 53% of them wish to continue working according to the Sloan Center on Aging. Many of these new or soon-to-be retirees are seeking to connect with a personal passion and become entrepreneurs, running their own businesses and supplementing their incomes. Join us for this fascinating panel discussion about what it takes to be an entrepreneur, financially and legally.

This seminar will present information on small business loan acquisition, tax implications of starting a business, and the different types of incorporations and other legal concerns.

This event is open to North Shore Senior Center members, volunteers, and staff as well as the general public. Admission and breakfast are complimentary. Space is limited to 30 participants. RSVP is required.

Sponsored by North Shore Senior Center.

Moderator: Patrick Price, North Shore Senior Center
Panelists: Jay Greenstein, (Weiss & Co.),
James D. Meyers (SCORE™ Chicago)
and Kerry R. Peck, Esq. (Peck Ritchey, LLC)

RSVP by January 19, 2016

to Molly Conley at 847.784.6050
or mconley@nssc.org
Support Our Year-End Appeal

Our Year-End Appeal Letter should be arriving in your mailbox very soon. When you support North Shore Senior Center with a charitable contribution, you are honoring the older adults we serve. Many of these individuals have limited financial resources and equally limited support systems.

Your gift will help us continue to safeguard the well-being of older adults in our community, both during the holiday season and throughout the year.

To learn more, please contact Patrick Price, Director of Development and Marketing, at 847.784.6057 or pprice@nssc.org. You can also make a donation online at www.nssc.org.