

spirit[®]

THE MAGAZINE OF VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA[®]

spring/summer 2009



IN THIS ISSUE:

- Going GREEN! Volunteers of America of Greater Los Angeles takes proactive steps to protect the environment and its landmark homeless service center. (page 4)
- Volunteers of America profiles some of its diverse programs and services for older Americans across the nation, including the rural Western Slope of Colorado. (page 14)

Keeping PACE on the Western Slope



Aging with Options

Our nation is on the cusp of one of the most dramatic demographic shifts in its history as a projected 71.5 million people will be age 65 or older by the year 2030. The demands this will place on our country's current system of providing elder care is daunting and the time to prepare is now.

Volunteers of America has spent more than a century anticipating and adapting to the needs of the most vulnerable citizens. As the largest nonprofit provider of affordable housing in the United States; the third largest nonprofit provider of nursing care; the seventh largest nonprofit provider of assisted living facilities; and with our community agencies across the U.S. offering services for seniors, we believe our mission today is to rise to the challenge of caring for an aging America. We are confident that our proven expertise in care management will place us at the forefront of aging services.

In preparation for the growing health care needs associated with the rising number of aging individuals, Volunteers of America will be proactive by expanding our current senior services. We will develop and implement the most innovative and progressive programs, offering older individuals the flexibility to continue living and aging where they are most comfortable—at home. Our initiative has one goal for every older American: to age with options. The call for help has risen; we have answered; and now, we invite you to join us as we take this journey.

spirit

THE MAGAZINE OF VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA®

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president's letter

Everybody has a story to tell about an aging family member and his or her care. Inevitably, there is some part of that experience that gives pause to the notion “there must be a better way to do this.” At Volunteers of America, we recognize that aging should not be a fearful proposition, but one filled with grace and dignity, regardless of an individual’s financial status. Our nation’s ability to care for the aged is at a tipping point where the current systems in place for the elderly cannot adequately support the ever-increasing number of older Americans. To address all of these issues, Volunteers of America is introducing a comprehensive approach for easing the burden on the elderly, their families, and local, state and federal health care systems—“Aging with Options.”

Building on our organization’s solid foundation of senior housing, long-term care and case management services, we plan to revolutionize the way in which older Americans receive care. This new initiative will deploy technology-enhanced, person-centered service models designed to better enable seniors to maintain their independence and dignity as they become frail. As with any transition of this magnitude, it doesn’t happen overnight. It is a gradual, but constant movement toward responding to the changing needs of people; something that Volunteers of America has been doing over its 113-year-history.

In this issue, you will visit northern New England where Volunteers of America has taken innovative steps to help the region’s older population by mobilizing not only the resources of the organization, but also the communities around it. They say “it takes a village” and Volunteers of America proves this adage every day by drawing energy, compassion and

pride from its supporters. The result is a caring environment for young and old.

Next, we will visit Minnesota where nearly 60 percent of its residents live in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area. Volunteers of America is at the heart of this bustling metropolis providing independent seniors a center for socializing, housing options, and a wide variety of home and community-based services. You will read how those who receive these valuable services view Volunteers of America staff as friends, family and advocates. They feel safe, secure and, more importantly, that they are not alone.

Lastly, we will visit the Western Slope of Colorado. This is a sparsely populated area with few towns having a population more than 5,000. Volunteers of America has established a PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) program where rural residents have found an alternative to isolation through an individualized care system. As they grow older, PACE will adapt to meet their every need.

This issue of *Spirit* is dedicated to the pioneering spirit our founders ignited in the heart of every volunteer more than a century ago when they promised to “go wherever we are needed and do whatever comes to hand”—and this spirited flame still shines bright today. I invite you to join us in making our new and innovative vision in caring for older Americans a reality. Together, we can make aging in America what it should be—dignified, empowering and supported.

Charles W. Gould
National President

Young or old...

We are here to serve.

At Volunteers of America, our ministry of service has supported and empowered America's most vulnerable groups for more than a century. Our work touches the mind, body, heart and, ultimately, the spirit of those we serve. We invite you to support us in our work to help others stand on their own.

Give today.

Visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.org
CFC#11973

There are no limits to caring.®



The Rotary House: Going Green in L.A.

GREEN features of Rotary House include:

- Photovoltaic solar panels power the entire facility, become a source of DWP credits, and offset 24,000 tons of carbon per year
- Highly insulated, reflective roof uses 40 percent less energy for cooling the building
- High-output HVAC system
- High energy lighting fixtures and compact fluorescent bulbs
- ‘Low-e’ windows and skylights control heat and add light
- Zero VOC paint and coatings are less harmful to human health, and reduce landfill, ground-water and ozone depleting contaminants
- Water-conserving toilets reduce water use by 400,000 gallons per year
- Restored hardscape and drought-tolerant landscaping will reduce water consumption

Pre-Renovation Capacity/Services

- 90 beds
- 500 served annually
- Emergency and transitional housing
- Permanent housing placement
- Services referrals

Post-Renovation Capacity/Services

- 150 beds
- 1800 served annually
- Emergency and transitional housing
- Permanent housing placement
- Services referrals
- Job training
 - Computer skills training
 - Culinary arts skills training
- Benefits advocacy and medical referrals
- Assessments and individual life plans
- New basketball court and outdoor recreation areas
- Special services for veterans
 - Incarcerated veterans program
 - VA and SSI benefits advocacy
 - Transportation
 - Medical referrals
 - On-site nursing services

According to GreenNonProfits.org, “as people and corporations around the world become more ‘green’ they in turn expect the nonprofits they support to also take proactive steps to protect the environment. The benefits are twofold: the global environment improves as a result of the nonprofit sector taking action; and nonprofits become part of environmental solutions and successfully respond to funder and donor demands.”

Volunteers of America of Greater Los Angeles has embraced “green thinking” with its latest project: a major renovation of its landmark 20,000-square-foot homeless service center in downtown Los Angeles. The goal is to not only be environmentally responsible in the construction of this facility, but to also provide an enhanced continuum of services within a place of shelter, dignity and hope for homeless individuals on Skid Row.

“It is an integral part of our philosophy to believe in the inherent good nature of people and their potential to return to independence and self-sufficiency,” said Volunteers of America of Greater Los Angeles CEO Bob Pratt. “The concern for our planet’s welfare is part and parcel of that philosophy. We believe that creating this type of environment for our homeless people demonstrates we are investing in the future.”

Volunteers of America is utilizing renewable energy and maximizing new energy efficient technologies to improve human and environmental health wherever possible. “Green building” practices will have an immediate and measurable impact. The scope of the project also includes an exterior facelift, enhanced reception area for improved access and assessment; new computer and job resource lab; the expansion of living areas; a major kitchen upgrade; additional office workspaces; and parking lot resurfacing.

Going “green” now will pay off later, and for nonprofits such as Volunteers of America, this can make all the difference in continuing to provide services for those in need for years to come. “These



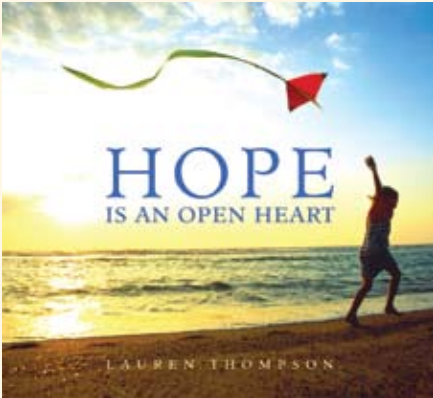
efforts will substantially reduce our carbon footprint,” said Patti Louie, chief financial officer. “With this investment, utility expenses drop immediately and will offset rising expenses in other areas, allowing long-term viability of this vital downtown resource.”

The project is supported by a pledge from the Los Angeles Rotary Club in honor of its 100th year anniversary. Members of the Rotary pledged to raise \$500,000 over the next three years to support the facility’s renovation.

“Volunteers of America of Greater Los Angeles and the Rotary Club of Los Angeles have partnered on various projects for more than 70 years,” said David Bland, LA5 Rotary president. “Given today’s economic conditions, I can’t think of a more appropriate project. Extending a hand to homeless people, many who are Veterans, is the crowning jewel to help us celebrate our centennial.”

In recognition of this unprecedented support from the Rotary Club, the facility will be renamed “Rotary House.” However, the Rotary participation goes much further than a generous gift. It is a permanent partnership between the Rotary Club and Volunteers of America to respond to the growing population of homeless veterans in downtown Los Angeles, exemplifying what Rotary members do best: assist veterans in a myriad of ways to become job-ready and utilize their (the Rotary’s) widespread manufacturing and service industry contacts to help them find employment.

PARTNERS PAGE



Hope is an Open Heart

Volunteers of America worked with Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company, to create "Hope is an Open Heart," an uplifting new book that teaches children that hope can be found in some of the most unexpected places.

Scholastic will donate one dollar from the sale of each hardcover edition of "Hope is an Open Heart" in the United States—up to \$30,000—to Volunteers of America, which provides services to children in need in communities nationwide.

Released in fall 2008 by Scholastic Press, the book by author Lauren Thompson combines its inspirational message with breathtaking photographs taken throughout the United States and

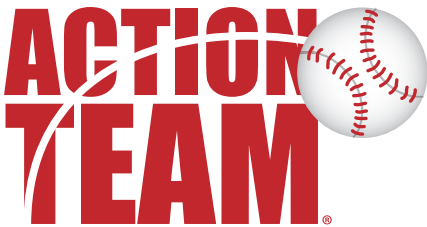
around the world. Speaking to people of all ages and cultures, Thompson's words combined with beautiful images celebrate loving families, caring friends, small kindnesses and great inner strength.

Beginning in 2006, Volunteers of America worked with Scholastic to identify children and families in the Gulf Coast whose lives had been affected by Hurricane Katrina, including several served by Volunteers of America's local office in Mobile, Ala. Several of those families are featured in the book.

"Hope is remembering that you are not alone," Thompson writes. "Many others feel just the way you do. Many others care."

 SCHOLASTIC

Maui, Hawaii: Pilot Online Action Team



The Action Team youth volunteer program, a partnership between Volunteers of America and the Major League Baseball Players Trust, recently established a new online pilot version of its volunteer program at four high schools across the country. This online initiative allows any high school in the country to participate in the Action Team program, regardless if it is in a city with a Volunteers of America office or a Major League baseball team.

Student volunteers at one of four new Action Team schools, St. Anthony Junior Senior High School in Maui, Hawaii, wasted no time making a difference in their local community. In December, the students hosted a "Senior Ball"—similar to a high school prom, but with a holiday theme—for residents at the Hale Makua Senior Center in the town of Wailulu.

Students arrived early to help the ladies do their hair and make-up, and get dressed. Wailulu Mayor Charmaine

Tavares greeted the guests, presenting the ladies with long stem roses. The school band and a local music ministry group performed Christmas carols. Student volunteers planned and executed the entire event.

Community service activities like Maui's Senior Ball are organized nationwide by Action Teams of young people. Established in 2003, the program aims to encourage high school students to get involved in their communities. From reading to elementary school children to reaching out to the elderly, more than 17,000 Action Team members have helped 70,000 individuals across the nation.

In addition to Maui, the three other schools participating in the online pilot program are Santa Fe, New Mexico; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Farmington, Maine. To find out more about the Action Team program, visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.org/actionteam.



Maui Action Team member Jenna Pico, a junior at Saint Anthony Junior Senior High School, presents a long-stem rose to a happy senior.

DIGNITY, AGING AND THE



BY GEORGE SIMONSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GLENN MICHAELS

POWER OF A VILLAGE

It has been said, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Volunteers of America Northern New England has expanded this old adage to include seniors, and is taking innovative steps to help older adults in Maine and New Hampshire. By mobilizing its own resources and those of the surrounding communities, Volunteers of America acknowledges it takes an entire “village” to do things that are good, whole and enduring.

“More and more seniors are finding it impossible to make ends meet,” said Volunteers of America Northern New England President and CEO June Koegel. “Most seniors living on fixed incomes are forced to make tough choices between food, medicine, heat, home repairs and other essentials.”

Seniors across the nation may find themselves in the same situation, but Volunteers of America Northern New England tackles the problem from all sides—through housing, community engagement, education and even law enforcement.

A place to call home

Headquartered in a handsome old mill building on a river in the coastal city of Brunswick, Maine, Volunteers of America Northern New England has taken the spotlight in recent years as an energetic leader in providing safe, affordable housing for the region’s seniors. This is important because Maine the state has one of the oldest populations living in some of the oldest housing in the country.

In 2008, Volunteers of America opened the 32-unit Richard Brown House in London, New Hampshire; the 32-unit Western House in Topsham, Maine,

just north of Brunswick; and began the planning and approval process as it broke ground for a 62-unit home in Bangor, located farther north. These are all impressive undertakings for the organization while it continues to operate its existing communities (with 216 units) in six additional municipalities across Maine.

“Why do we do this?” asked Koegel. “The answer is simple. These people are our mothers and fathers. They’re our grandmothers and grandfathers. And they deserve nothing less!” Yet, Volunteers of America Northern New England went further still.

Magic across the generations

Jennifer Goldman, director of community engagement, runs the Action Team

program, a partnership between Volunteers of America and the Major League Baseball Players Trust. The program was created to inspire and train high school students to volunteer more actively in their communities. Goldman, an enthusiastic six-year veteran with Volunteers of America, said, “We’ve had students from high schools all around the state go to senior housing communities to throw Christmas parties, demonstrate hula dancing, escort residents to school plays and more—breaking down stereotypes about the young and old.” Goldman runs 17 Action Teams across Maine with a remarkable 600 participating students, parents and teachers, making it the largest and most active program of its kind in the Volunteers of America network.

To help mobilize college students, Goldman also runs a program with the





Elder Justice Training Partnership

Two years ago, Kate Marro was stunned to discover her 89-year-old grandfather, who was living with dementia in a care facility in Maine, had fell victim to elder abuse by a staff member. “My grandfather was pretty vague in most of his storytelling,” said Marro. “But not on this topic.”

Marro’s grandfather claimed to have been abused repeatedly by “a burly man.” The family saw that the grandfather’s fears were real, but believed his claims were most probably a side effect of his disability. Then, a female worker actually witnessed the abuse taking place and came forward to report it—a brave act that Marro deeply appreciated and never forgot.

This incident led Marro to the Elder Justice Training Partnership (EJTP), an innovative effort spearheaded by Volunteers of America Northern New England to marshal the resources of law enforcement—and the community—to aid in the effort to eliminate elder abuse. By telling her grandfather’s story, Marro has shed significant light on the need to improve system responses to elder abuse cases.

Thankfully, Marro’s grandfather lived out the rest of his life in peace. Today, his granddaughter tells his story, without bitterness, in public talks to help others and in support of more effective elder-support organizations and laws. Even though the offender in her grandfather’s story eventually pleaded guilty to abuse, he was not required to register with the Maine Sex Offender Registry due to the nomenclature for registration. Marro is still working hard to have that verbiage changed.

Marro offers five tips to those with loved ones in elder care facilities:

- Listen to your loved one and understand how your loved one’s condition affects him or her.
- Know your loved one’s caregivers and their qualifications; include yourself in the plan of care, visiting often and at different times of day.
- Know your loved one’s caregiving facility—its policies and procedures (including hiring and mandated reporting practices).
- Make sure your loved one’s caregiving facility follows through on your requests.
- Know your area’s elder-support organizations and the laws on paid caregivers’ and facilities’ obligations to protect the safety of residents.

University of Southern Maine (USM) in nearby Portland, the state’s largest city. Recently, students from USM’s Social Work School created “Walk-About,” a guided indoor exercise footpath for seniors at Portland’s Bayview Heights, a 60-unit affordable housing community.

“The students get the benefit of walking with the seniors, sharing stories,” Goldman said. “And the seniors get the benefit of social interaction, light exercise, lowering their blood pressure and weight loss.” The students originally joined the program to meet their 20-hour, service-learning requirement. But now, they say, they look forward to time spent at Bayview. And so far, the residents have already walked more than 150 miles!

Helping end abuse

According to the office of Maine’s Attorney General, there are an estimated 14,000 cases a year of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, yet 84 percent of the cases go unreported.

Patricia Kimball, director of community development, and Sharon Herrick, project coordinator for the Elder Justice Training Partnership (EJTP) and Elder Victim Assistance Program (EVAP), spearhead Volunteers of America’s innovative efforts to marshal the resources of law enforcement—and the community at large—to aid these elders and work to eliminate abuse.

EVAP (profiled in *Spirit* magazine in spring 2007) brings together a team of law-enforcement, legal, medical, financial, social-service and faith-based professionals to identify and advocate for victims of elder abuse. EJTP trains law-enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff and 9-1-1 dispatchers about elder abuse. It is currently one of 26 such programs in the U.S. to be funded by the Justice Department and one of a handful of grantees implementing training and systems work statewide.

“Our work is having a meaningful impact in the way services are delivered to better protect elder victims,” said Herrick. “Thanks to our statewide collaborations we

are building capacity within our partnering organizations to better serve elder victims and hold offenders accountable.”

OUIs with IOUs

Meanwhile, at a tiny branch office in Bath, Maine, a shipbuilding city just east of Brunswick, Director of Justice Programs Mary O’Leary and Assistant Director Dan Kane are busy synergizing their resources to aid the elderly in an entirely different way. The team’s Alternative Sentencing Program offers an alternative to jail for people convicted of operating vehicles while under the influence of drugs or alcohol (OUI), and other misdemeanor offenses.

“We send program participants out for community service to help reduce their sentence,” said O’Leary, a vigorous 12-year veteran of Volunteers of America, with more than 20 years of experience in corrections and mental health. “And they help seniors by visiting senior housing (under supervision) to wash windows, maintain the grounds, paint, make repairs and more. We even had a piano player once who was fantastic; he played for the seniors and they loved it!”

“We’re the only private organization that does this,” Kane said. “It is difficult to measure declines in recidivism (habitual or repeated criminal activity) directly, but Kane is confident its results are positive. “This means we’re actually helping seniors while saving countless hundreds of thousands of dollars in community services for towns throughout the mid-coast region,” said Kane. “And because we accept participants from all over Maine, we’ve saved the state the cost of thousands of ‘bed-days’ in county jails at an average cost of \$100 per day.” The program has served more than 1,700 people since 1999.

2009 and beyond

Volunteers of America Northern New England has effectively grappled with the many issues its communities face, but what are some of the challenges ahead?

“Funding,” Goldman said. “I’m covering 17 schools in a big state. I’d love to have 117 schools, but I can only be in one place at a time.”

“Funding,” agreed Kane with a smile. “There is so much more we could do if we had access to a couple of 15-passenger vans to move our community-service teams around!”

Still, the energy at Volunteers of America Northern New England is high and infectious. “It goes all the way back to our founders,” Koegel said. “We are always finding innovative ways to help people that sometimes no one else wants to help. We

can’t do it alone. But we can build strong partnerships with government, granting organizations, business, and our amazing donors and volunteers—to create proven programs that make an important difference for seniors, children at risk, and so many others. In short, we can mobilize the community!”

Because after all, it takes a village to do the job right.

Ginny Nichols:



She lights up the room with her smile.

After years of challenging times, 78-year-old Ginny Nichols has reason to smile. Thanks to Volunteers of America’s new affordable senior housing community in Loudon, New Hampshire, she has been able to put many issues behind her.

“After my husband Dale passed away it was getting very hard to live alone in our home of 36 years. I was not able to afford it by myself,” said Nichols. “I feel so lucky to be living here at the Richard Brown House. I chose Loudon because it is in the country, yet close to Concord and my children. I am a ‘country girl’ at heart and was born in Loudon. This is a beautiful facility and it feels like home. I love the big community room and kitchen. I enjoy meeting all of my other neighbors and making new friends,” Nichols added.

Today, Volunteers of America continues to lead the way in northern New England in confronting the crisis in availability of safe, affordable housing for seniors. The Richard Brown House in Loudon, New Hampshire, is New England’s newest affordable senior housing community. Like so many Americans across the nation, northern New Englanders are living longer than

ever. In New Hampshire and Maine, more than 350,000 people are now 65 or older. Maine has the highest proportion of seniors than any other state, and they are more likely than other adults to have a low income—with many living on a small fixed income.

“This is a critical program for our seniors,” adds Volunteers of America’s Vice President of New Business Development Julia Wilcock. “They are very proud and are the last to complain about the serious issues they face today. Unfortunately, this often becomes a crisis leading to being forced to decide between food, heat, medicine and other critical necessities. Our apartments provide heat and electricity, and medical costs are subtracted from the rent. It provides peace of mind. After all, these are our parents and our grandparents. We believe they deserve nothing less than to live in comfort and with dignity.”

“HUD’s senior housing program serves a vital need by making sure low-income seniors have a safe, decent and affordable place to live,” said Philip Holmes, director of HUD’s Manchester Multifamily Housing Program Center, which oversees operations in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. “There is a tremendous need for affordable housing units, and Volunteers of America has been an excellent partner in creating opportunities for seniors. The housing units produced by Volunteers of America create a higher quality of life and improved sense of community for residents.”

Elsewhere in Maine, Volunteers of America also provides affordable senior housing in Augusta (45 units), Belfast (33 units), Peaks Island (12 units), Portland (60 units), Saco (36 units) and Thomaston (32 units).

A Circle of Caring

Imagine an older adult service model that has the needs, wishes and choices of seniors at the center of its planning. While there are other agencies in the Twin Cities metropolitan area that serve older adults and their families, Volunteers of America of Minnesota offers a unique perspective.

“We know that we are making a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve,” said Alice Tennis, vice president of senior services, “and the Circle of Caring model reminds us who’s in charge! From our perspective, senior adults are not a drain on society—merely viewed as the recipients of our charity and compassion. Rather, older adults provide an invaluable resource for our communities; their skills and talents are an asset from which we all can benefit.”

Although Volunteers of America of Minnesota has been providing services to older adults for more than 30 years and is considered a leader in aging programs, it does not rest on legacy alone. Increasing demands for senior services coupled with issues of those with limited resources has created a new intensity in programming. The staff utilizes a combination of client feedback, needs analysis, best practices and other evaluative methods to continue to refine programs. While core values such as dignity, respect and integrity remain timeless, the array of older adult services offered must constantly evolve. “This is such a dynamic, challenging time—if we don’t refine and grow, we will soon be extinct,” said Tennis. And nowhere is the challenge to refine and grow more evident than at a senior center.

Moving Beyond Bingo

Despite the chill outside, visitors to the Volunteers of America Southwest Senior Center experience the warmth of friendship immediately upon their arrival. Staff and participants alike are generating an energy that is filled with excitement and enthusiasm.

On any given day, Southwest Senior Center participants can avail themselves of congregate dining, a blood pressure clinic, computer classes, music and arts programs, brain exercise, volunteer opportunities and fitness classes. “Our center needs to have the ability to react quickly to the changing environment. We make a practice of listening to the seniors and the community at large to be responsive to their needs,” says Mary Ann Schoenberger, the center’s director.

“We make a practice of listening to the seniors to be responsive to their needs.”

Mary Ann Schoenberger
Director, Southwest Senior Center



“The challenge lies in being able to address the needs and wants of various age groups. Newly retired seniors may not be looking for the same programs that 80- or 90-year-olds want. Some new retirees are even reluctant to go to a place called a ‘senior center.’”

Southwest Senior Center is a place where older adults feel appreciated and welcome. “We’ve been called ‘Cheers’ without the alcohol,” Schoenberger laughs. “Here, everyone knows your name!” The center’s staff members are fully committed to providing programs, resources and support that help participants maximize their abilities and independence.

Here’s to Your Health

With today’s advances in health care and special emphasis on preventive care, older adults are facing a future of better health and longevity. This trend, however, does not deny that many older adults are living with the consequences of chronic conditions such as hypertension, heart disease and cognitive decline. To that end, the Circle of Caring includes supportive health services such as assisted living programs and nutritional services.

In addition to owning and managing senior housing, Volunteers of America of Minnesota offers assisted living programs in four apartment buildings. Services such as nursing care, medication set-up and reminders, homemaking, laundry, meals, personal care and case management help

support the independence of those who may otherwise need to move to a more restrictive environment. Utilizing contracts with the county, the state and insurance providers, as well as private entities, allows this high-quality assisted living to be affordable and available to everyone, regardless of income.

“The goal of our program includes quality of life, independence, dignity and wellness of being,” said Brad Huard, Volunteers of America of Minnesota’s director of assisted living. “Our assisted living programs are customized and designed to be inclusive, celebrating the diversity and unique character of the community we serve. We are passionate about providing the highest quality

affordable assisted living programs and services to our senior adults and those with special needs.”

The Senior Nutrition program is another vital service for helping older adults stay as healthy as possible. On a daily basis, Volunteers of America’s Minnesota local office is responsible for providing 1,150 congregate meals and 1,000 home-delivered meals. In 2008, more than 33,800 culturally specific meals were served for the Somali, Hmong, Vietnamese and Latino communities. The challenges facing older adults and nutrition seem to center on two issues: financial resources and the physical changes that accompany aging.



Nancy Christianson, Volunteers of America of Minnesota director of senior nutrition, is all too aware of the financial limitations that some older adults face. “Many seniors are living on just their Social Security,” said Christianson. “It is very difficult for them to stretch their fixed-income to cover all of their needs, particularly if they have health problems and inadequate insurance coverage. I have talked to some of our diners who only take part of their prescriptions or don’t buy them at all because they can’t afford them. Food becomes a low priority for them in this situation.” Neglecting medical care and experiencing poor nutrition only compound the problem.

Chronic health conditions can make it quite challenging for an older adult to remain physically active and obtain proper nutrition. Often an older adult may select foods that do not require a lot of preparation time and effort. “As a site coordinator, I knew several seniors who reported that their evening meal would be crackers or cookies. This was particularly true of seniors that lived alone. When a spouse dies, the last reason to cook often disappears,” Christianson said. Congregate dining not only

provides a nutritious meal but also the opportunity for older adults to socialize and stay connected to their community.

Connected...In More Ways than One

GPS (global positioning system) units are starting to become as common as the American automobile. Unfortunately, there is not a similar device available to help seniors and their families navigate the myriad of care choices they face. Help is available, however, in the form of a “geriatric care manager.”

A geriatric care manager (GCM) is a professional who works collaboratively with a variety of community resources to ensure that services are available to best meet the needs and preferences of the older adult. The senior service social and outreach workers collaborate intensively with the older adult, the family and other community professionals. Together, they assess the older adult’s functioning and make recommendations for care and services. This approach is increasingly important in today’s families where “long distance” care-giving is the norm. Care-management services are delivered

where it is most convenient, whether that means the home of the older adult, online or a booth at a local restaurant.

“We will go wherever we are needed,” said Mary Bornong, a Volunteers of America licensed social worker and care manager. “Due to the shrinking availability of resources, it’s all the more important for families to have an experienced, knowledgeable professional to help people navigate, strategize and problem-solve issues surrounding their loved ones’ care.”

Fostering Independence

Kathy Mosavat, Volunteers of America of Minnesota director of senior community services, has worked in the field of aging for more than 25 years and has witnessed firsthand numerous changes along the way. “Ten to 15 years ago, it would not have been uncommon for our outreach social workers to give clients a telephone number for a community resource, and the older adult could find what he needed with relative ease,” said Mosavat. “Today, however, it is a very different story. Our health care and social service systems have become so complex that even some of the highly educated, most resourceful seniors are unable to navigate the system without assistance from our experienced and knowledgeable staff.”

Making a significant difference in the lives of older adults is what keeps Mosavat and others committed to the work. “We know that we are providing a continuum of service for some of the neediest people, but we also have the opportunity to recognize the assets of older adults,” Mosavat said. “We should be utilizing the skills and experience of our seniors to help solve some of the most critical community needs.”

Christianson put it another way when she said, “We get to work with ‘the Greatest Generation’ every day. These are folks who have lived through the Great Depression, World War II and other hardships. Their stories are fascinating, and I feel proud to be serving them.”



Mary's Advocate

Mary, a petite lady in her 80s, visits the Volunteers of America senior center regularly. Two to three times a week, she pulls her flowered hat over her cropped silver hair and makes the one-block trip (on foot) eager to meet with her friends and share in the center's daily activities. She likes the time she spends at the senior center, because she is surrounded by familiar faces. It was a day when Mary stayed at home that trouble came knocking.

The young man seemed pleasant enough as Mary gazed up through the curtain. He was tidy and had a nice smile. She opened the door and the salesman began his pitch. Mary listened intently as he rattled off words like safety and security. Indeed, these were two high priorities for Mary. But when the man insisted on having Mary look over the papers that required her signature for a new security system to be installed, she paused.

"I don't think I should be making any decisions without first discussing this

with my sons," she said to the pushy man. Later, Mary would share, "But he just didn't seem to listen."

Like an unexpected March wind, the salesman ushered in a workman who got busy drilling holes and installing a security system Mary wasn't sure she wanted. She looked on in disbelief as the workman busily assembled a panel in her wall. Her frail hand shook as she signed on the dotted line, but her heart and head said that maybe this wasn't the right thing to do without having some input from a friend or family member. "What else can I do with these two strange men in my house, but sign?" she thought.

The men from the security company left, but Mary spent a sleepless night. She tossed and turned in bed. Mary knew she had been "sweet-talked and railroaded" into something she didn't really want to do. The next morning she would call Linda, a Volunteers of America social worker she had met at the senior center. Linda would know how to fix this problem.

It almost seemed that before the phone had been placed back in its cradle, Linda was tapping on Mary's door. As she entered the house, Linda could see Mary was very upset and asked what had happened. Linda realized that indeed Mary had been taken advantage of because Linda worked closely with other seniors in the community and was aware that there had been an ongoing scam involving security systems in the neighborhood. She quickly looked over the contract Mary had signed and saw there was a three-day period where the service could be canceled. Linda picked up the phone, first calling the police to report the incident and then the security company. The system was removed and Mary's wall was restored—along with her dignity.

"Linda's our fixer-upper," Mary said later. "She saved my life."

At Volunteers of America, we provide shelter from the storms of life. We are advocates for those most in need and seniors like Mary always know they can count on us.

The Circle of Caring is an oasis in the vast desert of indecision, often leaving older adults feeling lost and alone. It not only provides invaluable programs, but additional services like transportation, adult day care, elder law, volunteerism and mental health services, but more importantly, peace of mind. Older adults can feel safe and secure in the knowledge that Volunteers of America is there.


"We don't have to offer everything. One of Volunteers of America's greatest strengths is identifying unmet need," said Tennis. "We look around and listen to elders and to the community. We'll partner, collaborate, consult and refer – whatever it takes to provide the best services possible to our clients."

And the Circle of Caring, with unwavering commitment to serving seniors, remains unbroken.

Over 120 seniors, students and neighborhood residents helped to create the oval shaped mosaic which features scenes from the Southwest Minneapolis area. The mosaic's creative process is a great example of how art can bring people together.

Images featured in the mosaic include the Lake Harriet Bandshell, Lake Harriet, a school, the Southwest Center, the Rose Garden, and people of all shapes and sizes. Viewers will also spot surprises in the mosaic, such as a special pieces of jewelry or coins that were donated by participants.





**Who will
be there
to care
for you?**

We will.

We are Volunteers of America. Our philosophy is everyone who needs our help and support should receive that care with respect and dignity. Because we are community based, we can tailor our services to the seniors who live there.



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A CAPITOL SUGGESTION

Senate Bill 118: Help for Affordable Senior Housing Shortage

Recently, Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI), chairman of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, reintroduced legislation to expand and improve the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program. This program provides capital grants to nonprofit community organizations for the development of supportive housing and provision of rental assistance exclusively for low-income seniors, allowing seniors to remain safely in their homes. Access to supportive services reduces the occurrence of costly nursing home stays and saves money for both seniors and the federal government.

There are more than 300,000 seniors living in 6,000 Section 202 developments across the country, with 10 seniors vying for each housing unit that becomes available. It is expected approximately 730,000 additional senior housing units will be needed by 2020 to address the housing needs of low-income seniors. As it stands now, the program is not expected to meet the future demand. To compound the problem, many older Section 202 properties are being converted by developers of higher-priced condominiums and apartments. As a result, many seniors currently participating in the program may end up homeless.

Senate Bill 118, "The Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Act of 2009," would promote the construction of new senior housing facilities, as well as preserve and improve existing facilities. The bill would also support the conversion of existing facilities into assisted-living facilities that provide a wide variety of additional supportive health and social services. Under current law, these processes are time-consuming and bureaucratic, often requiring waivers and special permission from HUD. Finally, the legislation provides priority consideration for homeless seniors seeking a place to call their own.

This legislation has been endorsed by Volunteers of America and the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. Specifically, the bill will address the affordable senior housing shortage by:

- Streamlining mixed financing deals to reduce the development time for new Section 202 developments;
- Making it easier to refinance Section 202 developments in need of rehabilitation;
- Providing greater flexibility to owners to transform unmarketable efficiencies into rentable one-bedroom units;

- Expanding existing/potential streams of funding that can further a nursing home's mission of providing housing and supportive services;
- Establishing a new project-based rental assistance program for seniors at risk of losing their homes due to possible rent increases;
- Making it easier for owners to convert properties into assisted-living facilities that make health and supportive services available to residents; and
- Creating a national clearinghouse of senior housing facilities to ease the search for seniors and their families.

Go now to the Public Policy section of the Volunteers of America Web site <http://www.vo.org/PublicPolicy/ContactCongress/tabid/5141/Default.aspx> and contact Congress now in support of S.118.

Together, we can make a difference in the life of an older American.

“Congress needs to act now to address the demand for safe, affordable housing that allows seniors to remain independent. With this bill, we hope to increase the availability of supportive housing for our nation's most vulnerable seniors.”

Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI), Chairman
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging





Keeping PACE on the Western Slope

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY: MARLA BEAR BISHOP

Rural western Colorado. Wide open spaces with room to breathe. There may be miles between one neighbor and another, or, at the very least, several acres between one door and the next. This scene is a romantic vision of the West for many of us; but for the older rural population, living in isolated locations can be a serious disadvantage when help is required.

Serving seniors in rural communities is challenging. By in large, the elderly prefer to remain in their own homes as they become more frail. With few services and care facilities located nearby, leaving home means leaving community and, often, family. Cost of care is another consideration for wanting to remain in their homes.

To meet this challenge, Volunteers of America has brought PACE (Programs of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) to the Western Slope of Colorado. Not to be confused with or considered as “day care,” PACE is a unique program that is tailor-made for a rural environment.

Conceived in the city of San Francisco in the early 1970s, the PACE team believes that it is better for the well-being of seniors with chronic care needs and their families to be served in the community whenever possible. Seniors and their families agree.

PACE is available to individuals who are age fifty-five or older, certified by the state as needing nursing-home care, are able to live safely in a community setting at the time of enrollment, and, of course, live in an area served by the program.

PACE participants are provided an array of coordinated services to prevent the need for nursing home admission. PACE provides social and medical services, primarily in an adult day health center setting referred to as the “PACE center,” and supplements this care with in-home and referral services depending on the participants’ needs. In Colorado, there are two central care sites where a client can choose to spend the day—a day that may include nursing, physical,

occupational and recreational therapies; a great meal; nutritional counseling; social work and personal care. Day center attendance is based on individual needs and can range from once a week, or every month, to several days a week.

All medical needs are handled by physicians and nurses familiar with the participant’s history and preference of treatment, as well as all required prescription drug management. This is done either in the client’s home, on-site, or both, if necessary.

Other home health care options are delivered to seniors unable to come to the PACE site, as well as to those who are working to make “home” a safer place. This includes instruction on how to place and use handrails in the bathroom and shower areas.

PACE provides specialists in audiology, dentistry, optometry, podiatry, speech therapy and many other disciplines. If a participant has to go to the hospital for a short stay, PACE will continue care in



PACE is a unique care program for seniors that is tailor-made for a rural environment.



that setting. PACE will consider almost any service that enriches the life of a client.

At the two PACE sites now up and humming in Western Colorado, there is an upbeat and lively energy from both the participants and the staff alike. Gregarious gentlemen read the morning newspapers and tease the staff. Modern furnishings and a well thought out color scheme add a comfortable air of a club rather than a “facility.” Everything is clean and orderly, but not institutional in mood or manner.

In a meeting room, there is an early morning gathering of physicians, nurses, dieticians, physical therapists, social workers, case managers, van drivers and home health care workers—

everyone who is involved with a client’s well-being. They address lifestyle management and health issues of clients with respect. Plenty of humor allows for a relaxed exchange between caregivers. All clients are seen as unique individuals. The staff is respectful of each other as well, displaying attitudes that are passed along to and noticed by clients.

Out in the commons area, a young aide takes on the task of mending the torn jacket of an elder. It means a lot to the senior that this young person took the time to mend his favorite jacket—a jacket that he could not be convinced to give up. As he proudly shows off his newly refurbished jacket, he says, “I wouldn’t want to be cast off because of my imperfections!” This client has just

had his blood pressure checked and a bandage changed on a sore toe.

In the dining room, the dietician directs her full attention to menu plans with a woman who has been a vegetarian for all of her seventy-six years. They discuss how to add some zest to old recipes and how to get the most nutrition in every meal for both her husband and herself.

Transportation is a key part of the PACE benefit. Transportation is not only provided between the home and the day health center, but also to appointments with specialists and other activities. Participants are enthusiastic for the van’s arrival, looking their best as families assist in the sometimes labor-intensive task of boarding wheel chairs. At one stop, there is a gift of several dozen “home hatched country fresh” eggs for staff members. Once in the van and safely secured, a client muses that the program means everything to her because she has always known her freedom and has been blessed with the room to breathe without someone bearing down on her. This individual appreciates the fact that she has “choices” in the program. Little things like if she wants more salad and less meat at lunch to bigger things such as if she wants to be there on any given day. With the help of PACE, she has a “good listening ear” in the staff and can remain safe in her home out where the coyotes make music at night. Night doesn’t scare her; it makes her know she’s alive. She needs to see that starry sky outside her own window when she climbs into her bed, the bed that her parents had once shared when they homesteaded on the land many years ago.

Arriving at the site, it doesn’t take long for everyone to get to an activity that makes him or her feel at ease. One participant heads off to get a shower, another a haircut and curl.

A few clients congregate to make bread in a bread machine, a marvelous

Quick Facts about PACE Programs of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly

PACE is a Medicare program for older adults that provides community-based care and services to people who would otherwise need nursing home level of care.

You can join PACE if :

- You are 55 years old or older.
- You live in the service area of a PACE organization.
- You are certified by the state in which you live as meeting the need for the nursing home level of care.
- You are able to live safely in the community when you join with the help of PACE services.

Note: You can leave a PACE program at any time.

PACE services include, but are not limited to:

- Primary/Hospital Care
- Medical Specialty Services
- Prescription Drugs
- Nursing Home Care
- Home and Adult Day Care
- Social Services
- Physical and Occupational Therapy
- Meals and Nutritional Counseling
- Dentistry
- Laboratory/X-ray Services
- Transportation
- Emergency Services

Benefits of PACE:

- You can be cared for at home or at a PACE center.
- Transportation to and from PACE is provided.
- An individual plan is designed just for you.
- PACE supports family caregivers.

PACE Funding:

- PACE uses Medicare and Medicaid funds to cover all of your medically-necessary care and services. You can have either Medicare or Medicaid or both to join PACE.

invention after toiling for years with the time-consuming necessity of bread making, especially out in a rural area. A now “modern” baker says that being arthritic has taken away the pleasure of home-baked bread, but with a big smile she announces that her granddaughter is going to buy her one of these new fangled machines that she had now mastered thanks to PACE.

Flower arranging captivates the imaginations of several clients who create friendships as well as lovely pots of dried flowers. Cooperation and a helping hand are important to sorting flowers and composing the pieces of art, as some hands are more nimble than others.

These are just a few glimpses into the PACE model. Volunteers of America hopes to expand its programs to include more PACE sites, and based on the Western Slope’s PACE program’s success, this is the future for “Aging with Options”.



Providing Key Care for Seniors in the Keystone State:

Transportation and Housing



Safety, independence, dignity and quality of life—these are the values that have shaped Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania's elderly services; and they are the heart of all the organization does for the seniors it serves. In the greater Wilkes-Barre area where the percentage of the elderly population is even greater than the state average, Volunteers of America is meeting some of the most critical needs which impact the elderly and their families – the need for reliable and affordable transportation and the need for safe, affordable housing.

Dial-A-Driver

For seniors like Doris Brague who at 88 no longer drives, getting to the doctor's office or even the supermarket can be a real problem. Volunteers of America's Dial-A-Driver program serves Doris and dozens of elderly individuals every week by providing transportation to doctors visits, therapeutic appointments, the grocery store and other quality of life destinations.

"I am fighting lymphoma for the second time," Doris said. "I had to give up driving last year and my daughter can't take me to all the radiation appointments or doctor visits as often as I need to go. I just don't know what I would do without Dial-A-Driver."

Dial-A-Driver started as an independent organization in 1973. The program fell on

hard financial times in the late 1990s, and in 1999, Dial-A-Driver's board of directors approached Volunteers of America to assume its operations. At that time, Dial-A-Driver had three old vans—in need of repair—providing 6,000 rides per year.

Today, with Volunteers of America leadership, the Dial-A-Driver program operates six well-maintained shuttle buses and expects to provide more than 16,000 rides this year alone.

"Because of Dial-A-Driver, I can be independent," Doris stated. "I am so grateful for that."

The Palmer House

Bringing new life to older programs to make a difference in the lives of the elderly is nothing new to Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania. In 2001, it opened The Palmer House, a HUD 202 housing facility for the elderly.

The Palmer House was formerly the Henry W. Palmer Elementary School, which opened in 1917 and was named in honor of a socially conscience statesman who had served the Wilkes-Barre community in a number of ways, including three terms in Congress. For more than 60 years, the Palmer School served the students and community of Wilkes-Barre. The building closed in 1979 and, once vacant, became victim to deterioration and blight.

Volunteers of America purchased the building in 1998, realizing that this quiet neighborhood setting and distinctive architecture lent itself to another distinguished and noble purpose: safe, affordable housing for the elderly.



Today, the 28 one-bedroom apartments are stunning. Twelve-foot ceilings, 10-foot windows and spacious interiors are designed to meet the comfort, safety and changing needs of the older residents.

While The Palmer House has been recognized by many organizations, including the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, for its design, adaptive reuse and remediation of neighborhood blight, the thing that is most rewarding to Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania is that its services for the elderly are making a difference and allowing options to seniors as they age.

To find out more about Volunteers of America programs and services for the elderly, visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.org.

June Green

At 67, June Green has faced a number of challenges in her life: an abusive marriage, racial prejudice, raising five step children (as well as three of her own) and battling cancer, to name a few. At one point, her doctors gave her three months to live. That was in 2006. Through it all, she has seen the hand of God at work in her life and couldn't be more joyful and thankful.

One of the many "everyday miracles" that June believes happened in her life occurred in December 2005. Not only was she not feeling well at the time, she "felt like a burden" to her family. June could no longer keep up with her own house and needed to move in with her son and daughter-in-law. She prayed for an affordable apartment of her own where she could feel safe and be independent.

Just as she was having a conversation with God, as she often does, she was heading out to her car when the phone rang. Her daughter-in-law called to her saying, "It's the man from The Palmer House and he wants to talk to you." The call was from Tom Stires, Volunteers of America of Pennsylvania's chief financial officer who also manages The Palmer House. Later that day, June's prayer for safe, affordable housing was answered and she was packing her things including dozens of cherished pictures of her children and 14 grandchildren. Ironically, she was going to live in a building where 45 years earlier she had been a Girl Scout cadet troop leader.

Within a short period of time, June was diagnosed with stage-4 cancer and expected to live only a few months. Yet, her conversations with God continued. "God put me here at The Palmer House for a reason," she said with

a glowing smile. "I absolutely love it here! It is very quiet, clean, warm and the people here are wonderful. Best of all, I feel safe."

Because she no longer had the anxiety of maintaining a larger house, feeling like a burden to her family, or not feeling safe and secure as in other housing, June was able to focus on her health concerns and her recovery. She has already exceeded her doctor's expectations by more than two years!

"Everyday I wake up in this beautiful apartment and I have hope!" June said. "I am so happy here. Everyday, no matter what happens, is a blessing and I have so much to look forward to."



Filling the Gap

Alma White and Deborah Martin have a unique mother-daughter relationship. White, 83, and Martin, 48, have joined together in raising Martin's grandchildren. Although their partnership is unique, their situation is not.

According to a 2006 American Community Survey, 6.1 million grandparents have grandchildren under the age of 18 in their care. "I've had the two little ones, 4-year-old Keshawn and 8-year-old Aleja, since birth," Martin said. "My mother had been caring for Sirtyrus, who is 12 years old, and Sirdarrean, 14 years old, until last year when things got to be too much [for her]." Although Sirtyrus has joined his grandmother's household, and the eldest child Sirdarrean now lives in Baltimore, Maryland, with his aunt, White still helps care for her great-grandchildren.

Many caregivers are experiencing financial, physical, legal and educational difficulties in raising their grandchildren. "I was struggling to care for my older great grandsons," White said. "As my health started to catch up with me, I had to let my daughters take the kids."

While Martin works nights for a sitting and health care services ministry for the mentally ill and elderly, her mother stays with the children. "I still cook for them and do laundry to help my daughter," White said.

The unfortunate reality is that these grandparents have become overlooked and neglected, in most cases, when they are actually doing the community a service by raising this generation of children. Supporting grandparent care-givers actually costs only one-third the money for supporting a child in foster care.

Susan Freundlich, program manager for the Grandparents as Parents (G.A.P.) program at Volunteers of America Central Louisiana, has counseled with almost 200 grandparents raising grandchildren since the program's inception in April 2007. "The majority of these cases come about because parents are involved in some form of substance or alcohol abuse," said Freundlich. "The parents move around a lot, can't hold down a job and end up neglecting their kids who then appear on the front doorsteps of grandparents."

"Before I found Volunteers of America," Martin said, "I felt isolated and embarrassed, like I was the only one who had

a child that had gone astray, and that it was my fault. The staff at Volunteers of America actually listened to me and made me feel that I wasn't alone." G.A.P. staff not only helped Martin find local resources, but gave her peace of mind.

"Through pro-bono assistance from a local attorney, Deborah has been able to gain custody of her grandchildren," Freundlich said. "Being able to have custody of these children eases her mind about their future and allows the family to get financial assistance through the state. Now, the threat of her grandchildren ever being removed from her care is gone, giving the kids a greater sense of security as well."



Somewhere between her night job and all the responsibilities of caring for three children, Martin still finds time to volunteer right alongside her mother. After becoming clients in Volunteers of America's G.A.P. program, Martin and White also became avid volunteers for the organization. Whether it's putting together bookmark gift packets for the agency's annual fundraising event or helping provide transportation for the monthly support group meetings, this mother-daughter duo is always willing to lend a hand.

Freundlich has several clients that enjoy volunteering their time for the agency and the G.A.P. program. "They find a purpose and are driven to help others like them," she said. "Because they are volunteering for us, clients have taken ownership of the G.A.P. program and have a greater sense of belonging."

Martin and White are also regular volunteers at the local thrift store, Community Closet, which is run as a partnership between the G.A.P. program and a local church. "Volunteers

of America has been so helpful to me," Martin said. "And this is my way of trying to give back." But it's Martin's mother that gets them out and going to volunteer activities. "Being involved with Volunteers of America gives my mom a direction and purpose," Martin said. "And I love to see her life so enriched by the grandparents program and helping others."

"The socialization of volunteering for our agency has helped these grandparents develop new relationships and a network of friends that are in a similar situation," Freundlich said. "Not everyone at the monthly G.A.P. support group meetings is financially in need. We have clients who keep an eye out for items that other grandparents and their families might need, like furniture, appliances and other items. Then we have some who hear about a need in a meeting and pull out their checkbook to provide for what that family's needs may be."

Volunteering time and resources has enabled grandparents in the G.A.P. pro-



gram to find their voice and realize that there is power in numbers. But some, like 83-year-old Alma White, volunteer simply for the benefit of helping others. "I don't have the money to give, but I can volunteer my time. I like to help others and being involved with this organization makes me feel young."



According to a 2006 American Community Survey, 6.1 million grandparents have grandchildren under the age of 18 in their care.

Foster Grandparent Program



When a person decides to become a volunteer, he or she might not imagine that their assignment is going to change someone's life story.



When a person decides to become a volunteer, he or she might not imagine that their assignment is going to change someone's life story. But for Grandma Daisy, a Foster Grandparent with Volunteers of America Colorado who tutors middle school students twice a week, this is exactly what happened.

Grandma Daisy had been working with her student, Jason, for several months when she noticed he arrived to school more disheveled and distracted than usual. While working on a math problem, Daisy noticed burn marks on his arm. When she asked the young man about the burns, he told her that his father had burned him several times with a lit cigarette. Since becoming a Foster Grandparent, Daisy now recognized the signs of child abuse. She explained to Jason that as his Foster Grandma, she must let the school social worker know what had happened and suggested Jason join her in the counselor's office. "Will you come with me to talk to the social worker, to make sure I get this story right?" Daisy asked Jason. Because of the unique and strong bond they shared, Jason summoned the courage and together, Jason and Grandma Daisy reported the physical abuse.

Grandma Daisy knew before approaching the counselor with what she suspected and Jason had confirmed could result in a difficult situation. Any report of suspected child abuse leads to an extensive investigation. While Foster Grandparents and counselors

must report what they have witnessed, they are not privy to the confidential information and the results from that point forward. The abused children are often removed from their homes and schools to be placed in someone else's custody. Grandma Daisy understood the repercussions of what this report would do, but Jason's well-being was all that mattered to her. She was prepared to lose touch with the young man she so cared about.

Joyfully, Jason didn't let that happen. He reconnected with Grandma Daisy as soon as he was able and continued his tutoring with his special Foster Grandparent. Jason now lives with his loving aunt and no longer is a victim in his own home. He arrives at school each day dressed, well fed, rested and ready to learn. This brings a smile to the face of both Grandma Daisy and Jason.

Seeing troubled children as a Foster Grandparent is a difficult aspect of this volunteer position. But Grandma Daisy's dedication is stronger than ever before through this experience and witnessing the positive difference she can make in the lives of her students.

Volunteers of America is about changing the life stories for struggling and disadvantaged people across the nation. In small ways and great, a volunteer really can "change the story" for each person they meet through their work. To find out how you can make a difference in someone's life, visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.org.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR FREE TIME?

Spend it with us!

Volunteers of America has bridged the generation gap for more than a century through a variety of programs like Foster Grandparents and RSVP. We understand the value of older Americans and the amazing change they can make in someone's life.

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For more than 113 years, Volunteers of America has been working in communities providing services for children, youth and families, those with disabilities, the frail elderly, homeless individuals and veterans.

We are a major provider of professional long term nursing care for seniors and one of the largest nonprofit providers of quality affordable housing. With your help, we will continue to help those who need it most.

Visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.org to see what we are doing in your community.

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american SPIRIT



Super Heros for Older Adults

They spend their time protecting the powerless and defending the vulnerable...does it sound like a couple of super heroes? Yes, indeed! Mary McGurran and Anita Raymond are superheroes for older adults and their families. Since 1999, senior managers Mary McGurran, LSW, and Anita Raymond, LISW, have worked at Volunteers of America of Minnesota, but they both started their careers in protective services and geriatric care management nearly a decade earlier, bringing a clear and compassionate approach to working with vulnerable seniors.

Everyday these two women work tirelessly to improve the quality of life for older adults. On any given day, one may be serving as resource for an incapacitated adult who is having difficulty with personal decision-making and may need a conservator or guardian, while the other may be assessing an older adult's needs so that his or her family can make appropriate decisions about his or her care. Their work has shaped the Volunteers of America of Minnesota's Protective Services and Care Management & Consultation into a stellar program.

A willingness to go the extra mile combined with a demonstrated passion for senior issues has enabled McGurran and Raymond to have broad impact.

Collectively, they have touched the lives of more than 900 older adults through the information, advice, referrals, consultation, assessments and case management they provided last year alone. And as a sound resource for expertise and advice, they enable other members of their Volunteers of America team to become more effective.

"Issues of client capacity or incapacity can be very difficult to sort out, especially if there are issues of self-neglect. It can be difficult to balance a client's right to self-determination with protecting them, because they are vulnerable," said Linda Walker, a social worker for Volunteers of America of Minnesota's Southwest Center. "They have helped me to sort out the best way to proceed."

Dorothea Harris, an outreach social worker for Volunteers of America of Minnesota's Park ElderCenter, works closely with McGurran and Raymond. "Just knowing they are available to counsel me and knowing they have my back allows me to step out in the deep areas where I'm still a bit inexperienced," said Harris. A particularly difficult case involved an ill-tempered family member who attempted to step in and make hasty decisions on behalf of a senior client. "Mary's performance was spectacular. She started off the meeting with a modest and soft approach, but became very strong and resolute when necessary." McGurran's unique ability to champion her client and be firm when necessary has made positive impact in the lives of so many.

In another case, Harris described how she contacted Raymond for advice on a senior client whose doctor demanded she obtain legal guardianship paperwork for her husband of over 30 years who had dementia. "Anita told me the paperwork was not necessary and that I needed to advocate on my client's behalf," Harris said. "I walked into the care conference and informed everyone that the paperwork was not necessary. When asked

where I got my information, I informed them I received it from Anita Raymond of Volunteers of America's Protective Services. That settled it. You could have heard a pin drop."

The reputation of this dynamic duo, McGurran and Raymond, is well-known within the senior services community and their contributions have not gone unnoticed. They were the recipients of the annual Shelley Joseph-Kordell Award in 2008, which honors "unsung heroes" who embody three broad criteria: a willingness to go the extra mile in working with older adults; a demonstrated passion for senior issues; and a clear impact in the senior community.

In addition, they were selected as recipients of the State of Minnesota's Age Odyssey Service award for service, leadership and advocacy as protective services social workers in 2004.

"As their supervisor, I have a chance to review the customer feedback for their programs," said Volunteers of America of Minnesota Vice President Alice Tennis. "The comments are usually 'Mary was a lifesaver for our family' or 'Anita helped save my sanity.' They are truly remarkable individuals. During the many years that I've worked with Mary and Anita, I continue to be impressed with their enthusiasm and commitment to working with some of the most vulnerable seniors in our community."

"It's not skill and experience that makes them exceptional," said Harris. "It's their personality, character, their passion and enjoyment, and their satisfaction about the positive impact they have on the lives of seniors and their families."

There are thousands of unsung heroes in the Volunteers of America family. To find out more about the many programs and services we offer, visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.com. You too can be a superhero by supporting our efforts!



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Volunteers of America is a national, nonprofit, faith-based organization dedicated to helping those in need live healthy, safe and productive lives. Since 1896, our ministry of service has supported and empowered America's most vulnerable groups, including the frail elderly, people with disabilities, at-risk youth, men and women returning from prison, homeless individuals and families, those recovering from addictions and many others. Through hundreds of human service programs, including housing and healthcare, Volunteers of America helps more than 2 million people in over 400 communities. We offer a variety of services for older Americans, in particular, that allow them to maintain their independence and quality of life—everything from an occasional helping hand to full-time care. Our work touches the mind, body, heart and ultimately the spirit of those we serve, integrating our deep compassion with highly effective programs and services. For more information about Volunteers of America, visit www.VolunteersofAmerica.org

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