



SENIORS in SERVICE

GEARED UP TO SERVE

GEARED UP News

Seniors in Service presents
the News You Need to Know
About Community Service in Tampa Bay

Rolling With Purpose: Our New Outreach Van Hits the Streets!



Thanks to generous funding from the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB), this shiny new van and trailer are a rolling lifeline ready to bring help, hope, and connection to neighborhoods all across Pinellas County. We now have the ability to meet people right where they are, delivering literacy resources to kids and families, recruiting rockstar volunteers, and helping isolated seniors prepare for and recover from hurricanes. This van is more than transportation, it's about building trust, community, and resilience block by block. Our Mobile Outreach Unit has already made two exciting debuts in the community!

Our Mobile Outreach Unit Unveiled

We were honored to celebrate the official unveiling of our Mobile Outreach Unit with a ribbon cutting event alongside our amazing volunteers, partners, and supporters who make our mission possible. A huge thank-you to State Representative Linda Chaney for joining us and taking the time to speak directly with our Senior Companion and Classroom Grandparent Volunteers, your encouragement means the world.



It Takes a Village

As the new school year quickly approaches, our Mobile Outreach Unit rolled into the St. Pete Care Fair to help equip kids for success and recruit new volunteers.



We connected with incredible community leaders and our trusted partners from JWB to spread the word about the Classroom Grandparent Program. Classroom Grandparents offer more than academic help, they bring consistency, encouragement, and joy to students who thrive when someone simply believes in them. Whether it's reading together, sharing a reassuring smile, or mentoring a child who needs a champion, these volunteers make school a little brighter every day.

A huge thank-you to the Junior League of St. Petersburg for stocking our trailer with books that flew off the shelves and into the hands of eager young readers at the fair! Your generosity is fueling young minds across Pinellas County.



Juvenile Welfare Board

Want to make a difference this school year?
Become a Classroom Grandparent and help
shape the future. Scan the QR code or email
FGP@seniorsinservice.org to learn more.



JUNIOR LEAGUE
ST. PETERSBURG



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Charles Murray, a social scientist who spent his life studying happiness in America, found that the two most powerful ingredients for a joyful life are:

1. A happy long-term relationship
2. A satisfying job or sense of meaningful work

Right behind those? Social connection and spiritual grounding. And the good news is, you don't need all four. Just having two of these almost guarantees you to be very happy. And that's why volunteering matters so deeply.

When you step into a classroom to read with a child, when you pick up the phone to call a lonely senior, when you show up to lift the load someone else is carrying, you're not just helping them. You're bringing purpose and connection into your own life, too.

Volunteering gives us meaningful work, deep relationships, and a sense that we're part of something bigger than ourselves. It's not always easy. Bearing someone else's burdens rarely is. But it is transformative. For them, and for you.

We still need 175 Classroom Grandparents before the school year kicks off in full swing. If you're feeling moved, or you know someone who needs the ingredients for a joyful life, now's the time. Because when we serve others, we don't just change others' lives, we find the joy that changes ours, too.

-Robin Ingles, CEO

Teamwork and a Touch of Trash Talk

Who says work can't be all fun and games? Our Seniors in Service crew stepped away from our desks and headed to That Game Show Place, a one-of-a-kind game show studio. Think real TV-style game shows, a live host, and plenty of good-hearted competition!

This team-building event was all about connecting with each other, tapping into our strengths, and learning how to work better together. From lightning-fast trivia rounds to tricky survey questions, every game gave us a chance to cheer each other on, share some laughs, and see one another in a whole new light.



These kinds of bonding moments are fun, help build trust, improve communication, and remind us that we're not just coworkers... we're a team with heart.

Now we get to carry that good energy with us, ready to serve our community with renewed spirit and stronger connections than ever before.

We're Delivering Fresh Food with Real Impact

For more than five years, our Health Buddies program has paired trained volunteers with older adults living with chronic conditions, helping them stay socially connected, improve health outcomes, and reduce preventable hospital visits. Over time, we've seen a pattern we can't ignore: food insecurity and poor nutrition are directly linked to worsening chronic illness. Many participants rely on ultra-processed foods, which can make conditions like diabetes and heart disease harder to manage.

Diet-related chronic diseases are the most common health conditions in the U.S., and poor nutrition is also tied to depression, anxiety, and stress. It's clear: if we want to help seniors thrive, we need to address not just social connection, but also access to healthy food, embracing the idea of food as medicine.

Thanks to a generous Senior Citizen Services Wellness Grant from the Pinellas Community Foundation, 50 older adults in our Health Buddies program are now receiving six bi-weekly deliveries of fresh produce. Partnering with Access to Fresh, we're making sure seniors get real, wholesome ingredients like fruits, vegetables, and seasonal favorites that fuel better health and better days. Mary shared, "I'm working hard to eat healthier and change my food habits, and the fresh produce has helped a lot! My Health Buddy Alexendra has been sending recipes and supporting me along the way. I live with Crohn's disease and I'm awaiting a liver transplant, and having her in my corner means so much."

This effort is giving seniors the tools to manage their health, stay independent, and feel supported. We're proving that a bag of fresh produce can be a powerful prescription for a healthier, happier life.

Know a senior who could use a Health Buddy? We're looking for more folks to serve! Health Buddies provide companionship, encouragement, and now an extra touch of healthy goodness. Reach out to us at HealthBuddies@SeniorsInService.org or scan the QR code to learn more.



The Ripple Effect of One Phone Call

91 isolated seniors now have a new friend through TelePals, all thanks to a growing network of compassionate volunteers, including incredible team members from Suncoast Credit Union.

At the heart of TelePals is something so simple, yet so powerful: consistent connection. A weekly phone call that says, "You matter. You are not alone." One of our participants, Jane, joined the program looking for exactly that, someone to talk to, but instead found something much deeper.

After a few warm, meaningful conversations with her TelePal, Jane began to feel truly seen. Encouraged and uplifted, she started believing in herself again. And with that belief, she took action enrolling in courses, working toward her counseling license, and becoming a TelePal herself.



Jane now supports three participants who are walking the same path she once did. Her story is a beautiful example of the ripple effect that begins with one act of kindness.

This is the heart of TelePals, relationships that inspire confidence, healing, and hope. We are deeply grateful to Suncoast Credit Union for their continued support of TelePals. Your generosity powers every connection, every conversation, and every transformation.



One phone call can truly change a life. If you're ready to be a voice of comfort and care, join us as a TelePals volunteer today. Scan the QR code to get connected today!

A Golden Night for a Great Cause

At Bayboro Brewing Co. in St. Petersburg, a night of laughter, bingo, and Golden Girls flair turned into something more, real help for local veterans.

Thanks to ticket sales and donations, Golden Girls BINGO raised vital funds for Operation: Veteran Connect, which empowers veteran volunteers to serve fellow veterans across Tampa Bay. These volunteers provide life-changing support offering one-on-one companionship, help with transportation, and a listening ear for those who might otherwise feel forgotten.



Every laugh, every game, and every generous gift from the night now fuels that mission. To Bayboro Brewing Co. and every supporter who made it happen, thank you for standing with our veterans.



Want to join the movement? Operation Veteran Connect is always looking for more veterans who want to give back or find connection. Email OVC@SeniorsInService.org or scan the QR code to learn how you can get involved today.

Volunteers Are Steering Seniors Toward Independence



Meet Clara one of our first participants who is 90 years old with no family in the U.S., she relies on the kindness of neighbors and the support of our transportation services.

Many seniors face a daily barrier: they need medical care but have no way to get there. Without transportation, essential appointments are missed, health declines, and isolation deepens.

Thanks to a 3-year grant from the Community Foundation Tampa Bay, we've launched our Companion Transportation Services to change that. Isolated seniors are connected with caring volunteer drivers who make sure they get to and from important medical appointments safely and with a friendly face by their side. Volunteer drivers do far more than give rides, they provide support that helps seniors not just receive care, but understand it, follow it, and benefit from it. From taking notes during appointments to helping pick up prescriptions or arranging meal deliveries, these volunteers become trusted allies in each senior's health journey.

The impact is already clear. Since the start of May, volunteers provided 78 rides to medical appointments. One ride made all the difference for Ed, a local Veteran. After losing his wife last year, he has no family, lives alone in a small trailer, and can't even afford a cell phone. When he needed to get to Tampa General Hospital for a vital surgery, he didn't know how he would get there.

That's when Mel, a volunteer driver, stepped in. He drove Ed to the hospital on surgery day, and when the procedure was unexpectedly canceled, Mel brought him home and was ready again for the rescheduled date, making sure Ed got to surgery and safely home the next day. Without our services, Ed would have faced multiple costly Uber trips he simply couldn't afford.

If you have a car, a kind heart, and a little time, you can make sure a senior gets to the care they need and feels supported every mile of the way.

Want to learn more? Email RSVP@SeniorsInService.org or scan the QR code to sign up today! Thank you again to Community Foundation Tampa Bay for believing in this mission and helping us drive real change in the lives of seniors.



COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
TAMPA BAY

From Vietnam to Volunteer of the Year



Some people retire and slow down, but not Keith Smith. For this Navy veteran, retirement wasn't the end of the road. It was the start of something extraordinary. More than 50 years after his service in Vietnam, Keith found a new mission: helping fellow veterans build better lives through Operation: Veteran Connect.

And now, his incredible journey has earned national recognition. We're proud to share that Keith has been named one of just 11 national recipients of the 2025 Service Year Alums Awards, presented by Service Year Alliance. This honor celebrates AmeriCorps alumni who are using their service to make a meaningful impact, and Keith's story is a shining example of what that looks like.

After confronting the long-buried trauma of war, Keith found healing through purpose. He joined Seniors in Service as an AmeriCorps member in 2022, determined to be the helping hand so many veterans need. From navigating the VA's digital systems to collecting donated bikes so veterans could get to job interviews, Keith is always looking for a way to turn roadblocks into ramps.

When newly housed veterans moved into bare apartments, Keith stepped in, delivering gently used furniture, TVs, and other essentials to turn four walls into a home. And when hurricanes Helene and Milton left his community reeling, Keith put his trucking skills to work hauling away heavy appliances that threatened to overwhelm cleanup efforts.

Service doesn't stop at any age, it simply evolves. Keith's story is a reminder of that. Thank you to Service Year Alliance for recognizing Keith's incredible impact and to Keith for continuing to serve with courage, humility, and heart.



Want to make a difference like Keith? Join Operation: Veteran Connect and discover what's possible when veterans serve veterans. Email OVC@SeniorsInService.org or scan the QR code to get started.

Health Buddies Takes the Stage at the Florida Conference on Aging!

Shoutout to our very own Aria, Health Buddies Program Manager, who recently shared our mission with professionals from across the state at the Florida Conference on Aging!

Aria took to the stage to share how Health Buddies is a simple yet powerful program, pairing volunteers with adults for weekly check-ins, goal-setting, and encouragement to help boost emotional and physical well-being.

We're grateful to the Florida Council on Aging for the opportunity to shine a light on how something as small as a weekly chat can lead to big changes, like reduced loneliness, improved wellness habits, and a renewed sense of hope.

Beyond the conference, Aria also spoke on WEDU PBS *Florida This Week* with Lissette Campos and joined a panel discussing food insecurity in Florida, focusing on vulnerable groups like children and older adults. She even stopped by Radiostpete.com to chat with Wendy Wesley on the St. Pete Eats Podcast about helping seniors feel healthier and happier through friendship.

Do you know a senior who could use a friendly voice and a helping hand on their wellness journey? Now's the perfect time to join Health Buddies! Email HealthBuddies@SeniorsInService.org or scan the QR code to contact us today!



How One Volunteer Became a Lifeline

Sometimes, a volunteer becomes more than a helping hand, they become a lifeline. That's what happened when Tia joined Ms. Vera through our Senior Companion Program in Pinellas County.

For nearly two years, Tia has shown up with compassion, consistency, and heart as Ms. Vera's companion. But when Ms. Vera's health began to decline, it wasn't just her client who needed support, it was her entire caregiving family.

Tia didn't hesitate. She created a detailed tracking spreadsheet, listing everything from meals to medication to family schedules, to bring clarity and calm to a household juggling caregiving duties and medical crises.

That act of kindness meant the world. As Ms. Vera's daughter Earnestine said, "I feel so happy and at ease knowing my mom is in the best hands. Ms. Tia has been such a blessing to our family, and I'm truly grateful to have her with us."

Tia isn't alone in this mission. Thanks to the Pinellas Community Foundation's Senior Support Services grant, low-income seniors in Pinellas County are receiving this kind of life-changing support, free of charge, through Senior Companion volunteers. From telephone reassurance to homemaker help and respite for family caregivers, these services bring connection, stability, and comfort into homes.

If you're 55+ and have a heart for helping, we'd love to welcome you as a Senior Companion. Whether it's sharing stories over a cup of tea or giving a family some much-needed peace of mind, you can make a powerful difference.

Email SCP@SeniorsInService.org or scan the QR code to get started. Because every senior deserves a friend, and every friend has the power to change a life.



Pictured above: Members of the Pinellas Senior Companion Program

Classroom Grandparents Are Everywhere You Need Them

In the Classroom

Grandma Maudelene is always smiling, and quietly working her magic with students who need a little extra help. Whether guiding a struggling reader or helping an English learner with new vocabulary, she's become more than a volunteer, she's family.

"She's the best addition to our classroom this year," Ms. Ramirez said. "The kids love her. She jumps in and helps, often without me even asking. That kind of support is AMAZING!"

In the Community

Our Classroom Grandmas brought their superpowers to STEAM Day at the Lealman Exchange, where students lit up with excitement. These amazing volunteers helped spark curiosity and confidence in young learners. "The STEAM Day was a resounding success," shared Keara McGraw, Director of Development and Engagement. "We could not have done it without the support of your incredible volunteers."



Inspiring at Any Age

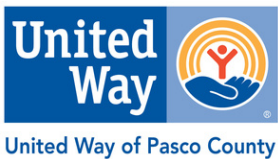
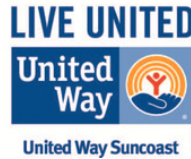
Mamie Manning has been a Classroom Grandparent for 9 years and she's not slowing down. At 82, she still works out daily, volunteers weekly, and inspires everyone she meets.

"Summer school is over, and I don't know what I'm going to do with myself!" she laughed. "This gives me life like you wouldn't believe." Her passion is proof that service knows no age limit.



Got time and heart to share? Join the Classroom Grandparent family! This summer, we're training 175 new volunteers for the 2025–2026 school year. Get the tools and support you need to build confidence, foster connection, and help kids succeed. Email FGP@SeniorsInService.org or scan the QR code to get started today!

Thank you to our funders!





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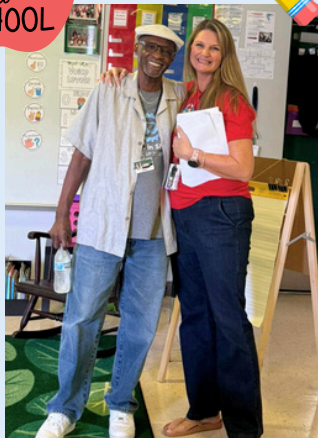
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The Bell is Ringing... Will You Answer?

Classroom Grandparents are gearing up to get back into the classrooms this fall! At Oak Grove Elementary's Open House, Ms. Volpe couldn't hide her smile or resist a hug when she reunited with Classroom Grandpa Givens. Proof that these volunteers are more than helpers; they're part of the school family.

In preparation for the new school year our Classroom Grandparents stuffed over 500 backpacks full of school supplies for our Readers in Motion students, thanks to the Children's Board of Hillsborough County, helping set them up for success.

The need for caring volunteers has never been more urgent. Hundreds of children in Title 1 classrooms are counting on steady, loving support to build their confidence and reading skills and that's exactly what our Classroom Grandparents provide.

If you've got a little time and a big heart, join us in making a lasting difference in a child's life this school year.

Email FGP@SeniorsInService.org or scan the QR code to become a Classroom Grandparent today. The classroom is waiting!



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HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**
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