

NEWSLETTER

2022 YEAR-END REVIEW

INTERFAITH
Caregivers
GREATER MERCER COUNTY

Our mission is to promote the independence, dignity, and wellness of homebound elderly and people with disabilities by matching them with supportive and caring volunteers who assist with the tasks of everyday life.

As we say goodbye to 2022....

What a full and wonderful year 2022 has been! Yes, the year was fraught with pandemic challenges. Many of our friends and family members had to battle the COVID virus, sometimes for the second time, and our services still juggled masking and safe distancing limits to keep our care receivers and volunteers safer. But the year was also packed with many returning activities that demonstrated our love and dedication to each other and the care receivers and older adults that we serve.

We approached the year with a determination to move forward with creativity and compassion, proud to provide another year of service to our vulnerable homebound neighbors. This end of year newsletter captures many 2022 highlights, including:

- A spotlight on the power of a volunteer's caregiving "match";
- Celebrating the re-opening of our Project Healthy Bones in-person classes in Hamilton;
- Our Spring Outdoor Volunteer Appreciation BBQ – it was a hot day, but so filled with laughter and friendship;
- Photos from our new Walk for Wellness, which gave the agency the opportunity to feature and support our senior wellness services. We are already planning for next year's walk and believe that this event will quickly become a community-wide and agency favorite!
- A special thank you to this past year's donors;
- And of course our 2022 Shining Lights Gala. It was held this year at the Hilton Garden Inn and included some new games, music and dancing, all while recognizing the generous contributions of Board Member Betsy Solan, and the Lawrence Township Community Foundation.

Further, our staff and board leaders have continued to craft new plans that will move our agency from reactive solutions to proactive strategies. These discussions have balanced our commitment to retaining needed safety protocols, while seeking more opportunities to serve those in need.

We know that we will need more volunteers and donors to help us on this journey, AND believe that as we mobilize new outreach tools and activities we will find others who will embrace our commitment to serve.

Please enjoy our year in review, and keep an eye out for more wonderful ICGMC projects in the coming weeks and months!

With warmest holiday wishes,

Linda Gyimoty

Linda Gyimoty, MA,
Executive Director

Thanksgiving Dinner Gift Basket



Each year Interfaith Caregivers, in partnership with Mount Carmel Guild, distributes Thanksgiving Dinner Baskets to our food-vulnerable care receivers. During the pandemic, safe distancing prevented us from being able to craft and distribute the full gift bags, although we were still able to provide food gift cards to meet some of these holiday food needs.

This November we were thankful to bring back this full partnership project once again! With our volunteers helping with coordination and distribution, and the food pantry from the Mount Carmel Guild providing bags of dinner groceries, 29 of our homebound elderly and disabled neighbors received the supplies and funds for a full thanksgiving dinner. Absolutely one of our "Favorite Things"

A Volunteer's Journey to a New Friend

By Carla Winters

I sat through my caregiver training session smiling patiently as yet another staff member spoke about “the match.” This was the reason why my volunteer application seemed incredibly long as I detailed my appreciation for all things handcrafted! The staff seemed so excited about this topic, but my data-driven mind had already set down my pen. Little did I know...

The “Why” Behind a Match

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center recently published a report titled “Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation among Older Adults.” The report compiled research from various authors detailing the frighteningly harmful health impacts on older adults using comparisons such as “...the mortality risk of loneliness is comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes per day” and statistics such as “...lonely people are 50% more likely to die prematurely” than non-lonely people.

Thankfully, the authors noted that loneliness and social isolation are among the “most modifiable risk factor for mortality and morbidity.” Of three key steps to reducing loneliness and social isolation, the third step is to connect older adults to services MATCHED to individual preferences. In fact, their review of the literature noted that this notion of creating an individualized match has become a central theme as studies reveal a “quality over quantity” approach is most effective when reducing loneliness.

ICGMC has been using such a match process between caregiver and care receiver for almost 30 years. Not only have we seen the benefits officially recorded by this research, but also ICGMC’s unusually high volunteer retention rates reflect the rewards of the matched relationship from the caregiver’s end, as well. In fact, in 2021, friendly visiting, respite care, and reassurance calls alone took up a full 1/3 of all volunteering activities.

“What is it that makes our organization special? What are the primary things that people need?” Executive Director Linda Gyimoty regularly asks herself as she guides the agency. She believes the use of a matched volunteer helps to create the “...magic behind us.” “Even care receivers with challenging personalities can end up with a special and unexpected friendship,” says Gyimoty, remembering with a smile an especially rewarding pairing. “And having a

new friend can ease a need that neither person knows they have. It is a big element of what we do and why we are so successful.” Recounting the friendships of a few more stand-out pairings, Gyimoty concludes, “That’s really what is so sweet about our work.”

Senior Case Manager, Nancy Remer, RN, BSN, has been making matches for ICGMC for 10 years. She’s gotten pretty good at it, too! “Our goal is to have everyone matched within one to two months. For the most part – 99% of the time – if we think we have a match, we have a match,” Remer states. The information on the volunteer application is a big part of the success. “We want this to be what they want to do; what they signed up to do.” Remer continues, “Whatever you want to do, we can use your service. I remember training a volunteer who happened to speak Russian. About two weeks later, we got a request for someone who needed help but only spoke Russian! It happens!” Reflecting on the many rewards of meeting a care receiver’s needs, Remer summarizes, “If you choose to volunteer with us, we will

match you with somebody with a need that you can help.”

My New Friend

My “match” came in the form of a beautiful, 91-year-old woman whose smile is impossible not to return. She is witty, caring, tells a great story – and even shares my passion for crafts! I look forward to our weekly visits together as I always leave her house with a smile – no matter my mood prior. But, needs have changed, she is moving closer to family, and it is time to say goodbye. As I swallow hard at the thought of missing my friend, I can’t help but wonder who benefitted more from our relationship. I’ll simply settle for the compliment that I was “matched” with someone as special as she.

Ready to find your match? Apply to become an ICGMC volunteer caregiver today! www.icgmc.org/volunteer

To read the entire referenced report, please refer to sprc.org.

Dr. Carla Winters, PHD, joined our team of caregiving volunteers in February 2021 and in June 2021 also joined our staff as our part-time Grants Manager.



Project Health Bones Returns

After a 2-year hiatus, ICGMC's Project Healthy Bones in-person exercise classes returned to the Hamilton Township Library.

While March 9, 2020 may have been the last in-person class that took place at the library, it certainly did not stop Project Healthy Bones (PHB) from continuing to serve participants. Early on in the pandemic, ICGMC chose to cancel weekly PHB classes for what we believed would be a temporary two week break to give the curve of the Coronavirus outbreak enough time to flatten. Those optimistic two weeks soon turned into two months and before we knew it, a more sustainable action plan was needed as an alternative to in-person classes. That's when the idea to host virtual PHB classes was hatched and classes pivoted to an online format using the video conferencing software, Zoom.

This virtual shift was not only uncharted territory for ICGMC staff who were working remotely, but for PHB participants and volunteer Peer Leader exercise instructors as well. With patience, adaptability and no doubt our fair share of technical difficulties, PHB was able to once again "meet" for an hour long virtual exercise program on Monday's and Thursday's at 10 o'clock AM. For more than a year, these virtual classes helped participants remain active and engaged in the Project Healthy Bones program during a time in the world where a more sedentary lifestyle became status quo. However, not everyone was a fan of the virtual environment. Most people that previously attended classes at Hamilton Library held out hope and waited patiently to resume their exercise regimen once classes reopened.

As other PHB sites reopened, and no restart date for Hamilton Library set, answers surrounding the logistics of reopening at the library remained largely unknown. Would we still have the same reserved spot for classes at the library? Will our Peer Leaders and participants even feel comfortable enough to return back in-person? How will this shift back to in person effect the virtual class schedule? Our prayers were finally answered and on Monday, March 28th, 2022, we anxiously and excitedly reconvened for two filled-to-capacity classes at the Hamilton Township Library. While this reopening meant that Monday virtual classes would no longer take place, we have kept Thursday's in the rotation as a virtual class option.

The return to in-person classes could not have been possible without the faithfulness of both our Peer Leaders willing to run the classes and of course the participants who attend. It's through the perseverance and patience of everyone involved that we are able to finally say that classes have returned to the library!



Classes Schedule & Locations

MONDAY 9:30 & 11:00 AM

In-Person

Hamilton Township Library
1 Justice Samuel A Alito Jr Way,
Hamilton Township, NJ 08619

TUESDAY 1:30 PM

In-Person

Lawrence Township Senior Center Lawrenceville,
NJ 08648 (for Lawrenceville/Lawrence Township
residents ONLY)

THURSDAY 10:00 AM

Zoom (for existing PHB participants ONLY)

In-Person

Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption
151 N. Warren St., Trenton, NJ 08608

Scheduled to return January 2023

WEDNESDAY 10:00 AM

In-Person

Trent Center West Senior Apartments
465 Greenwood Ave. Trenton, NJ 08609

Volunteer Appreciation

The grill was sizzling, the conversation was flowing and the friendship was apparent at the 2022 Volunteer Appreciation BBQ.

ICGMC's wonderful volunteers, staff and board members gathered

BBQ

at the German-American Society of Trenton picnic pavilion for a wonderful afternoon. After just a few words of appreciation, games were played and delicious food was served. And most still kept some room for cake and ice cream!



A Walk for Wellness

The first annual A Walk of Wellness on June 25th, was a huge success. With the support of our sponsors, and participants, this event provided the needed resources to help our local senior population stay healthy and active.

Over 60 participants came out and enjoyed a beautiful day with wonderful weather. Thank you to the ICGMC staff, board of directors and on-site volunteers who helped make this event an amazing day to remember! - Hope to see you next year.



2022 Shining Lights Gala

The 14th Annual Shining Lights Gala was a wonderful night of celebration hosted at the Hilton Garden Inn in Hamilton, NJ. It was a night full of love and laughter as we celebrated our honorees, Elizabeth (Betsy) Solan and The Lawrence Township Community Foundation. Celebrants danced to the music stylings of Sargent DJ and took a chance at an array Gift Basket and Vacation Raffles. Attendees also enjoyed the chance to win a surprise wine from the Wine Pull Raffle and the traditional ICGMC 50/50 raffle. On top of great food and drinks, the gala allowed attendees the opportunity to help raise funds for the ICGMC programs.

Thank you to all of the attendees and sponsors of the 2022 Shining Lights Gala. Your support is truly appreciated and will make a difference in the lives of many elderly and disabled people in the Mercer County area. Through our programs, they will be able to live more independent and dignified lives.

The photos from the evening are now available to view at <https://www.icgmc.org>



With Gratitude

IN LOVING Memory

With deepest thanks we acknowledge the following gifts and grants of \$250 or more received in the past 12 months. These generous funds enable us to provide essential caregiving and wellness services throughout the year to our care receivers and participants.

Individual Donors

Gary & Pat Bernabe
Robert & Mary Bernard
Ann Cannon
Lisa and Charles Carmalt
Maureen Cozzi
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Saul Funeral Home
Shiloh Baptist Church
Stark and Stark
The Bank of Princeton
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral
Wallerstein Foundation
Wal-Mart

Please join us as we recognize those within our ICGMC family, care receivers, volunteers and friends that we lost this past year. May they be at peace and may their loved ones take comfort from knowing that they continue to live in our memories and our hearts.

Jane Castner
Pasquale “Pat” Colavita
Robert Csillan
Cathy Dinapoli
Andrew Durbak
Phyllis Di Persio
Marie Falconio
Naomi Graff
Margaret Harrett
Judith Higgins
Mary Hinkle
Sally Houghton
Genevieve Jencarelli
Frank Joeick, II
James A. Keenan III
John T. Lynch
Lucille Mendez
Nora O’Neil
Daniel Ostroy
Dolores Saracino
William Smith
Judith Tilton
Norman A. Webster

Holiday Bag Distribution

Volunteers and Staff assembled Holiday Gift Bags for a special distribution to our elderly care receivers this month. Inside each bag were homemade cookies, and a Shoprite food gift card donated by the employees of Janssen Pharmaceuticals. Volunteers dropped off the gift bags and shared some warm holiday wishes from our entire ICGMC family!



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We're in the Movies



YouTube "Movies" that is. View the ICGMC Volunteer Recruitment video exclusively on our website at www.ICGMC.org.



Remember to **LIKE** and **SHARE** our posts on Facebook.

Help champion our cause and all the great acts of kindness provided by our sensational volunteers.

Help spread the word.

NEW 2023
NEW volunteer
training
609-393-9922

Consider sharing an hour of your time once a week to make a profound difference in the life of an elderly person.

Training is offered on select **Tuesdays** in the morning from **11am-1pm** or the afternoon from **1pm-3pm**. We offer training on other days and times if requested.

Call today to reserve your place - Registration is required.

2023 New Volunteer Training Dates

Tuesday

January 10th or 24th
February 7th or 28th
March 14th or 28th

ICGMC OFFICE TEAM

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