

Age-Friendly Times

News from Teaneck's Age-Friendly Community Initiative

Faith Leaders to Help Spread Age-Friendly Message

Age-Friendly Teaneck is partnering with religious leaders to identify and assist vulnerable older adults who might be living increasingly homebound lives.

Age-Friendly Teaneck's leadership team



met recently with representatives from several congregations to discuss how to better serve the needs of their older members.

"We know as people get older, they can begin to feel more isolated and cut off from their community," said Age-Friendly Teaneck Project Director Elizabeth Davis. "But we also know that the community ties that remain strongest are to their houses of worship." Many churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques help congregants in need, from arranging rides to religious services to visiting those who are ill.

Age-Friendly Teaneck would like to bolster those efforts by providing information about local resources and connecting older adults to services that can help them continue to live – and worship – in the community they've long called home.

CLERGY on back

Volunteer to Bring Some CHEER

At 94, Ethel feels at home in her Teaneck apartment, and she's very attached to the friends she's made in her twice-weekly visits to the township senior center, where she enjoys exercising and taking classes on writing and "cerebral gymnastics."

She cherishes her ties to the community where she's lived for 45 years.

Thanks to a non-profit program called CHEER, Ethel didn't have to upend her life 10 years ago, when a serious accident left her unable to drive or perform necessary chores like grocery shopping or carrying a laundry basket down the stairs.

The decades-old program matches willing volunteers or trained aides with older residents who are capable of living alone but have health or mobility challenges that make it too

hard for them to shop, run local errands, or do laundry and other housekeeping.

The program offers help with such routine tasks, but it also offers a social connection that, for some CHEER clients, can be just as much of a lifeline.

"There's a reason it's called CHEER," said Michele Ogden, who coordinates the program now operated by the non-profit Bergen Volunteer Center.

Ethel looks forward to her Tuesday morning visits with Shani, a 29-year-old Paramus resident with special needs. Some of CHEER's 36 active volunteers are participants in programs that offer vocational opportunities for special needs adults.

Those partnerships allow CHEER to serve a dual purpose, with **CHEER on back**

CLERGY from front

"It is important that older people in Teaneck can get the information and help they need to be able to stay in the community," said Reverend Dr. Marilyn M. Harris, pastor of First Baptist Church of Teaneck and a member of Age-Friendly Teaneck's steering committee. "Clergy and other religious leaders can play a big role in making sure older Teaneck residents aren't struggling or going without the help they need."

Please email info@agefriendlyteaneck.org if you would like your religious community to become part of the Age-Friendly Teaneck movement, or if you'd like to learn more.

CHEER from front

young adults like Shani gaining important interpersonal skills while also helping fill the growing demand for volunteers to visit and assist older residents living on their own.

CHEER, which stands for Compassion, Health, Education, Empathy, and Respect, currently serves more than 90 older adults. Its nine paid employees serve clients who need help with laundry and light housekeeping. But while the program serves all towns in Bergen County, it doesn't have enough volunteers to take on the numbers of older adults seeking help with grocery shopping, picking up

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AARP Foundation Tax Aide Program

For people age 50 and older

To find locations and times near you:

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Phone: 888-687-2277

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

Sat. mornings at Bergen Volunteer Center

Appointments required; Dial 211 to arrange

More info: www.nj211.org

Sign Up For CHEER

Two hour visits once a week
Help with groceries and errands
Must have own transportation



To volunteer, or if you are an older adult in need of this service, contact:

Michele Ogden

201.489.9454 x203

mogden@bergenvolunteers.org

prescriptions, or other light errands. It sometimes takes Ogden as long as 6 weeks to find volunteers to assist newly referred clients.

"We really could use more volunteers," Ogden said. Some CHEER volunteers have formed years-long relationships with clients.

Ethel and Shani have grown close to each other after being paired up 5 years ago. Shani said she usually finishes the weekly grocery shopping quickly, having grown accustomed to finding the items on Ethel's list, so the two have more time to "talk and hangout."

They have discovered a mutual love of cats as well as a keen interest in stories from the science section of the newspaper.

"Shani has helped me a lot, and I would like to think that in some small way, I'm helping her too," Ethel said.

Ogden calls their relationship one of the program's "matchmaking miracles."



Ethel and CHEER volunteer, Shani, spending time together.