



VOLUNTEERS

April 2004

Volunteer tip: Are you listening to me?

Has anyone asked you this question? Yes? You're not alone. Listening is a challenging skill to learn. Challenging yes, but not impossible. When you are conversing with your senior client or your young student, listening is very important. It can help make you an effective volunteer.

Consider using these three steps for effective listening – focus, process, and respond.

- 1. Focus.** Focus all your attention on the person talking. Tune out any competing sounds that can disrupt your listening. Turn your body toward the person and concentrate on what he or she is saying.
- 2. Process.** Process the information you've heard by connecting it to your personal experience. Share that common experience to keep the conversation interesting. If you can't think of a common point, think of a question to help you learn more about their experience and what they're sharing.
- 3. Respond.** When you respond, be genuine. When you are honest about listening and learning from other people, they will be more interested in listening to you.

You've Got Mail!

E-Mailing Volunteer Hours

To report volunteer hours spent serving seniors, Direct Service volunteers can e-mail hours to barb.koenig@darts1.org. If you'd like, a timesheet form can be e-mailed or mailed to you for convenience. Contact Barb at 651-455-1560 with your preference.

Director's notes: A Glimpse Inside DARTS

Perhaps you're wondering where in the world we come up with all the volunteer projects we have at DARTS. We have volunteer grocery shoppers and visitors, and we have volunteers in classrooms helping children with reading and math. So, how did we come up with this new idea, volunteer lawn mowers?

It all started with a phone call – in fact, hundreds of phone calls – to DARTS' Information and Assistance Specialist. These calls (over 50 during spring months alone) from seniors and family members have one thing in common; namely, a senior living in their own home who can no longer manage their yard maintenance.

To respond to this need, DARTS began working with the MN Dept. of Human Services last fall to expand our outdoor chore program. Since then, we've increased our capacity to serve seniors with outdoor chores and odd jobs by over 60%.

So, what does this mean to you?

Remember those signs you would see at checkout counters everywhere, "If you need a penny take one, if you have a penny leave one"? Well, we're putting our own spin on that. [If you need help with outdoor chores, call us.](#) We're gearing up to help. [If you love working outdoors and want to adopt a senior's yard for a season, call us.](#) We'd be thrilled to have your help in expanding this program!

And that's a glimpse of what happens daily at DARTS. It all starts with a phone call for help.

Colleen Fritsch

Director of Volunteer Resources



No Tall Fishing Tale When it Comes to Friendship

“I get a lot of pleasure out of brightening someone else’s day.” This is how Terry O’Brien, a DARTS volunteer visitor for 3 years, sums up what volunteering means to him. Terry became interested in visiting a senior because he saw how much his own mother (who lives 900 miles away) enjoyed visits from someone other than immediate family.

Terry has been visiting Joe throughout his 3 years of volunteering. **With the encouragement of Terry, Joe got back into his hobby of woodworking.** Terry’s reward is seeing the great pleasure Joe gets from making things for other people. At the young age of 91, Joe is still experiencing a real sense of accomplishment from making things that people can enjoy using.

The friendship between Terry and Joe formed quickly because they have a lot in common. Fishing is one example. Terry is a fly fisherman and Joe used to make bamboo fishing rods for his own fly-fishing and for customers. The two always have plenty to talk about, like the lakes they both know and the books they’d recommend. Mostly, though, what a “spider on the wall” would see is Terry intently listening to Joe and admiring his handmade furniture, toys, and fishing rods, and Joe’s face lighting up when Terry walks through the door to visit.



Joe and Terry

Ask Terry about the rewards of volunteering and he’ll say **“how fulfilling it is to find that you can make a huge difference in someone’s life with a small investment of effort and time.”** And, no doubt, he’d be the first one to admit to the difference in his life, too.

If you’d like to learn more about being a volunteer visitor at DARTS, call Barb Koenig at 651-455-1560 or visit www.darts1.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

What’s Happening?

→ Volunteer Orientation

will be held April 27, April 28, May 25, and May 26 for new Direct Service Volunteers. For more information, contact Barb Koenig at 651-455-1560. Postcard reminders will be sent out.

→ “Stars with a Heart”

is this year’s theme for honoring DARTS Volunteers. Volunteers will be receiving invitations when party dates are near. Several parties will be held throughout Dakota County in 2004. Watch for your invitation in the mail!

→ National Volunteer Week is April 18-24.

DARTS’ volunteers touched more than 2,800 lives in 2003 by serving seniors and helping children learn to read. Thank you!

Spread the word to friends and family about your volunteering experience and let them know about these current opportunities:

Relief Phone Receptionist. If you have 1 hour available once a week and don’t mind spending time on the phone, this could be the volunteer position for you. You’ll receive concise training and work in a very supportive atmosphere. Volunteer from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. either Thursday or Friday, or fill in as needed.

Outdoor Chore Volunteers. Spring weather brings calls from seniors for help with their outdoor chores. You can get involved as an individual or as a family. You’ll be assigned to help a senior with yard cleanup, lawn mowing, window washing, or garage cleanup. Outdoor chore volunteers help seniors manage the care of their home.

If you or someone you know is interested in these volunteer opportunities, call Barb Koenig at 651-455-1560.