

Connecting Volunteers

NEWSLETTER FOR DARTS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers Matter

The Shared Pleasures of Learning Buddies and Children

By JoLynn Bucki, Learning Buddies Coordinator

What do DARTS Learning Buddies volunteers and elementary school children have in common? Quite a bit actually! They both know that school is a great place to learn AND make new friends.

Gerri McArdell, Learning Buddies volunteer, helps out once a week in a first-grade classroom in South St. Paul. She works with students on their reading and comprehension skills. Gerri told this story one day.

"Thanksgiving week, Miss Kelly [the teacher] had a surprise for the children – hot chocolate and cookies in the lunch room. I was invited also. Upon returning to the classroom, the children wrote poems/sentences about either the hot chocolate or the cookies. I was seated in Miss Kelly's rocking chair and, one by one, each child came to me and read their poem. It was the greatest."

In the Learning Buddies program, good things happen for both the volunteer and the children. Learning Buddies enrich their lives with new friends and the satisfaction of helping a young person succeed in reading, math, and science. The youngsters benefit from the relationship of having a caring adult in their lives. As one teacher says, *"There is rarely a time that a young child doesn't just crave that extra attention and someone to listen to them. My volunteer does that for the students in my class."*

There's also someone else who experiences a positive benefit from this wonderful program in community schools – the teachers! One teacher remarked, *"In this day of fewer minutes for academic support in the classroom, my Learning Buddy was able to help some students with things that I did not have time to do."* Another teacher wrote, *"With 29 students in my math class, I can only afford minutes of individual help with the students each day. My Learning Buddy greatly increased this time with students."*

Nearly 100 DARTS Learning Buddies volunteers assist students in 25 elementary schools across Dakota County. They are a fabulous group of people committed to making a difference. And they will recount to you first-hand the joys of "going back to school." You're never too young or old to learn AND make new friends!

If you're interested in becoming a Learning Buddies volunteer, call Colleen Fritsch at 651-234-2222.

Thank you, Learning Buddies. You are making a WORLD of difference!



What's Happening?

Vision Loss Resources is offering **“Supporting Older Adults with Vision and Hearing Loss”** as a free session for volunteers on August 27, 9:30-11:30 a.m., at DARTS. This training addresses:

- Common causes of vision loss
- Types of hearing loss
- Tips for communicating
- Sighted guidance tips
- Grief associated with sight and hearing loss
- Sensory sensitivity exercises

This session is highly recommended for direct service volunteers, because it can help you better understand the specific issues and needs of this population. RSVP by August 21 and direct questions to Barb Tiggemann at 651-234-2254.

Note: Reminders will be sent by e-mail and regular mail. An evening session of this same training will be offered in October.

Volunteer Tip: Grocery Shopping

Keep these tips in mind when helping an older adult with their grocery shopping needs.

- Be alert to packaging that may be difficult to open.
- Go over the shopping list carefully, and determine whether substitutes are acceptable.
- Ask to see an example label when the person requests a specific item.
- Take advantage of pre-cut and washed items when buying produce and fresh foods. They may be simpler to prepare. However, be sure to check ahead of time that the extra expense will be okay.
- Become aware of favorite brands and foods. You might even find a coupon for that item.
- Give the person a call when you are unsure about having the right item.

Happy shopping!

Volunteer Opportunities



Assist residents in the Independent Living Program.

Volunteer to help with the noon hour meal in a South St. Paul high rise. Tasks can include setting tables, serving meals, and providing socialization for residents. For more information about this opportunity, contact Barb Tiggemann, barb.tiggemann@darts1.org or 651-234-2254.

Does Your Company Offer Benefits for Volunteering in the Community?

All DARTS volunteers should check with their company about what they might have in place to recognize your volunteer service time! For instance, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota and Thomson Reuters are two companies that offer *Dollars for Doers*. DARTS benefits twice—once through your time and talent and a second time through a contribution from your company that recognizes your volunteer service. Contact Barb Tiggemann with any questions at 651-234-2254.

