



August 2002

VOLUNTEERS

News from Jason:

Special parties for recognizing volunteers

DARTS' Volunteer Resources area is always trying new ways to honor volunteers – from thank-you notes to gift bags to annual volunteer banquets. In the past, we've recognized DARTS volunteers yearly with a get-together in the fall; last September we held one in the new DARTS garage. This year we're honoring volunteers on a more personal level. To date we've hosted small thank-you parties for our clerical volunteers and our volunteer callers. These parties let us thank you in person and hear your favorite stories about volunteering. In May, we held a luncheon sponsored by Flint Hills Resources for our Reading Buddies volunteers.

We are in the midst of planning thank-you parties for our Visitors, Grocery Shoppers, and Respite volunteers. Please keep an eye on your mail so you can join us when we honor you and the volunteer work you do. We always remember that, without you, we couldn't serve so many seniors as well as we do. Thank you.

Jason Sanders
Director of Volunteer Resources

Wheelchairs Wanted!

DARTS transportation needs wheelchairs for passengers who have limited mobility when making trips. If you have a wheelchair not in use and would like to donate it to DARTS, contact Kris Barrett at 651-455-1339.

Volunteering is an investment you never lose



When you listen to Marie Schueller talk about being a volunteer, it's clear her words come from the heart. "With volunteering, you give only a little of your time and get so much back in return. You meet new people who turn into new friends. It's better than the stock market – you never lose on your investment," says Marie.

Marie is one of many dedicated DARTS volunteers in the Senior Companion program. She started volunteering at DARTS in early 2001 and currently provides weekly or monthly respite for five caregivers in addition to visiting a senior once a week.

After retirement, Marie easily fit volunteering into her schedule. To her surprise, each new family and senior DARTS has assigned her have been a "perfect fit." She says, "each [senior] is just a wonderful person. And the people at DARTS are so down to earth, so positive."

Volunteering has brought Marie rewards from both the caregiver and care receiver. "Everyone is so appreciative, especially the caregivers – [for] giving them a little time away from caregiving. And, it's so surprising how positive my senior clients are in spite of their health problems. They all still have a good sense of humor!" To top it all off, Marie says, "I have even found something inside myself that I didn't know was there."

Marie and the senior woman she visits weekly have become great friends. They can easily sit in a restaurant for 3 to 4 hours talking about everything and anything, "as long as we don't get too many stares from the waitresses!" The two enjoy window shopping to see the latest fashions and running errands, which usually turn into each other laughing about the silliest things. Marie sums up her visiting experience with something she read, "A good friendship is one heart shared by two people." All in all, she just can't believe the good fortune of being "paired up" by DARTS!

Check out this October 9 PBS Special on Caregiving

To honor caregivers from across the country and share their stories, PBS is airing a 2-hour documentary on October 9 called "And Thou Shalt Honor: Caring for Our Aging Parents, Spouses, and Friends." Check your local program listings in October for the timeslot in your area.

What's Happening?

→ August

27, 28 Orientation for new DARTS volunteers serving seniors.

→ September

16 Keeping your Memory Strong, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m., Pleasant Hill Library, Hastings. To register call DARTS at 651-455-1560. Fee of \$10.

23 Understanding Memory Loss and Dementia, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m., Pleasant Hill Library, Hastings. To register call DARTS at 651-455-1560. Fee of \$10.

23, 24 Orientation for new DARTS volunteers serving seniors.

→ October

8 The Sandwich Generation: A Hero or a Sub, 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m, Apple Valley Villa, Apple Valley. To register call DARTS at 651-455-1560. Fee of \$10.

10 Effective Communication: Tips to Use with Seniors Who are Hard of Hearing. Free and open to all DARTS volunteers, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m., DARTS location. To register call Barb at 651-234-2254.

15 Critical Conversations: Making Decisions as a Family, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Apple Valley Villa, Apple Valley. To register call DARTS at 651-455-1560. Fee of \$10.

23 Volunteer Gathering - meet other volunteers, share stories, hear updates at DARTS. 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. DARTS location.

28, 29 Orientation for new DARTS volunteers serving seniors.

Volunteer Opportunities

Reading Rewards

The DARTS Reading Buddies program continues to need volunteers – the program is now operating in 21 Dakota County elementary schools. Surely one is close to your home! We need your help in either becoming a Reading Buddies volunteer or referring a friend to the program. Please call Jason Sanders (651-455-1560) to reserve your place at the school of your choice. We especially need volunteers in Burnsville, Apple Valley, and Eagan. Join us 1 hour a week during the school year and make a powerful impression on the children in your community. Flexible days and times available.

Caregiver Respite Support

Respite volunteers' efforts are valued and appreciated by caregivers. More than one-fourth of U.S. adults are caring for a family member or friend, and 37 percent of caregivers live under the same roof as the care receiver (according to the National Family Caregivers Association).

DARTS provides education, support, and respite for family caregivers in Dakota County. Become part of the support system by volunteering 4 hours a week or on occasion to supervise and socialize with the senior needing care while the caregiver leaves for a break.

As a respite volunteer, you can help a caregiver make caregiving more manageable. Contact Barb Koenig for more information at 651-234-2254.

Enjoy Writing?

Adults, high school or college students, and others interested in writing to second graders can become a Pen Pal volunteer through DARTS' Pen Pal program. You can befriend and mentor elementary students by writing 2 to 3 letters a month and helping them learn letter writing skills. Call Jason Sanders (651-455-1560) for more information about becoming a Pen Pal.

Volunteer Tip:

“Soft” skills for volunteers serving seniors

- Have a sense of humor and share it whenever possible
- Be patient; your priorities aren't theirs
- Be a good listener, not just a good talker
- Be flexible whenever you can; they enjoy variety
- Wear your thicker skin; some days it's about them and not about you
- Be friendly; you may be the only person they've seen today
- Be respectful; not everyone ages gracefully