



VOLUNTEERS

October 2006


Volunteer Profile:
Help Others and
You'll Feel Better
About Yourself

Dale Hilsman was looking for a way to spend some time in a worthwhile cause when he heard about DARTS' need for volunteers. Three years have passed, and Dale continues to be a respite volunteer for a family caregiver and a volunteer driver for DARTS – simply because he enjoys helping people. “You feel better about yourself when you’re helping others; it keeps you occupied,” he says.

Part of Dale’s motivation to volunteer stems from his family teaching him to help others when you can. He understands how caring for a loved one can often be an overwhelming task. “Caregivers need a break; they are so tied down.”

Even the challenging times make Dale smile. One of the seniors he sees is living with Alzheimer’s Disease. “This person often asks me the same questions, but I keep answering them like they are new to me.” He and the senior keep busy by playing games, talking, or going for walks.

This year, Dale is adding a new volunteer activity to his schedule—he will be a DARTS Learning Buddy at a local school. He was inspired to help other kids when his granddaughter was sick and needed a tutor for extra help.

Dale’s dedication to helping others is a model for us all!

Learning Buddies Program
Kicks Off its 10th Year


In 1997, the Learning Buddies program (formerly known as Reading Buddies) began as a partnership between DARTS and Glacier Hills Elementary. *What started as a concept to encourage intergenerational relationships in one school has now touched 22 schools throughout Dakota County.* Volunteers work with kindergarten through fifth grade elementary children on reading, math, and science skills.

On September 12, new and returning Learning Buddies volunteers gathered at DARTS for a back-to-school orientation and to kick off the 10th year of “connecting generations” through shared learning. Sherry Patterson, DARTS Learning Buddies Coordinator, led the orientation on goals, volunteer expectations, and school procedures. Kris Barrett, DARTS Director of Transportation, spoke about using the DARTS buses to travel to participating schools. DARTS is proud to offer these free bus rides with the help of generous funding from Flint Hills Resources, Learning Buddies program sponsor.

With the 2006-2007 school year under way, more Learning Buddies volunteers are needed. If you’re interested, contact Sherry Patterson at 651-234-2227 or sherry.patterson@darts1.org. Volunteers are accepted throughout the school year. Come help us finish off our 10th year bigger and better than ever!

What's Happening?
October

23, 24 Orientation for new DARTS volunteers.

Call Barb Koenig, 651-455-1560, for more information.

November

14 5:00- 8:00 p.m. at DARTS.

Enjoy a light supper and mingle with other volunteers; get better acquainted with DARTS services; and learn about becoming a Volunteer Ambassador for DARTS!

Call Barb Koenig at 651-455-1560 to learn more.

21, 22 Orientation for new DARTS volunteers.

Call Barb Koenig, 651-455-1560, for more information.

volunteer tip:

Four Ways to Stay Informed and be Involved with DARTS

- 1 Visit www.darts1.org for the latest information and happenings at DARTS.
- 2 If you haven't visited DARTS' administration and transportation buildings, give us a call at 651-455-1560 and we'll gladly give you a tour.
- 3 Attend a Volunteer Ambassador Training session so you can learn more answers to the question, "What is DARTS?"
- 4 E-mail Barb Koenig at barb.koenig@darts1.org to simply share a story about your volunteering experience or to set up a time to chat.

Volunteer Opportunities

Five Inexpensive Ways to Give to Your Community

It seems obvious, but no one must spend a lot of money to make a difference in someone's life. Let a friend, family member, or co-worker know about the following volunteer opportunities available at DARTS.

- *The gift of mentoring* – Help an elementary student once a week with reading, math, or science skills.
- *The gift of companionship* – Brighten up a senior's day by spending a few hours a week visiting.
- *The gift of time* – Give a family caregiver a break from 24-hour caregiving.
- *The gift of neighborliness* – Help a senior in your neighborhood by raking leaves or removing snow from their sidewalk and driveway. This is a wonderful family activity.
- *The gift of assistance* – Help a senior with their shopping errands.

Director's Notes

Mother Nature Gears Up and So Do We

At DARTS, you can tell the seasons are changing. Sherry Patterson, our Learning Buddies Coordinator, is busy welcoming her volunteers back and placing them in elementary schools throughout the county. Barb Koenig, our Volunteer Coordinator, is helping area colleges connect their nursing students with seniors so that, as nurses, they can better understand and respond to the needs of older adults. And around Dakota County, at volunteer fairs and at businesses, Barb is telling people about ways to serve the community through DARTS.

But clearly, the greatest sign of the changing season is in our Outdoor Chores department. Our newest staff member, Christine Jaques, is scheduling civic and corporate groups as well as individual volunteers to help with fall yard clean-up for seniors throughout the county. Every autumn, DARTS helps 35 to 50 seniors get their gardens turned, their patio furniture put away, and their leaves raked before winter. Christine is also compiling her list of seniors who will need DARTS' help with snow removal; she will pair them up with volunteers ready to get at those sidewalks and driveways!

All the activity this time of year is fueled by great volunteers like you. Quite literally, we couldn't do it without you. Whether you are a visitor, grocery shopper, respite volunteer, outdoor chore worker, greeter, administrative volunteer, or Learning Buddy, you are the arms, legs, eyes, and ears of DARTS' Volunteer Resources, and *we thank you.*

Colleen Fritsch
Director of Volunteer Resources