

Friends of Seniors of Dutchess County Corp.

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FRIENDS OF SENIORS OF DUTCHESS COUNTY CORP.

www.friendsofseniors.biz

Initial Problem to be Addressed: to provide basic support services to the older adult community.

Brief Program Description: Friends of Seniors of Dutchess County Corp. (FoS) is a volunteer-based, 501(c)3 program that provides basic support services to the older adult community in the forms of medical transportation, grocery shopping, visiting services, telephone reassurance and respite for primary caregivers. For the most part, the volunteers drive their own cars. FoS does not have a bus or a van. We do have an FoS car. We provide well over 200 medical trips per month.

Our medical transportation includes rides to doctors' appointments, physical therapy, surgical procedures, labs, radiological testing, and dialysis within and outside Dutchess County, including appointments to Albany, New York City, Westchester County, Putnam County, and Connecticut. Our volunteers are on the road as early as 5:00 a.m. and can drive as late 5:00 or 6:00 at night seven days a week, if necessary.

Our grocery shopping program is for seniors who have no means to purchase groceries. Our volunteers either shop for or with the client, depending on the client's needs. Many can go to their medical appointments, but cannot withstand the ordeal of going to a supermarket. We shop for them. For others, grocery shopping might be the only time they get out. For them, going to the supermarket is on the same level as going to Broadway show! Then, there are those who, understandably, want to pick out their own food and buy their own brands.

Our visiting service targets those seniors who have little contact with the outside world. Before matching a volunteer and client for visiting, we do a home visit to ensure the safety of the volunteer and to give the potential volunteer and client an opportunity to meet each other. In order to provide a comfortable setting for the client, the executive director and the volunteer sit and talk with the client informally. It is a conversation among "friends." No forms are filled out as the paperwork is done before the home visit. The advantage of an unofficial appearance to this type setting is that both the volunteer and the client are prone to be more relaxed and be more themselves. All can get a feel if the relationship will be a match or not. No decisions are made until after the interview. The executive director speaks with the potential volunteer and the client to get an understanding of how each feels. Most of the time, it works. The volunteer and the client schedule the visits that are accommodating to both. The volunteers report their hours to the executive director each month.

The telephone reassurance program is great for homebound seniors who volunteer to call other homebound/isolated seniors. We do have volunteers who are participate in the telephone reassurance program who are not homebound, but for those who are homebound, making phone calls gives them a sense of purpose as they continue to be active participants in the community.

The respite for primary caregivers program is for caregivers with family members who are homebound. The caregiver cannot leave the home and leave the family member home alone and the family member cannot go out with the caregiver. Our set up with the respite is the same as with the visiting. Home visit is first. The program gives the caregiver some time for him/herself free from worry about their loved one.

At this time, FoS has 44 volunteers, 37 of whom are drivers. All volunteers must provide us with a completed application with two references. With the exception of the telephone reassurance volunteers, all others must provide us with copies of a driver's license, registration, insurance card, NYS Driving Certificate (if available) and a copy of their driving record obtained from the DMV. We ask for yearly updates to keep the driving information current.

The volunteers are reimbursed a minimum of .40/mile for regular medical appointments, .50/mile for dialysis within the county, .58/mile for dialysis outside the county.

FoS has an umbrella insurance policy for the volunteers through The CIMA Companies, with coverage up to \$50,000 medical, \$500,000 auto liability, and \$1,000,000 in personal liability. If a volunteer is in an accident while volunteering for FoS and if that individual took the NYS Driver's Course in the last three years, FoS will pay half the volunteer's insurance deductible. This aspect of our program encourages volunteers to take the driving course, which increases safety to our clients.

Each volunteer is interviewed and trained via a training manual. At the end of the training, each volunteer receives an angel visor clip, which says, "Never Drive Faster Than Your Guardian Angel Can Fly."

Our philosophy is that the volunteers are the boss. None are required to make a commitment to a certain day of the week to drive, visit, shop or call. However, once a volunteer makes a commitment to the client for any of our services, then the volunteer is expected to follow through.

Every Volunteer's Week, each volunteer is recognized with a card and small gift mailed to their homes. We also have a volunteer dinner the Thursday before Thanksgiving. The volunteers receive a card of appreciation and a small token gift.

