



2024 Board of Directors

Officers

David Heizer, Chair
Humana Market Point

Dr. Daphne Fudge, Vice Chair
Early Learning Consultant

Mark Hall, Secretary
Egnyte

Kevin D. Zwetsch, Treasurer
Brick Business Law, P.A.

Members

Tracie Bergman
Hillsborough County Schools

Marina A. Choundas, Esq.
Foley & Lardner LLP

Dr. Fred Hicks
Early Learning Coalition of
Hillsborough County

Steve Marciano
BayCare

Jenna Stock Wunsch
Raymond James

Debbie Viveiros
The Bank of Tampa

Robert C. Wood, CPP, CFE
Allied Universal Security Services

Your Gift. Their Match. Lives Transformed Forever!

"When you get to be 80, you feel like people just sort of forget about you. But not Seniors in Service. You make me feel special and I know I have lots of people that care about me. Thank you for all that you do to help me know I'm remembered."

- Russell, Health Buddies Participant



We're not done. There are still thousands of seniors in Tampa Bay who wake up every day feeling alone and forgotten. Back-to-back hurricanes devastated communities leaving seniors who already felt alone, with the overwhelming task of rebuilding their lives. The need to show seniors they live in a community that cares is more urgent than ever.

Suncoast Credit Union is responding to this urgent need with their BIGGEST commitment to Seniors in Service so far...\$90,000. Will you help too?

Donate Today! And Suncoast Credit Union will Match your gift!

Now through January 31, your donation to Seniors in Service goes twice as far! Thanks to the generosity of Suncoast Credit Union, every dollar you give will be matched—up to \$90,000.

Your support empowers older adults to rediscover purpose and connection, channeling their unique skills and experiences to make a lasting difference in our community.

In the pages ahead, you'll see how, in 2024, our volunteers changed lives—thanks to generous donors like you and partners like Suncoast Credit Union. Let's build on this momentum and create even greater impact together. Donate today and be the spark that changes a life!



Suncoast Credit Union isn't just a financial institution—it's a true partner in building stronger communities. Guided by shared values, Suncoast is deeply committed to improving the lives of all Floridians, with a special focus on supporting underserved populations. Beyond offering lower rates on loans and free services to ensure their members' financial success, they go the extra mile to make a difference in the community. From protecting seniors and veterans against scams to fostering social connections and promoting well-being, Suncoast's outreach programs create meaningful impact. They also champion educational initiatives, empowering kids to succeed in school and beyond. We're honored to work alongside such a dedicated and community-focused organization!



**SCAN
HERE TO
DONATE**

SeniorsInService.org/Double-Your-Impact/

Venmo: @SeniorsinService

Thank you to our funders!



Celebrated for Service Excellence



Senior Companions Recognized for Their Golden Hearts

What do Lauren Smalls, Denise Jones, and Carmen Rodriguez have in common? They were all honored at SAGES's Annual Golden Hearts Award Ceremony, designed to recognize individuals in Tampa Bay who dedicate their time to making an outstanding difference in the lives of seniors.

Lauren, Denise, and Carmen are on a mission to ensure seniors in Pinellas County seniors always have a friend who cares by dedicating their time to build connection, community, and friendship with elders who are at risk of isolation.

Health Buddy Pamela Roberts is a "2024 Hero Among Us"

Pamela Roberts was among a select group recognized as The 2024 Heroes Among Us Congressional Award Winners in Florida's 12th District. Winners were recognized for making a positive impact through their volunteerism, acts of kindness, and extraordinary service to others.

Pamela spent many years as a nurse, dedicating her life to caring for others. After retiring, her passion for service continued, but her declining vision limited her options until she discovered Health Buddies, a perfect virtual opportunity for those with low vision. Now, Pamela uses her healthcare expertise and compassion to support isolated seniors with chronic conditions. Through weekly phone calls, she provides encouragement and health coaching, empowering her clients to take charge of their well-being and proving that one can still make a meaningful impact despite challenges.



Seniors in Service Honored as Lightning Community Hero

Seniors in Service was proud to be recognized as a 2024 Lightning Community Hero for our dedicated Classroom Grandparents who instill confidence in struggling students. Classroom Grandmas, Rebecca Bray and Edith Shepherd were honored to accept the \$50,000 donation to Seniors in Service on behalf of all the 200+ Classroom Grandparents who are instrumental in helping the next generation succeed in school and beyond.

Grandma Shepherd shared, "Words cannot express how honored and special I felt for what was bestowed upon me at the Lightning game. It was my first time at Amalie Arena. How exciting it was to meet some of the players and to have taken a photo with one of them. It was a very memorable evening shared with warm, beautiful people-one that I shall never forget."



Classroom Grandma Margaret was honored as a Hillsborough County Public Schools Volunteer of the Year. She serves in Ms. Dufault's Kindergarten class at Colson Elementary helping children learn their letters, numbers, and sounds. Grandma Margaret is helping the kids in her classroom build confidence as young learners.



Operation: Veteran Connect was recognized by Volunteer Florida for Excellence in engaging veterans, volunteers, donors, and organizations to empower veterans, active military members and their families for positive health, mental wellbeing, and long-term success.



Health Buddies Program Manager Aria Garling had the honor of presenting a poster on Health Buddies at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in Tampa. This prestigious event hosts over 4,000 anthropologists from around the globe. Aria introduced attendees to the concept of "Companionship as Medicine."



Teaching the Art of Volunteer Recruitment!

1900+ volunteers and counting! Seniors in Service's impressive record of volunteer recruitment and engagement earned our team the opportunity to present best practices for community engagement at the 2024 AmeriCorps Seniors Convening. The team shared tips on effective tabling, engaging activities like volunteer bingo, and the importance of sharing our passion for service with the community. Their enthusiasm left attendees saying, "OMGOODNESS! What a great group. The energy and passion of the presenters was electrifying! I left with so many fantastic ideas. I wish my whole team could see this!"

This year 1,900+ volunteers served over 326,000 hours to transform lives.

Every hour of service can change a life. Our volunteers are catalysts for lasting transformation. We have over 1,900 dedicated individuals who are eager to share their time, skills, and experiences to uplift others. Together, they help build a community fueled by kindness and meaningful contributions.



36

Operation: Veteran Connect Members

Helped 3,897 of their fellow veterans access health care, nutritious food, affordable housing, and resources to improve their quality of life.

59 Veterans

Experiencing homelessness now have a place to call home

"I feel that serving not only brings others joy but gives me joy in return."

-Rhonda Byrd
Operation: Veteran Connect Member

213 Classroom Grandparents provided 159,289 hours of tutoring in the classroom

98% of Students

Improved their literacy skills

1,591 Students

Received 1-on-1 tutoring for the entire school year





154 Health Buddies

Provided personalized health coaching and support to empower seniors with chronic conditions to manage their health independently, reducing unnecessary ER visits.

"I can't wait to see what my doctor says during my next visit. On top of that, I LOVE my Health Buddy! I haven't had someone to laugh with in so long, and I love talking with my new friend. Joining Health Buddies feels like hitting the lottery!"

-Health Buddies Client

"Ana [Volunteer] is a heaven sent person, kind, compassionate and has the patience of a saint. my mom loves her so much. It's very heartfelt to see how much my mom loves her and cares for her. Ana treats my mom as if she were her own mom."

-Blanca Morales,
Senior Companion's Caregiver



76

Senior Companions

Provided 68,860 hours of social connection and support to enrich the lives of 127 seniors.

Volunteers provided
49,001 Hours

Of emergency food support for hungry families

1,143

Vulnerable individuals and families were empowered for success through meaningful interventions provided by a Resource Advocate.

Everyday Heroes: Inspiring Stories of Volunteers Transforming Lives



Though Kitty had never met Ed, when he walked into the VA clinic she could see he was in serious trouble. Kitty is an Operation: Veteran Connect member who serves at the front desk, greeting veterans as they arrive at the VA for their appointments. Thanks to her extensive training on PTSD and veteran suicide, Kitty immediately recognized the warning signs from Ed's heightened stress and emotional state.

Ed didn't have an appointment, but he urgently needed to talk to someone. The VA had a strict no walk-ins policy, but Kitty knew that turning Ed away could be a fatal mistake. Determined to help, Kitty became Ed's biggest advocate. She approached the nurse on duty and explained the situation. Despite the nurse's initial refusal to accept walk-ins, Kitty didn't back down. She used all her training, including skills from Crucial Conversations, to persuade the nurse to make an exception.

Two hours later, as Kitty left the clinic, Ed was still talking to a mental health professional. Kitty knew she had made a difference that day. Her persistence paid off in more ways than one. **Thanks to Kitty's efforts, the VA changed its policy to welcome walk-ins, especially those in a mental health crisis.**



Victoria has been a Readers in Motion student for two years, which means she has benefitted from a Classroom Grandma each year, Grandma Gladys and Grandma Manning pictured with her on the left. Her mom shared, **"Victoria is growing up without her grandmas. We left them behind when we left our country but I'm so happy that she gets to have Grandma in her class because they fulfill that emptiness of not having her Grandma from back home."**

"I got a really tough student the other day and I just wanted to let you know that Grandma Paulette is totally connecting with him. He feels so comfortable with her. She's AMAZING. In the past, he has struggled to complete work and she has him working on day one! He's even excited to be building words with her 😊."

-Ms. Healey
Seminole Elementary



When Neil retired he thought he was leaving behind the construction world to serve in a food pantry. Little did he know that the skills he gained during his career were exactly the skills the Volunteer Way needed. On Neil's first day he encountered two toilets and a garden irrigation system that hadn't been working for a long time, and he jumped right in to solve the problem. After his first week, Neil reported that he is "plugged in and they are happy to have a handyman available as needed." Neil is a shining example of how re-wiring retirees for service can bring tremendous value to our community.



Julia knows the devastating feeling of seeing your whole life on the curb. Her house was flooded during Hurricane Helene. Even though her own home had been flooded, Julia showed up to help others with debris clean-up. The answer to despair is in service to others. Instead of focusing on myself and my loss, I helped others. In that, we all found strength and hope."



Senior Companion volunteer Nona knew something was wrong when her client Diana didn't respond. The worry began around 10 a.m. when Nona headed to the store to pick up some groceries for Diana and sent her a text to see if she needed anything else. No response. Nona knocked on Diana's apartment door to drop off the groceries. No answer. She called Diana. No answer. It wasn't like her not to answer. As the worry took over, Nona called the police but they weren't able to help. Nona checked with neighbors. They said Diana was probably fine and told Nona to mind her own business. She called the apartment management company to open the door, but there was no one on site, and they wouldn't come unless 911 had been called.

By now it was getting dark, and Nona wouldn't give up. She went back to Diana's apartment to see if the lights were on. There were no lights. That's when Nona heard Diana's downstairs neighbor complaining about the banging noise she had been making all day. Now, Nona knew she needed to call 911. Diana used a baseball bat as a cane. She had been banging on the floor all day to get someone's attention. When emergency services arrived and opened the door, they found that Diana had suffered a stroke.

Unfortunately, the stroke was too severe, and Diana passed a week later. But thanks to Nona's compassion and persistence, Diana's daughter, who lives in Sweden, was able to see her mom one last time.

Delivering Hope After Hurricane Devastation

Back-to-back hurricanes devastated Tampa Bay, leaving many, especially seniors, with a long road to recovery. In the aftermath, we went door to door delivering food to stranded elders, witnessed seniors living in flooded mobile homes, listened to the stories of our own volunteers who had lost everything, and we knew Disaster Preparedness, Relief, and Recovery needed to become part of our focus.

In the weeks following Helene and Milton we partnered with Hello in There Foundation and First Contact to provide \$500 each to 39 seniors in Gulfport who suffered extensive flooding, home damages, and loss of belongings. Margie was among the individuals who received this support. She shared, "No one expected this devastation. I'm still mourning the loss of everything that felt like home but I'm finding my path forward. I've stumbled into a new life with new purpose."

With the generous support of Community Foundation Tampa Bay and other donors, we are laying the groundwork for long-term disaster recovery and preparedness for seniors. This support has enabled us to respond to immediate needs, including those of seniors like Kristy, whose home of more than 20 years was flooded during Hurricane Helene—along with her father's home just down the street. Kristy and her husband are now "camping" in their severely damaged home, which has no walls or furnishings, as they have nowhere else to go. The unexpected costs of storing their salvaged belongings and attempting to create a livable space have only added to the overwhelming stress of navigating insurance claims and FEMA forms. Thanks to the Disaster Relief Fund, we were able to ease some of their financial burden and provide essential items to bring a small measure of comfort back into their lives. Kristy is just one of nearly 100 seniors we've been able to support so far through this vital funding.





SENIORS in SERVICE
GEARED UP TO SERVE

**1306 W Sligh Ave
Tampa, FL 33604
(813) 932-5228**

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TAMPA, FL
PERMIT NO. 1094



AmeriCorps



**AmeriCorps
Seniors**

Follow us on social media
@seniorsinservice



In This Issue:

- Double Your Impact with Suncoast Credit Union **1**
- Recognized as a Leader in Service Excellence **2**
- Tampa Bay Lightning Create a Memorable Night for Grandma Shepherd **3**
- Guess how many volunteer hours you gave in 2024? Now guess higher. **4**
- Learn Why Having a Health Buddy "Feels like Hitting the Lottery" **5**
- They are Super Heroes Living Among Us **6**
- We're Going Door-to-Door Delivering Hope **7**

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

Thank You, Tampa Bay!

After Hurricane Helene, a high-rise, low-income senior housing facility in Gulfport was without power. Inconvenient, right? For the residents with mobility issues who now had no way to leave without a working elevator or air conditioning, their 16th floor apartments became sweltering prison cells. A group of volunteers from the neighborhood gathered FOR DAYS to help shuttle water and hot meals up the 17 flights of stairs to help these trapped residents.

In a tiny senior trailer park in Pinellas, 2 days after Hurricane Milton, the residents sat in lawn chairs next to the remains of their homes. Roofs were peeled back like sardine cans, a lonely widower sat inside his roofless trailer with his feet in the water.

Who will help these seniors? YOU will. And WE will. Together. Seniors in Service represents a whole community of people who care. People who will find strength in their service to others. Whether you can help us with a donation or your time, you are the solution. Loneliness and despair are no match for the energy we all bring together.

**Thank you to the many volunteers who show up
day-after-day for all of us!**



A HUGE SHOUTOUT...

To Ahmed Alaraj and his crew from the Shawarma King who partnered with World Central Kitchen to help get delicious hot meals to residents in a short amount of time.