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Forward

Winter 2022

2021 LESSONS LEARNED FROM SENIOR SERVICES' DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

Changes in our society due to the ongoing pandemic have taken a great toll on the population we serve at Senior Services. One of the biggest lessons we have learned is the effects of social isolation on older adults in our community. With our senior centers closed for over a year, we were very excited to reopen the doors on April 1st, 2021. As our members returned we saw and felt how the last year had changed people. Many had experienced health and mental changes, loss of loved ones, and so many were unable to return to the activities they had previously enjoyed.

The CDC ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) 04/29/2021) has continued to put out information in regards to social isolation and loneliness in those aged 65 and older, as they have seen nearly a quarter of adults this age are considered to be socially isolated. Though it is hard to measure the effects of social isolation, studies have found that:

- Social isolation significantly increases a person's risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.
- Social isolation is associated with about a 50% increase in the risk of dementia.

- Poor social relationships were associated with a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increase in the risk of stroke.
- Loneliness is associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and even suicide.
- Loneliness among heart failure patients is associated with a nearly 4 times increased risk of death, 68% increased risk of hospitalization, and 57% increased risk of emergency room visits.

Senior Services strives to assist seniors in our community; by making resources and programs available, to help combat social isolation, help maintain a healthy lifestyle and continue to live within their homes. With the Meals on Wheels program and Roving Pantry services we are able to ensure that at risk seniors receive the nutrition they need. When both services are combined 100% of the nutrition needs can be met. Along with nutrition these



Getting ready to deliver Meals on Wheels route.

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2021 LESSONS LEARNED - CONTINUED

programs provide a wellness check and a friendly face for the seniors to see. Our Senior Employment Program assists those older adults that chose to continue to work and make an impact on businesses in the area. What a wealth of knowledge, experiences, and ethics this group can provide an organization and teach the upcoming generations.



Angie and Rick with Roving Pantry

Fellowship, friendship, and fun are much needed elements in all our lives, interactions keep us healthy. We continue to grow, share, and learn as we get older. These are very important elements to assist in the fight to combat social isolation.



Linwood Senior Center Nail Painting Class

We thank you for your continued support of all the programs at Senior Services, Inc. of Wichita. Without our members, clients, donors and especially our volunteers we would not be able to provide all that we do. Looking forward to continued growth and partnerships in the coming year.

New Year's blessings to you and yours –
Karen S. Dao, Director of Programs

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Kelli Nuss took over as the Orchard Park Senior Center Director in the fall of 2020, while the center was still shut down due to the Covid 19 pandemic. She spent several months connecting with her members via phone calls. Here she reflects on the senior center reopenings in April 2021 and why this job is perfect for her.

QUOTES:

“The best part about re-opening is getting to meet all of the Members and seeing their smiling faces each day!”

“This is my dream job! I love the older population and I love planning activities.”

“When my 13 year old son found out that I took the Orchard Park Director position he said, “Mom that is such a ‘YOU’ job!” I couldn’t have summed it up any better.”



Orchard Park Senior Center Director Kelli in the middle along with center members during October field trip.

JEANETTE'S STORY

Jeanette Richard returned to **Senior Services of Wichita** in May of 2021. For years Jeanette was an active **volunteer** in the **Senior Employment** office and a regular **member** of the **Downtown Senior Center**. But, a chronic heart condition coupled with the onset of the Covid pandemic, had kept Jeanette away from the place she was once very active. Jeanette suffers from hereditary heart disease that she has battled for 30 years. She is now left with 10% heart function. On this particular day Jeanette planned to sign up for **the Heartland 5K** scheduled for September. Wearing oxygen and using a walker Jeanette explained that she was doing everything she could to keep up her stamina and had recently taken up walking. Her goal was to gain strength so that by September she would be able to walk the 3.2 mile course.

She breathlessly explained the struggles of the past year. At the young age of 44 Jeanette underwent a triple bypass. She has a pacemaker with a defibrillator attached. She also suffers from spinal stenosis and had 2 rods placed in her back. In the fall of 2020 she developed COPD and could barely walk across the room without wearing out. "My breathing was so labored I couldn't complete a sentence" she says. Her doctors suggested she get her "things in order."

But Jeanette wasn't ready to give up. Her doctor recommended she see a specialist in Oklahoma City. She underwent a procedure to place a permanent pic line that delivers the medication Milrinone 24/7. Milrinone helps blood flow efficiently through the heart and out to other organs. She has a medication bag which is stored in a pack worn around her waist and weighs 4.5 pounds. During the holiday season of 2020 Jeanette did rehabilitation to gain more strength.

Upon returning to Wichita Jeanette decided to take matters in her own hands. This spring she began walking her neighborhood to increase stamina. "I was still on oxygen and, at first, I was only able to walk down the block. I'd have to sit down on the ground to catch my breath. That's when I decided to get a walker". Never one to give up Jeanette persisted with her walking routine and progressed to over 2 miles a day.

There were some setbacks that included a summer hospital stay due to an infection from the pic-line, a common side effect of the treatments. Then in August, **Senior Services was forced to cancel the Heartland 5K** due to low attendance and increased covid infections. This was a big disappointment! Jeanette chose this race as her goal when she first started walking. Her son John and home health nurse Rachel planned to walk with her while her cousin in Texas planned to walk and communicate with her via smartphone. Knowing how much this meant to Jeanette **Senior Services refused to let her down!**



On October 6th Jeanette, along with Senior Services staff and board members, walked the Heartland 5K course. The Jeanette who came in was very different from the Jeanette who visited in May. Her stamina increased to walking nearly 3 miles every day. She no longer requires oxygen and while she uses the walker for balance during her walk, she's able to

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JEANETTE'S STORY - CONTINUED

manage other aspects of her life without it. The group took off at 9:00am with Jeanette decisively leading the way. She had yet another goal to achieve, aside from finishing the 3.2 mile walk, her goal now was to finish in less than 90 minutes. She stopped only once to allow others to catch up and completed the walk in 75 minutes! "She truly made my day" said Donna Johnson, Senior Services Board Member.

Jeanette has strong family ties. "I am so blessed" she says. "My determination comes from my family." Jeanette lost her father when he was 44, her mother at 65 and brother at 53, all suffered a heart condition. "I've already set my next goal and that's to make it to my 79th birthday next year. I will have lived longer than anyone in my family."

Jeanette's humility is as impressive as her inner strength. When asked how she could possibly stay so focused in the face of overwhelming challenges she modestly says **"I'm not special. I just want to stay as healthy as I can for as long as I can. If I can do it then anyone can!"**



SENIORS GIVING BACK

Each year the 4 senior centers operated by Senior Services join together to help disadvantaged populations. Started over 10 years ago by the members of Orchard Park Senior Center, this annual collection drive has helped numerous not for profit programs like Judge Ridell's Boys Ranch, Meals on Wheels and St. Francis Academy obtain much needed donations for their clients.

This year the charity of choice was the Wichita Children's Home. Linwood Senior Center collected gift cards and stuffed animals. Orchard Park members also collected gift cards, stuffed animals and baby items. Northeast members collected sippy cups, hairbrushes, baby lotion & baby shampoo & wash. The Downtown Senior Center held a Thanksgiving luncheon with all proceeds benefitting the Wichita Children's Home. All items were delivered to the home on Monday December 13, 2021.



FIDELITY BANK LAUNCHES ADOPT-A-GRANDPARENT TO COMBAT LONELINESS & ISOLATION

Mr. Glenn excitedly walks into Northeast Senior Center and tells Center Director Carnesha Tucker, “Look what was delivered to my house!” Mr. Glenn is holding an edible bouquet sent by his “adopted” granddaughters from Fidelity Bank in honor of Father’s Day. “Our members really appreciate the connection,” says Carnesha. “Many of them have felt lonely and isolated since the center’s shutdown, so a welcoming phone call or a surprise gift brightens their day.”

In 2021, Fidelity Bank reached out with a desire to help our senior population, which was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. “We were talking over the closure of the senior centers due to COVID, and a team member opened up about how much they miss their grandparents, their wisdom and stories of simpler times.” said Pam Regehr, Fidelity’s Director of Corporate Social Responsibility. “Another team member responded with ‘what-if,’ and our virtual Adopt-A-Grandparent program was born.”

Numerous employees signed up to adopt grandparents recruited by Senior Services from all four senior centers. As Fidelity granddaughter Greta Burns explains, “They need to know they are loved and still vital to our community. I think everyone needs to connect with at least one senior outside of their family in some way. Any kind gesture, whether it be a call, small gift or a gift card to help with groceries, is always greatly appreciated.”

Another Northeast Center member, Viola, has also benefitted from the matches. As Fidelity granddaughter Kelsey Kearn explains, “During one of the first weeks with Viola, our group bought her flowers, Butterfingers and a card for Mother’s Day. She LOVED it and instantly called, thanked us and let us know that she had

to show the gift off to her director, Carnesha.” Carnesha laughs, “I think she made a lot of other members jealous!”

While all four senior centers participate in Adopt-A-Grandparent, the project has been especially well-received at Northeast Center. Although the four centers reopened this past spring, members from Northeast are still a bit reluctant to gather in groups. The special connections made by Fidelity “grandkids” are especially helpful, even now. Granddaughter Kelsey reflects on this special experience: “If you have some free time or a similar opportunity, jump on it! You learn so much about each senior and form a bond with them. Viola has a special place in my heart, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to know her.”



Northeast Senior Center Member - Glenn

Fidelity
BANK

FIRST EVER PICKLEPALOOZA! A BIG SUCCESS FOR SENIOR SERVICES.

In 2019 Senior Services decided to try a fresh, new concept for special event fundraising and to develop a new Pickleball event. Since charitable tournaments are very common, the planning committee decided to create something a bit different. The concept of making Picklepalooza a week-long festival came to fruition.

Picklepalooza was designed to be a series of community events to celebrate the sport. Events were open to anyone, of any age and skill level. Numerous companies stepped up to be event sponsors and to organize teams. The festival would begin with a simple community fair hosted at Senior Services followed by 3 days dedicated to various industries such as healthcare, legal services and corporate/small businesses who competed against each other in social, round robin style matches. Each challenge day ended with a mingling party on the rooftop at Chicken N' Pickle. The festival would end with a semi-formal cocktail party celebrating the weeks' events. All plans were in place to launch Picklepalooza the week of April 18 - 25, 2020.

But the Covid 19 pandemic hit in March and changed all plans.

After 4 attempts at rescheduling, Picklepalooza was officially launched September 18 - September 23, 2021. While Covid outbreaks did force alterations to the schedule, and cancellation of the Celebration Party, the Challenge Matches were a big hit with players and sponsors. The festival generated \$53,000 to support all programs of Senior Services.

Plans are in the works now for Picklepalooza 2022 with the intent to make it even bigger and better. Early discussions include the return of a competitive tournament (formally known as the Heartland Games Pickleball Tournament) for players 50 years or better. Also in the works is a competitive tournament for all ages in addition to adding more industries to compete at the Challenge Matches at Chicken N' Pickle.

Senior Services would like to extend a sincere thank you to all our sponsors for their patience and support. Without them the festival would have never taken place.

PICKLEPALOOZA SPONSORS

Presenting Sponsor:



Senior Sponsor:



Security 1st Title, Davis Moore Auto Group, ServPro, Assisted Living Locators,
Dr. Matt & Kristin Conrad, Dr. Bruce Bammel, Oxford Senior Living,
The Carnahan Group & Farha Roofing

MARCH FOR MEALS 2021

“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassion actions of its members.”

**~ Cornetta
Scott King**

At the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, Senior Services faced unprecedented challenges to continue to provide critical nutritional services to the most vulnerable citizens in our community. Meals on Wheels, a lifeline for homebound seniors for over 50 years, is a program reliant on over 75 volunteers a day to deliver routes across Wichita.

Meals on Wheels director Sherri Flippo described March 2020 as “It was just a total unknown. We’re always focused on client service, and there was concern we might not be able to get the food supply, or have enough volunteers”.

After adapting to the challenges of socially distanced food pickup and client delivery, Meals on Wheels thrived throughout the pandemic.

A year later in March 2021, Senior Services participated in a national campaign through Meals on Wheels America called ***March for Meals***. This initiative is an annual calling to raise awareness about the importance of the program and the people it serves.

The response to the call for help was met with strong enthusiasm from many community leaders and businesses. This led to many first time volunteers getting the hands on experience of delivering Meals on Wheels. Volunteering can provide a warm impact on an individual as they see the difference a hot meal and friendly smile can make with a



**Ron Baker with
Executive Director
Laurel Alkire**

homebound senior, especially one that is isolated.

Senior Services would like to extend a huge thank you to the following individuals and businesses for stepping up to help in the March for Meals campaign 2021.

- Zach Nguyen
- Kelsey Banwart – Oxford Senior Living
- Kim Howe
- Tiffany Linares – Angels Care Hospice
- Wichita by EB
- Mobile Medical team
- Fert the Foodie
- Joceyln Devilliers
- Kelli Reese – Meridian Rehab & Healthcare
- Mayor Brandon Whipple
- KWCH’s Michael Schwanke & Ross Janssen
- City Council member Bryan Frye
- Ron Baker
- County Commissioner Lacey Cruse
- County Commissioner Sarah Lopez
- Kara Tipton – Home Instead
- Denise Neil – Wichita Eagle



**Michael Schwanke & Ross Janssen
Delivering Meals**



200 S. Walnut
Wichita, KS 67213-4777

Return Service Requested

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Wichita, KS

CALL TO ACTION:

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO DELIVER MEALS ON WHEELS

The holiday and winter months often see a decline in volunteer numbers. If you, or someone you know, would like to give back to a senior in need consider delivering Meals on Wheels. It only takes an 1 hour to 1.5 hours of your time whenever you are available. Volunteers deliver daily, weekly, monthly or as substitutes during inclement weather. Routes are strategically arranged based on areas and neighborhoods in the Wichita city limits. Volunteers deliver a hot, nutritious meal during the lunch time hours Monday through Friday. For more information visit our website page <https://seniorservicesofwichita.org/volunteer/>

Because all volunteers must be reference checked prior to delivering meals, walk-ins are not accepted unless you're a present volunteer.

Remember this:

A few moments spent at a senior's door delivering Meals on Wheels means the world to our recipients. You may be the only person they see that day!



Visit Us At: <https://seniorservicesofwichita.org/>

