

Programs of Excellence



Marketing and Public Relations

Winner: 12 Days of Christmas

Honorable Mention: Caring Club

12 Days of Christmas

Norwell Council on Aging
Norwell, MA
Susan Curtin, Director

Norwell total population = 11,127
60+ population = 2,762
Center members = 1,405

Grab & Go event designed to safely engage with older residents during the holidays.

Each day, an average of 50 individuals received a surprise giveaway, based loosely on the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Items were put aside daily for homebound to call in to reserve for delivery. **142 different people** participated over 12 days, for a total of **613 giveaways**.

Town leaders and volunteers of all ages offered to help with handouts, packaging, and deliveries. We also worked with **local cable TV** and **radio** to create PSAs.

The response and **gratitude** was far greater than anticipated. Since our center was closed at that time, it was a great way to **engage with older adults**. It also provided flexibility for staff to prepare and store items.

12 Days of Christmas: Key Takeaways

1. Everyone needs in-person social connections. This program gave people a purpose each day, to get out of their home and connect with others, even briefly.

2. Adults love surprises just as much as kids! Each day was a different surprise giveaway. That sense of anticipation and excitement was uplifting and appreciated by many.

3. What started out as a way to do something fun for older residents, ended up being a great mental health boost for staff and volunteers. We felt a sense of purpose, connection and excitement during a time when we were separated from our families.

4. Building relationships in the community is important. By doing so, the community will support you if you ask for something specific. Business, town leaders and residents of all ages volunteered or made donations to make this program possible.

5. It's important to publicly recognize and acknowledge those who help you. Many older residents also wrote letters or visited the businesses who participated in this program.



Caring Calabasas

City of Calabasas Senior Center

Calabasas, CA

Kimberly Post, Senior Center Supervisor

Calabasas total population = 24,000

Center members = 2,500-3,000

Community outreach program in which older adults and the community at large craft items or collect/donate goods.

Goal was for individuals to **contribute time and talent** resulting in meaningful multigenerational social interaction and new connections in the community.

As a result of media coverage in a local paper and magazine, there was **heightened awareness** of our Center and the community outreach we are capable of accomplishing. **Positive publicity** was created for the city that illustrated that Calabasas is a **caring and compassionate place to live**. New leaders that emerged could be called upon and encouraged to take leadership positions within the Senior Center. Finally, **the City awarded the Club funds** to continue their activities.

Caring Calabasas: Key Takeaways

1. Keeping the spirit of community and caring alive, seniors became influencers rather than bystanders even during the pandemic.
2. Engaging community members of all ages in the projects fostered intergenerational social interaction and attracted new members to the senior center.
3. Activities reflected positively on the City and Caring Calabasas Club, by accomplishing meaningful outcomes such as the significant number of items donated.
4. Partnering with 501(c)(3) organizations ensured the donated and handmade goods were easily and appropriately received, and forged deeper collaboration with charitable groups.
5. Opportunities for participants were generated to learn additional skills and engage in creative activities, as new leaders for each project emerged.



Cultural Programs

Winner: **Honoring Legacies**

Honorable Mention: **Historical Perspectives**

Portraits of Life - Honoring Legacies

Groton Senior Center

Groton, CT

Mary Jo Riley, Senior Center Supervisor

Groton total population = 38,411

Center members = 3,500

Photography display of local residents with a diagnosis of dementia.

This presentation of portraits brought awareness to the community about the real person who is affected by this disease and reduced the stigma associated with dementia.

This project provided all who attended with a **more comprehensive understanding** of the lives led by those with dementia/Alzheimer's with a goal of leaving attendees uplifted and inspired. It demonstrated that the disease is but a small portion of the lives of the people who have it. **The portraits show the person; you cannot see the disease.**

Over 100 individuals came to the opening event.

Portraits of Life: Key Takeaways

1. A person's life is so much more than the diagnosis of dementia. They have skills, families, and friends. The portraits showed the person and their history.
2. Persons with mild to moderate dementia are still social, enjoy life and can be an active part of the community.
3. For the person with dementia and their families, the focus is on their life well lived and not a diagnosis of a terrible disease.
4. For the community, the event brought resources together for people to learn about and share.
5. The program was used to announce a longer-term safety program with the police called Project Lifesaver. This is a radio bracelet program for people who wander managed by the police.



Historical Perspectives of Baltimore

Parkville Senior Center
Parkville, MD
James Sloane, Director

Parkville total population = 30,000
Center members = 1,600

Virtual history program connected a professional and enthusiastic tour guide with participants for a journey into the colorful traditions and back stories of Baltimore.

Enthusiastic guide from the Baltimore Tourism Association helped develop a wide-ranging slate of programs that were **fun** and translatable to a virtual format and **encouraged engagement** from our audience.

Participants **increased their knowledge** about the historical figures, events, and landmarks, in Baltimore. They developed **connectivity and a sense of community** while participating in programs, as many lived during the times of these significant historical events making national headlines.

Historical Perspectives: Key Takeaways

1. People love learning about the charm and history of their town.
2. That enthusiasm and love of place from the presenter is infectious and connects with the participants/residents of this city and encouraged interest and engagement.
3. People responded to the opportunity to remain connected with their city and region, maybe even more so than usual, in the midst of pandemic lockdowns, perhaps yearning to be out and about more as they could in normal times.
4. In an area like the Baltimore region that makes the news more in current times for the struggles in the city, having the opportunity to celebrate the unique history and accomplishments of the region was a draw: served as both a trip down memory lane and a reminder of the many good things in this region.
5. There is a love of learning at all ages and for sharing the memories and experiences of one's generations and those that were handed down to them from their previous generation.



Health and Wellness

Winner: **Elder Day**

Honorable Mention: **Peapods**

Elder Day

Opal Senior Center

Virtual (Baltimore County, MD)

Kathleen Young, Programming Manager

In 2021, 40,000 seniors attended virtual programs across all of Baltimore County.

Virtual, all-day "Feel Good, Look Great" event organized and held in partnership with the Baltimore County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Offered on a Saturday from 9 am - 5 pm and participants could join in at any time based on the schedule for the day.

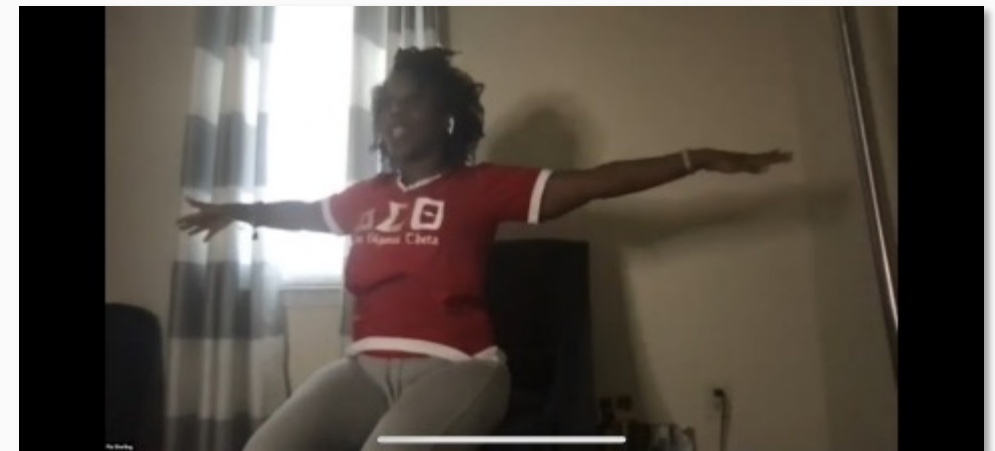
The day started with opening remarks from the Alumnae Chapter president followed by a citation by the County Executive. The programs for the day included **social, health, self-care, and fitness activities**. The day ended with a Silver Screen Showcase which was a talent show that our older adult could participate in as well as alumnae of the sorority.

Desire **to uplift our older adults' spirits** during the winter and in the middle of the pandemic on a cold January day.

111 people logged in for the event, 3x number for typical event.

Elder Day: Key Takeaways

1. Advertise the schedule/program times in advance so participants can pick and choose when to join vs. attending all day
2. Either set up as a webinar or have a designated person responsible for tech issues like folks not muting themselves.
3. Having partners who can help organize the schedule and book the program providers takes the responsibility off of the staff.



Pea Pods

Duxbury Senior Center
Duxbury, MA
Joanne Moore, Director

Duxbury total population = 16,000

Small group cohorts to reduce isolation and increase overall health and wellness.

Recruited older adults who **weren't being reached via virtual** programs.

The program was offered two days a week for four hours with **social time, educational programming, exercise, a healthy lunch, and a conversation circle.** Kept “pods” small and developed safety protocols.

21 people, aged 67-90, signed up and 17 people completed the program. All said that **loneliness and isolation was reduced**, and that there were unexpected benefits including **in-depth sharing of life experiences, making new friends, and having more energy.**

One of the happiest events of my life and the top events during my senior years.

Pea Pods: Key Takeaways

1. Strong friendships have formed. Participants gather together outside of Pea Pods; they've formed a team in the Center's bocce program, they have each other over to their homes; they telephone, and some text each other on the phone between Pea Pod sessions.
2. Participants have stayed healthy and safe. No Covid cases during the course of this program.
3. We've helped reduce seniors' overall loneliness.
4. Participants increased their participation at the Center and attended programs outside of Pea Pods. Pre-COVID, only 28% of participants came to the Center to participate in programming three times a week. Now, 50% of participants come to the Center three times per week.



Nutrition

Winner: **Nutritional Distribution Outreach**

Honorable Mention: **Grocery Delivery**

Nutritional Distribution Outreach

Cheshire Senior Center Cheshire, CT

Stefanie Theroux, Coordinator of Senior
Services

Cheshire population = 29,000

Population 60+ = 7,300

Center members = 2,700

Comprehensive nutritional outreach program to meet the needs of all senior citizens within the Cheshire community.

The program includes partnerships with several other agencies, including New Opportunities, Brass City Harvest, Whitney Rehabilitation Care Center, New England Young at Heart, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and the Cheshire Community Food Pantry.

These programs combined have provided over **2,400 opportunities** for older Cheshire residents to access food: 515 food deliveries and Cheshire Community Food Pantry rides, 675 **Grab and Go lunches**, 379 produce bags, 600 **Dash and Dine Meals**, and 288 **rides to the grocery stores**. We have also distributed Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers and assisted with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications. Additionally, we are part of a municipality that financially supports the Meals on Wheels program.

Nutritional Distribution: Key Takeaways

1. Food insecurity is a significant issue for older people.
2. A collaborative effort across organizations is needed to address food insecurity effectively.
3. In addition to nutritional outreach, this program has provided older people with the opportunity to connect and socialize, especially during the pandemic.
4. The various ways that food insecurity has been addressed by this program has helped us reach the largest group of people possible. Using different marketing techniques for different facets of the program has been extremely effective.
5. The senior center has become a focal point for older people within the community for a number of services and resources; helping us recognize gaps in services and create programming to help fill these gaps.



Grocery Delivery

Eden Prairie Senior Center
Eden Prairie, MN
Sue Bohnsack, Recreation Supervisor

Eden Prairie population = 65,000
Daily participants = 90–150

Weekly grocery runs for older adults who could not get to a store and/or shop safely.

Much-needed emergency interim food program Center staff made calls to ascertain who was most in need and really could not get food for themselves. Staff would **call participants on a regular basis** to find out what they were lacking, what they needed.

Staff would also **provide other resources** as needed. This reliable and personal connection allowed vulnerable seniors to **stay healthy, keep connected, and not suffer from malnutrition or dehydration**. Each week the staff would call on these individuals and ask the same questions to make sure all their personal needs were being met.

Grocery Delivery: Key Takeaways

1. Vulnerable and at-risk seniors were heavily impacted by Covid-19 isolation measures, and were incredibly grateful for personal contact and the service provided.
2. The vulnerable members of our community were hesitant to ask for help, so for the grocery delivery service to come looking to them was an unexpected and valuable amenity.
3. Seeing the different members of the Eden Prairie community come together to help desperate seniors was inspirational. People across multiple agencies in the City contributed to this program.
4. It is important to have resources available to at-risk seniors, but even more important to give those seniors easy access to that information.
5. Seeing and hearing the immediate impact of this program makes it so much easier to serve (do my job).



Technology

Winner: **Technology Makers Space**

Honorable Mention: **TechTalks**

Technology Makers Space

Woodbury Senior Center
Woodbury, CT
Loryn Ray, Director

Population = 9750

% of population over age 65 = 30.5%

Center members = Approx. 900

Increase confidence in technology by showing how computers can help create beautiful crafts.

Converted an old computer lab to become an **inspirational digital maker-space**, equipped with all necessary equipment as well as laptops and tablets for digital learning. We use a **CRICUT machine and a GLOWFORGE digital laser engraver/cutter** to teach seniors the fun of being creative and making purposeful, useful, and beautiful items.

The "carrots" in this project are the **beautiful, high quality items** people can make for themselves and others. The "stick" is this: in order to create these items (ranging from decals to laser cut furniture!), the participant must **use a computer to create and set the design**.

Participants are thrilled to learn **they are indeed creators**, and to take home their "techy" projects. With each subsequent use, participants become **more confident** in computer skills ranging from using a mouse cursor and toggling between screens to actual digital design, placement and creation.

Technology Makers Space: Key Takeaways

1. All people are creative, but some have not embraced their creative talents. Structuring projects that allow them to modify existing designs or create something completely new was important. The “ah-ha!” moment is fun to watch and helps build confidence in computer learning and other areas.
2. Small group classes best (5 people or less), but each person will need some 1:1 assistance to use the computer program in designing a project.
3. Safety training was not boring (as anticipated), but helped build excitement.
4. Train people early in the calendar year. Anticipate a sharp increase in participation in the fall when people start thinking about holiday gifting!
5. Significant investment for a small center, but we were fortunate to have some donated money that made it possible. The results have absolutely shown that this was a good investment on our part. We see people learning computer confidence, becoming makers, and exhibiting pride in their creations.



TechTalks

Ateaze Senior Center Baltimore, MD

Rebecca Ebert, Former Director

Center members = 1,000

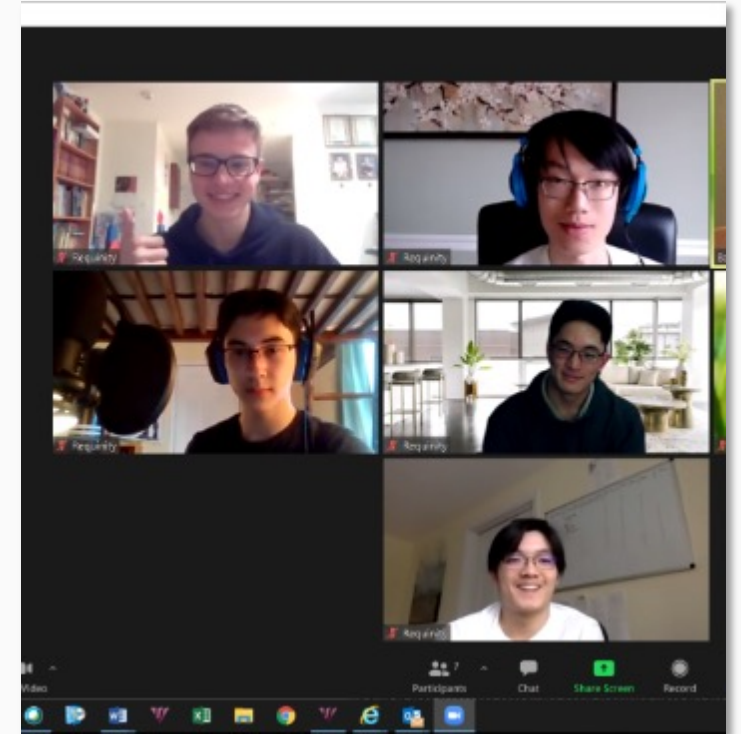
Partnership with Requinity, a group of local high school students to teach seniors technology.

The program was twice a month and taught seniors a new type of technology via Zoom. Especially needed during the pandemic with everyone at home, yearning to connect and learn new things.

These talks started out as a “How to” to connect via Zoom and Webex. They morphed into a step-by-step technology tutor twice a month. Seniors **learned to connect to their friends and peers using the technology** they already had. If they didn’t have a computer, they were taught how to call into an online meeting. As the talks went on, they began teaching seniors e-mail, how to use smart phones, and even took questions from the seniors as to what they wanted to learn. The students made YouTube videos to send out to seniors for later use.

Tech Talks: Key Takeaways

1. The topic can determine the size of the group of participants. 2-7 participants at each session seemed the right number.
2. Engaging with high school students is beneficial for all. They come with ideas that your staff may not think of or have time to do.
3. Invite your staff to join the sessions. Even the staff learned more about Zoom than we had known before.
4. Open the programs broadly to seniors even if they are not part of your center.



Hybrid Programming

Winner: **Wellness Workshop Without Walls**

Honorable Mention: **Senior Center Without Walls**

Wellness Workshop Without Walls

Whitney Senior Center
St. Cloud, MN

Paula Woischke, Senior Center Supervisor

St Cloud population = 199,671 residents.
65+ population = 12% of the total and is
expected to reach 20% by 2030
Center members = 1,000+

Hybrid lifestyle/behavior change programming for an underserved senior population.

It was **vital to repackage** our programming to address realities of social isolation and loneliness. Amazingly, we also recorded just as many virtual contacts throughout the year. **90% of programming is hybrid.** In 2021, we **logged 20,000 in-person contacts** with Whitney's members + **20,000 virtual contacts.**

Collaborated with **universities and health care systems.** Maximized project's reach by providing Whitney's programming via **16 mobile technology carts** (large TV, mini-PC, accessories) placed around our 14-county region. We provided these carts, funded with grant dollars, to deliver a wealth of hybrid programming to area churches, health facilities, and housing settings.

Wellness Workshop: Key Takeaways

1. Offer wide-ranging, holistic programming. All offerings are focused on nine dimensions of wellness: physical, emotional, intellectual, interpersonal, cultural, spiritual, environmental, financial, occupational.
2. Form strong community partnerships. One partnership with two area trained 72 university nursing students to facilitate Diabetes Prevention Program workshops.
3. Partner with health care. We partnered with the largest health care system in our area, CentraCare for targeted recruitment of at-risk patients, filling our wellness workshops efficiently.



Senior Center Without Walls

Sowega Council on Aging Georgia

Virtual-14 Counties

Izzie Sadler, Executive Director

14-county, 65+ population = 56,000+
COA participants = 6,000

1400 people in the program with 790 on
the waitlist.

Fully virtual senior center serving 14 counties in southwest Georgia.

Robust program that includes **nutritious restaurant meals** and **innovative activities**. Variety of activities designed to engage seniors and reduce social isolation.

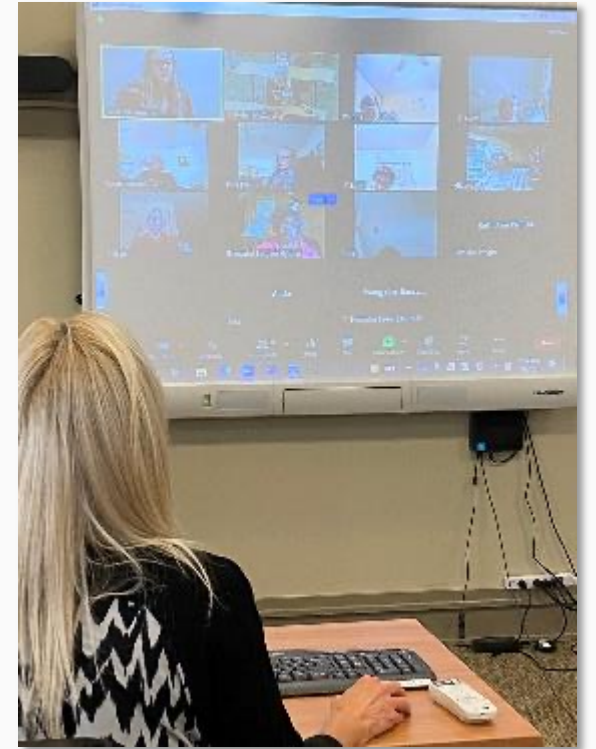
Activities are held via **telephone, zoom, and in-person**. Hybrid options are available for all evidence based programs and educational sessions; many in-person activities (held at libraries and YMCAs, for example) are live streamed via FB and posted to YouTube library. Pilot program using Claris Companion tablets.

New model **completely refashions what a senior center is**, strengthens community partnerships, and is attractive to baby boomers.

Tripled the number of individuals served.

Senior Center Without Walls: Key Takeaways

1. The senior center without walls (SCWW) program is enticing to seniors looking for a healthy meal and activities in their local communities. It resolved the issue of declining participation in our traditional senior centers with participation tripling.
2. It encourages the development of more local partnerships and relationships.
3. It benefits local economies by using local restaurants and other non-profits to deliver services.
4. The model is more resilient to economic and health-related issues such as workforce shortages, supply chain issues, and pandemics.
5. The program is efficient to operate, using only a few full-time administrative staff vs. the nearly 100 employees and extensive logistics required for the traditional centers.



Reducing and Prevention Social Isolation

Winner: **CheckMates**

Honorable Mention: **Rooted in Resilience**

CheckMates

JCC of Greater Pittsburgh Pittsburgh, PA

Sharon Feinman, Division Director AgeWell
at the JCC

Pittsburgh total population = 299,434
Center members = 10,000

Weekly phone calls from a peer to reduce social isolation and connect older adults to resources via caring discussions.

Healthy relationships are necessary at every age and perhaps even more vital for older adults who are feeling isolated, but still living independently.

Our 22 volunteers **develop strong bonds** over the phone with those they call. Volunteers **provide information** about upcoming **programs and events** that are available including activities around socialization, education, congregate and home delivered meals, Covid-19 vaccine information & clinics, and more.

In 2021, **11,421 calls** were made with an average of **219/week**.

I'm a volunteer, but by calling my CheckMates people it helps me....it helps me emotionally, too.

CheckMates: Key Takeaways

1. Often the phone calls turn into a phone friendship that develops over time. Volunteers benefit just as much as the recipient, but often in different ways.
2. Before and during the pandemic, these calls created a connection so that older adults knew someone was thinking about them and could also provide caring support, with their words, and concrete support when our social worker could connect the person to needed resources in the community.
3. Volunteers benefited by having the opportunity to continue volunteering during the pandemic, unlike so many other volunteer opportunities. Our volunteers found that by calling from home, they were able to spend more time talking with their CheckMates "friends" and developed a stronger bond.
4. Although the pandemic impacted everyone in so many ways, we noticed that the older adults that were already receiving phone calls seemed to be less impacted because they were already aware of available resources, staying home wasn't unusual and they were already connected (and felt connected) to other people.
5. Many of our older adults wanted weekly phone calls after the first month or two of the pandemic (once they realized that this isolation was going to last for a long time).

Rooted in Resilience

Overlea Fullerton Senior Center

Baltimore, MD

Inbal Neun, Director

Year-long initiative to address the challenges of social isolation as well as other hardships experienced during the pandemic via monthly, themed activities.

Department staff and volunteers created monthly themes related to becoming more resilient as well as a monthly **newsletter and challenge**. The newsletter included a **checklist of activities** and recommendations of things to try that focused on that theme.

There were at least **10 virtual or hybrid programs** that also related to the theme that people received a chance for winning a gift card at the end of month when they attended and participated.

At the end of the month, a **wrap-up meeting** was held so participants could **share their experiences** that month and the drawing for the **three gift cards** were made.

Rooted in Resilience: Outcomes

1. Attendance ranged from 75 in virtual attendance to smaller groups of 5 for some programs.
2. Over 125 seniors participated in the program and many verbally expressed gratitude for the program and improvement in their own resilience during the challenge of isolation.



The monthly themes were: Accepting & Self-Compassion, Supporting through Self-Care, Coping, Growing, Expressing Your Feelings, Strengthening, Serving, Chilling Out, Learning, Building, Caring and Celebrating.