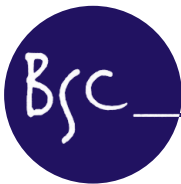


Valued

VOLUNTEERS



ADDING LIFE TO THE YEARS

Brookline Senior Center

93 Winchester Street, Brookline, MA 02446
617.730.2770 • brooklineseniorcenter.org

Valued VOLUNTEERS SPOTLIGHT

We are truly thankful for the countless hours and talents that our volunteers generously share with us every day. Their dedication and generosity never cease to impress us. Their contributions make the Brookline Senior Center a very special place, and we value each of our volunteers, past and present.

If you have a skill to share and would like to be one of our valued volunteers, please reach out to me!

Valerie Graf, Volunteer Coordinator
617-730-2743
vgraf@brooklinema.gov



Volunteers are our lifeline.

I often state that we would have to close our doors without our wonderful volunteers. Whether they answer our phones, create new programs, or help raise money all of our volunteers are essential and appreciated.

I hope that this publication inspires even more volunteer activity as we highlight our valued volunteers.

Ruthann Dobek, Director

Thank you to our volunteers who responded to our survey and whose quotes are sprinkled throughout this publication. Please note that quotes may not match the volunteer profile.

This book is a compilation of articles from 2017 to the present and some of the information contained herein may no longer be accurate.

VOLUNTEERS OF 2017

Barbara Kean



Barbara Kean, 2017 Volunteer of the Year, has been a volunteer at the Brookline Senior Center for the past 5 years. Barbara gives tours of the BSC, covers the reception desk greeting visitors and helping them find the activities they are looking for, volunteers with the TRIPPS Program – especially with the TRIPPS Challenges, has participated in the Alzheimer's Walk twice and has begun assisting visually impaired visitors to the BSC.

Barbara said that when the law firm she worked for closed its doors, she was devastated. After six months, she decided to come to the BSC. She says, that she can remember opening the front door of the BSC and immediately feeling the adage, "When one door closes, another door opens".

When asked what she likes best about the BSC, Barbara said, the kind people she has met here. She said that it is a place that makes her happy, that she loves the classes she takes and the good feeling she gets when she comes here. And yes, it was so nice to be nominated for and receive the honor of being chosen the 2017 Volunteer of the Year!

Flower Arranging



This is just one of the beautiful flower arrangements created by the Flower Arranging Volunteer Group. This very skilled group consists of Rhona Hirschowitz, Akemi Minami, Mei Chu and Mary Williams. Every Thursday morning they create lovely arrangements from the flowers that have been donated by Trader Joe's. All who come to and work at the Senior Center are able to enjoy the arrangements placed throughout the Center.

Barbara Scotto



This month we are spotlighting Barbara Scotto, and the amazing work she has performed for the Brookline Senior Center and in the community. Barbara has volunteered for The Brookline Senior Center as the School Committee liaison for about 5 years. She says, “Volunteering here gives me insight into the senior community in Brookline, allows me to catch up with parents of former students and library colleagues from the late 70s.

I find it fascinating to get to know people. This is an opportunity to do that”. Barbara says, “Volunteering at the Brookline Senior Center helps me spread awareness of senior citizens as supporters of education as well as their concerns about increased taxes and informs seniors about the discussions going on at various Town meetings.

Barbara also volunteers at *Children’s Literature New England*, a non-profit organization, where she acts as the Co- Director and Treasurer. She also runs online courses for the *Examined Life Greek Studies in the Schools Program* encouraging teaching of Greek culture. When Barbara isn’t volunteering at one of these places she’s most likely at a School Committee, Town Meeting or COA Board meeting.

Before retiring, Barbara worked in the libraries of Brookline elementary schools. “I have a foot in the education world, but I also have a foot in the library world, and have been active in the American Library Association for a long time. I’m learning more and more about the community and people’s needs which is very important”.

Although Barbara retired in 2006, she’s doing more work than ever, continues to be proactive in our community and enjoys her children and grandchildren. Thank you Barbara for all you do for the Senior Center, Brookline seniors and the community.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

The gratitude people express to me.

Anonymous

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Corey Cohen



Corey has just finished his 3rd year as a volunteer with the Brookline Senior Center. He helps out in the lunch program setting tables for the many seniors who enjoy the lunches and also works in the Food Pantry every Tuesday. He has helped by taking tickets as shoppers enter; bagging apples and helping shoppers select items and get them into their shopping cart.

Corey also works at Trader Joe’s in Coolidge Corner where he makes sure the shelves are neat and stocked, sweeps the aisles and breaks down boxes. Outside of the Senior Center and Trader Joe’s, Corey enjoys playing softball, participating in exercise classes, dancing and bowling. He also checks in each evening with his mom, shares highlights of his day and reminds his mom to take her medication. Corey says that he likes coming to the Senior Center because he loves the people who help him a lot!

What a great son, worker, volunteer and example of customer service!

Mailing Volunteers



This core group of volunteers pictured here meets each month to make sure that the monthly Senior News and Events Newsletter is mailed to more than 500 seniors. This core group and other mailing volunteers prepare all Council on Aging mailings, some of which for

new gallery exhibits, special events and fundraisers, are more than 700 pieces. They also do mailings for the Brookline Town Hall. One of the largest mailings this year for the Brookline Human Resources Department was 3,000 pieces and was finished in 3 hours!

Some mailing volunteers have been a part of this group for more than four years, while others have recently joined. It is a wonderful, multi-cultural social group.

Kara Murdock



Kara is a senior at Boston College. She chose the BSC for her Clinical Field Work. She had previously worked in a nursing home so knew that she loved working with seniors. However, Kara said that she hadn't realized that our seniors would refer to the BSC as their 2nd home where they meet with new and old friends and participate in many activities. As an intern she visited with elders, helped with the Springwell lunch program and covered the I & R desk. Kara's internship ends in December, but she enjoyed it so much that she will be extending as a volunteer for the 2nd semester. She said that while she had been thinking of pursuing social work, meeting the social workers, joining group supervision and seeing our social workers support seniors to be independent and engaged, validated and increased her passion and feeling of a good fit to become a social worker for seniors and support a special bond that she has with her grandmother.

Sherry Lee



If you want something done, ask a busy person. "I'm just a girl who can't say no...almost".

Some of the jobs Sherry has done at the BSC are: the gift cart, Springwell lunches, special events, recycling toner and cartridges, and bottles and aluminum foil from special event refreshments, helping Julie with program needs and the craft fair and participating in the Alzheimer's Walk.

In addition to her many volunteer jobs at the BSC, Sherry also has helped with 1st Night, the Wine Expo, the Flower Show, the Boston marathon, South Brookline Senior Coffee, Emergency Medical Corp, the Regional Alzheimer's Walk and caring for her grandson.

Sherry said that one of the benefits is meeting people from all over the world. Sherry tries to schedule a big and pleasurable event each month. And, her activities at the BSC give her a lot of pleasure. Sherry is also an Associate member of the Council on Aging.

Patricia Silva-Gayle



Patricia is a junior at Brookline High School where her favorite subject is English which she hopes will prepare her for a career in photojournalism. She has been part of the Steps for Success Program since kindergarten. She chose the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) for her summer volunteer internship. When asked her impression of the BSC, she said that there is a real sense of community, many interesting programs and opportunities for seniors, and that staff and seniors were all so friendly and welcoming to her and new visitors. During her internship, Patricia helped out at the reception desk, the information and referral desk, shadowed leaders in Zumba Gold, History of Russian Revolution and REAP, helped in the luncheon program checking participants in and serving lunch, helped with the Federal Food Commodity Program and assisted with various administrative tasks.

Earlier this year, Patricia spent two weeks at the School of New York Times in NYC where she studied photojournalism. This was her 2nd year in that program. Last year she studied law. In her spare time, Patricia likes to write poetry and explore interesting places around Boston with her friends. We are sure that we will see Patricia's name on photojournalism articles in the future!

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**PLEASE SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE
TECHNOLOGY ASSIST PROGRAM.**

**Tech assist with the volunteer is the
best thing since pantyhose!**

Anonymous

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VOLUNTEERS OF 2017

Nick Brown



Nick has been the Student Coordinator of the SHOP Club, a collaboration between the Brookline Senior Center and Brookline High School, at the high school for the past two years. He started participating in SHOP as a freshman because his brother had been a member, enjoyed it and recommended that he get involved as well. As the Student Coordinator, Nick used Facebook, freshmen orientation, and community service opportunity events as recruitment tools. This really worked as the SHOP Club is the biggest community service option at BHS. Nick used a survey to match students with seniors in their geographic area. In addition to students helping seniors, the students get to know a senior, gain some historical knowledge, engage in cultural sharing and sharpen a life time skill of grocery shopping. Nick says, 'I love the inter-generational aspect of the program. It can be life changing for some seniors and one senior reported that she could not afford food delivery charges so would not be getting enough to eat if it wasn't for SHOP. It also gives both students and seniors an opportunity to form real relationships'.



**PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE SHOP PROGRAM
OR YOUR STUDENT VOLUNTEER SHOPPER.**

**SHOP: The student's cheery demeanor is a gift in itself.
The program incorporates young people to help older
people like me. It's beneficial for everyone involved. Win Win.**

RF



VOLUNTEERS OF 2018

Fran (Frances) Pechenick



Fran (Frances) Pechenick began volunteering at the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) in 2011 when she saw that help was needed in the food distribution program. From there she went on to help with a wide variety of tasks, such as Computer One-on-One, the Alzheimer's Walk, tours of BSC, driving to events, the food pantry, newsletters, mailings, and working at the desk. Though initially reluctant to join BSC because she did not consider herself "old", Fran's first experience with SHINE counselor Sonia Wong opened her mind to the vibrant community at BSC that went far beyond her original expectations and definition of the word "Senior". Fran considers BSC to be a "home away from home", and currently enjoys the discussion group "Living Our Values", as well as the concerts, theater, trips, and transportation offered at BSC. Fran's seven years of volunteer work show her appreciation of the community and the lively and supportive atmosphere she has found here.

Akemi Minami



Akemi Minami has been volunteering at the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) since 2011, when she began because she was interested in volunteering in her community. She had previously volunteered with organizations including Hospice and Boston Public Schools, where she taught young students to read. In her seven years at BSC, Akemi has done gardening and flower arranging, which she enjoys because of its creative and meditative elements. Her interest in flowers stems from her father, who always kept flowers when they lived in Japan and in Brookline. One of her favorite parts of being at the Senior Center is socializing and the opportunities to make new friends. Akemi has been an inspiration to many throughout her time volunteering, most recently during the visit of the Lincoln 8th graders, when she demonstrated a traditional Japanese flower arrangement to a Japanese student. Akemi continues to practice reiki at BSC and inspire others in the community.

Lincoln School 8th Grade Graduating Students



Lincoln School 2018 8th Grade Graduating Students came to the Brookline Senior Center on June 14th for a Community Service day of board and card games and engaging with seniors. Their curiosity, eagerness to share what they are involved in at school and their interest in learning about the seniors with whom they spoke was wonderful. In addition to the above activities some students also worked with the senior flower arrangers and others watched the Chinese knitting and crocheting group. Some students also brought food donations. Patricia, the Volunteer Coordinator shared the recent Food Security Survey results to confirm how important food donations and food supplement programs are even in a town like Brookline. Over lunch, the students eagerly shared interesting stories about the seniors that they had interviewed – growing up in the Soviet Union, relocating in Brookline for the last year after losing everything in the hurricane in Puerto Rico, memories of WW II and being in the Israeli Army. Some students got to practice their Spanish and Japanese as well.

The BSC seniors definitely appreciated the students and their 2 teachers and the guidance counselor and the joy and energy that they brought to the BSC. We hope that they will continue volunteering when they attend the high school next year. Congratulations to all!

“

WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

Being useful and helpful for other people in the community.

Anonymous

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Julia Riesman



Julia Riesman is a rising senior at Brookline High School (BHS) and was a Steps for Success intern at the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) this summer. While at the BSC, Julia participated in the daily lunch program, the monthly Food Commodity program, the weekly Food Distribution program, interviewed volunteer of the year nominees, wrote mini articles about them for the monthly newsletter and the volunteer pages of the Town and COA websites and performed a variety of administrative tasks. When asked why she chose the BSC for her internship, Julia said that she had lived with her grandparents, likes to help people and lives nearby. She was not sure what to expect at the BSC, but was amazed at the number and variety of programs and resources available.

In addition, during her week off this summer, she was one of the three BHS students who participated in the World Scholars Cup Global Academic Competition in Barcelona, along with 2,000 students from 57 countries. Julia's BHS team placed 4th overall and won the team debate competition. Julia won 1st place for both art and literature. She is looking forward to participating with her team in the Tournament of Champions to be held at Yale University in November.

“

WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

**The appreciation of all of the seniors and employees
at the BSC, as well as their thoughtfulness
as to the improvement of my volunteer experience.**

ON

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Alice Fastov



Alice Fastov has been a volunteer at the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) for over 15 years. As one of her first projects as a volunteer, Alice paired Brookline seniors with Japanese students who were staying in the town. She began volunteering when approached by Charlotte Millman to help with the Easy Travel program, since Alice often traveled while teaching English as a second language. She was a frequent Easy Travel presenter, and continues to help “provide travel without the suitcases or passports”. After retiring from teaching English at Brookline schools, Alice continued to volunteer at the BSC, which enabled her to keep in touch with the community, despite not being a Brookline resident. Alice is also a co-coordinator of the theater program, making sure that those who enjoy theater get a chance to go to various plays and musicals. She appreciates the many ways in which BSC celebrates different ethnicities and enjoys getting to know people in BSC’s welcoming environment.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

My experience at BSC was wonderful, mainly because of the supportive and caring staff as well as the other amazing and kind volunteers. I will never forget my time here!

SL

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Senior, Marcella Katz, BHS students Charlotte Cahill and Yana Lazarova-Wong



The S.H.O.P. Program has been a collaboration between the Brookline High School’s community service program and the Brookline Senior Center for many years. It is a win-win volunteer opportunity for students who grocery shop and the elder for whom they shop.

Even more important than the actual shopping, this program builds meaningful multigenerational relationships and life lessons. Marcella enjoys giving shopping advice while reviewing her shopping list with Yana and Charlotte. Marcella feels that it is important to share her life experience and show that seniors may need assistance, but they are also still quite capable. Students show that they are interested in more than just technology. They talk about what they are learning in school and Marcella tells them about her experience and what it was like to live through different historical times and situations.

Charlotte and Yana have shopped for Marcella for two years and consider her an important part of their life...and the feeling is mutual.

“

PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE SHOP PROGRAM OR YOUR STUDENT VOLUNTEER SHOPPER.

It’s the highlight of my week!

KK

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Brookline Senior Center Food Distribution Team



The Brookline Senior Center (BSC) has held a Food Distribution every Tuesday for more than ten years. Up to 101 nearby residents come each week to supplement their food needs by

shopping at the Food Distribution. Unlike other food pantries in the area, the BSC's program has NO membership, asks NO questions about residency, age or income and allows shoppers to come every week. What really makes the BSC program shine is the dedicated volunteer team, some of whom are shown in the photo above. Whether it is the morning crew that sorts and sets up the incoming food or the afternoon crew who help shoppers make selections and ready the room for the next morning's activities, their ready smile and welcome not only make the process efficient, but enjoyable. Huge thanks to the Team for all your efforts to help provide food security to those who come to the BSC.

“

WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

I love the people and organization and providing a useful service

KH

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Vera Sharma



Vera Sharma started volunteering at the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) in 2002 when she was asked by program manager Charlotte Millman to join the volunteer team. Around that time, Vera became involved with the senior chorus and quilting at BSC. Over the years Vera has always been eager to help with a wide array of tasks, whether the lunch room, the coffee lounge, or at the craft fair. Despite her other volunteer commitments with the Springwell lunch program at 90 Longwood Avenue,

working at the poles during town elections and BCAN's Livable Community Advocacy Committee, she continues to be an active board member on the Council on Aging as well as collect donations from local businesses for the annual craft fair. One of her favorite activities is singing and dancing with the chorus for BSC's festivals and events. Her commitment to volunteer work at the BSC has earned her a volunteer of the year nomination for five consecutive years. At the BSC, Vera enjoys the art programs and museum visits, and finds the healthcare resources very helpful. She appreciates how the BSC enables seniors to be useful, feel valuable, and share their knowledge with younger generations. Vera has become close to other seniors who come from a diverse range of cultures, lifestyles, and experiences, and considers BSC her “second family”.

“

WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

Being able to share my knowledge and expertise with others to hopefully improve their health.

SH

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Sidonie Brown



Sidonie Brown is a rising senior at Brookline High School. She has participated in the SHOP program helping seniors with their grocery shopping for the last 3 years. This September she will begin her 2nd year as the Student SHOP Coordinator of the program along with being Editor in Chief of the yearbook and playing soccer. Sidonie recently was awarded a scholarship by the MIT AgeLab for her intergenerational work with SHOP. When asked what she liked most about SHOP,

she said she loved hearing students talk about their seniors, their stories, their connections and the cross sharing of experiences and wisdom. Congratulations to Sidonie!

Patricia Ahlin (Pat)



Patricia Ahlin (Pat), originally from Newfoundland, Canada moved to Brookline in 1966. She had the good fortune to work with Sherry Lee, a long time dedicated and past BSC Volunteer of the Year Award winner, for many years. It was Sherry who encouraged Pat to come to the BSC, enjoy the programs and start volunteering in October 2015. Pat has worked checking seniors in at the lunch program, helped with TRIPPS, is a COA member and member of other ad hoc

committees, but her favorite volunteer spot is at the reception desk greeting and conversing with so many interesting seniors. She feels that her volunteering is an absolute win/win connection and those who nominated her for Volunteer of the Year agree. Pat says that she is so impressed by how much such a small staff and huge volunteer group can do.

Serena Johnson



Serena Johnson is a perfect example of the success of the Brookline Senior Center's REAP program coordinated by Deidre Waxman. Patricia Burns joins Deidre in offering various job search workshops and help sessions for seniors looking for work.

Earlier this year, Serena attended Patricia's Job Search Networking four-session group in which Patricia recommended volunteering as a means of finding paid work. Very soon after, Serena applied to be a volunteer at the BSC where she became familiar with the center and staff. Meanwhile, the staff had a chance to observe and appreciate Serena's organizational and administrative skills and sunny personality. When Jessica, our full time administrative assistant went on maternity leave, it was Serena who was the perfect choice to fill this paid temporary position!

Sergio Hernandez



In addition to working as the assistant custodian at Brookline Senior Center (BSC), Sergio Hernandez spends eight hours each week volunteering with the Tuesday food distribution program. He began volunteering three years ago, when he saw an ad for assistance when passing by BSC. Sergio had extra time since he could not work, as he had not yet received a Green Card since moving from Chihuahua, Mexico. His energetic personality and drive to help others motivated him to spend his extra time volunteering at BSC, where he helped set up for events as well as helped with food distribution. After several years volunteering, Sergio was hired to help Jimmy, the custodian at BSC, who needed additional assistance. As he continues to volunteer, Sergio enjoys meeting seniors and other volunteers and fostering friendships that extend beyond the walls of BSC.

Sara Lee Bloom



Sara Lee has been a lifelong resident of Winchester Street in Brookline. She has been volunteering at the Senior Center Gift Cart for more than a year. This was a natural position for Sara Lee since her whole career revolved around retail sales where she worked with her late husband in the furniture business, started the Kids Corner on Beacon Street in Coolidge Corner and also worked 19 years in Bloomingdales.

Sara Lee loves finding new items for the gift cart. She often gets interesting donated goods from her friends. Many seniors enjoy checking out what might be new and stopping in for a chat at the gift cart whenever they are here.

In addition, Sara Lee also loves to bake. Her delicious baked goods are a favorite at the Annual Craft Fair. On special occasions, she also surprises staff with baked goodies.

Sara Lee was a long-standing member of the Brookline Library Art Society where she showed and sold many of her acrylic and pastel paintings.

She loves coming to the Senior Center and looks forward to meeting friends – new and old.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

The appreciation expressed by seniors who learn from the courses I created and present.

AW

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Mei Chu



Mei Chu has been a volunteer at the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) for more than six years. Mei has helped in the kitchen and for special events, teaches a weekly Chinese exercise class, helps with Chinese translation and interpretation, assists with various office tasks and is an important member of the flower arranging team. She is the BSC's 'energizer bunny'.

When asked why she first came to the BSC, she said that after retiring, she knew that she needed to keep active and also use and improve her English. Mei knows that learning new things, being productive and being around people are very good for her health.

Mei says that her role models at the BSC are: Agnes Rogers who at 98 was still volunteering and who @ 100 came to celebrate the Chinese New Year; Sylvia Tung who at 94 could still find an error from her CPA on her taxes; and Julie Washburn who even when she is tired and the day is long can always greet everyone with a smile.

Mei, who is celebrating 30 years in the US this year is a volunteer that all the staff and visitors to the BSC can count on.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

I loved interacting with the seniors and staff and hearing their stories of living in Boston over the years.

GP

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Rebecca Riccio



As Rebecca was finishing her junior year of high school, she reached out to volunteer at the Brookline Senior Center for the summer. She had an interest in making jewelry, and offered to lead a class. Each of Rebecca's weekly jewelry making groups was full and a huge hit! Clara, one of the group's participants, noted that "Rebecca deserves all the credits for her knowledge and tricks in jewelry making, and most of all, at her young age (more than half a century apart!), we appreciated

her patience in dealing with and teaching older folks like us who always asked questions at the same time, and she was running all over the places, always with a sweet smile, trying to show and explain how and what to do! This kind of intergenerational program certainly will help us (young & old) understand and learn how to get along with different age groups." Rebecca noted that "Many people came with broken jewelry that they wanted to fix and it was fascinating to hear the story behind each piece." Intergenerational programs like these enrich everyone's lives, young and old.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

I appreciate the opportunity to learn and contribute to the community.

PH

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Pam Hitchmoth



Every Tuesday afternoon for the past five years, Pam Hitchmoth has taken a seat at the information and resources desk in a sunlit office on the Senior Center's second floor and has set to work on fulfilling her responsibilities as one of the center's prized 300-plus volunteers.

Serving as an I&R officer is very much a multi-tasking kind of job, requiring Pam to field phone calls, assist with scheduling seniors for the center's myriad programs, referring them to social workers who can assist, accepting reservations for rides to medical facilities.

The list goes on, and this nearly 45-year Brookline resident seems to handle that multitude of assignments with a measure of aplomb, as well as with gratitude.

"I am impressed and grateful for the dedication, skill, and compassion that defines our leadership, social work, transportation, and administrative staff," Pam said in a recent interview. "Being part of this team is rewarding and enjoyable."

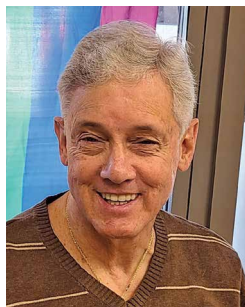
Her service at the center is just one of several volunteer positions to which Pam has given her time since her retirement from a career in medical sales (IV therapy products, infusion pumps, and compounding systems for pharmacies). Before that she worked in a clinical laboratory at the Franciscan Children's Hospital in Brighton.

She is a volunteer with the Medical Reserve Corps, a wing of the Brookline Department of Public Health and Human Services that coordinates flu clinics, emergency preparedness, and other health-related support services. She also gives of her time to Brookline's Community Emergency Response Team as one of 200 trained volunteers who assist emergency response personnel in times of crisis. And she teaches English as a second language at Rosie's Place, a shelter for women in Boston's South End.

But clearly the Senior Center has a special place in her heart.

"I value the opportunity to help and support the Senior Center staff and the senior citizen population," she said. "They're an amazing group of people."

Mitchell Drucker



With a master's degree in psychology, Mitchell Drucker built a career in health-related endeavors, most recently at a local behavioral health insurance company that provides coverage for people with mental health challenges and substance abuse.

Nearing age 70, this Brookline resident decided to call it quits from the working world three years ago and set about keeping busy in retirement. He soon discovered that “being retired can be boring,” he said, “so I tried to find a part-time job.” When no such opportunity presented itself, Mitchell came to the Brookline Senior Center about a year ago and inquired about volunteer work.

When Volunteer Coordinator Valerie Graf was showing him around the Center, the brightly colored rainbow flag hanging from a front window of the Winchester Street building caught Mitchell's eye. He asked if there was any programming for LGBT seniors, and she told him that there had been, but due to COVID-19, the program had been disbanded.

Last June Mitchell launched a weekly Wednesday discussion group for LGBT folks. “People enjoyed the free-ranging discussion,” he said of the event, now scheduled for the third Wednesday of each month. He is hoping it will continue to draw in participants.

Three days a week Mitchell also makes calls to people using the Council on Aging's medical transportation services to remind them of their appointments. He estimates he makes about 10 to 15 calls a day – a statistic that speaks to the popularity of that service with Brookline's seniors. Mitchell's friendly demeanor provides added support for those anxious about medical transportation. Mitchell combines his volunteerism with regular visits to the Senior Center's fitness center.



WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

Seeing people learn, feeling useful in the community!

Anonymous



Lyudmila Lugovyer



Lyudmila Lugovyer from Russia, with a love of English and desire to teach it. On the very day following the horrific events of Sept. 11, 2001, Lyudmila Lugovyer, an émigré from Moscow with a zen to teach English to her fellow Brookline residents, began her first day as a volunteer instructor of English at the Brookline Senior Center. She continues in that role to this day, and for her dedication to that form of education she has been honored by the Council on Aging with a Volunteer of the Year Award.

For Lyudmila, now a plucky 83, the honor is a recognition of a lifelong goal. “My whole life I wanted to learn,” she told The Brookline Beacon after she accepted her award at an April 19 volunteer appreciation event at the Senior Center. This teacher actually finds that she learns from those whom she instructs, making her voluntarism very much a discovery experience.

Her students, most of them Russian-born, fall into the intermediate category in terms of their grasp of the English they are studying. The class size numbers about seven or eight, down from the 15 or so who used to enroll when she first began teaching at the Senior Center but perhaps on the upswing now that the pandemic is less of a deterrent to enrollees. And as she did on Sept. 12, 2001, Lyudmila continues to offer her two-hour class on Wednesdays, from September through June.

The emphasis is on grammar and conversation, not immersion. “How do you converse if you don't know the structure of the language?” she asked rhetorically. Toward that end, she relies on several textbooks and also recommends the reading of newspapers. “There are wonderful books about teaching English that I brought from Russia” where she used to teach English at all pre-college grade levels. As a Jew, she was not able to advance to a teaching position in a state university in Russia.

Meanwhile, her twin daughters had emigrated to the United States and had settled in Brookline and Newton, so Lyudmila and her husband followed suit in 1996. They now make their home on the Hebrew Senior-Life campus in Coolidge Corner, mere steps away from the Senior Center.

Claire Larson



A lifelong resident of Brookline, Claire Larson had a 31 year career working for Sears Roebuck. She worked in the billing and credit department in the historic Landmark Center, as well as in the Natick and Burlington stores. Following her retirement from Sears Roebuck, Claire continued to work at several jobs including for the Boston Water Department. While she still worked full time, she started hearing good things about activities at the Brookline Senior Center from her friends and neighbors. When Claire finally retired and had more time, she discovered the important benefits of the Tax Work Off program. Claire was concerned about paying her high property tax bills, and this program offered some relief.

Claire now spends her time at the Brookline Senior Center's Gift Cart. On Mondays and Wednesdays, she sells items donated to the Center, and also greets folks as they enter the building. Claire notes that the Gift Cart is the first place many people stop when they arrive.

"I love meeting all the people and it's such a treat to say hello and chat with everyone. It's like being on Broadway; everyone coming and going and enjoying all of the programs we have here. It's just wonderful." Claire also helps with our annual Side Walk Sale as well as our Craft Fair & Rummage Sale. Her kindness, patience and fabulous sense of humor make a warm and positive impact on everyone she encounters at the Gift Cart and the Senior Center.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

**I like to feel needed, to feel like I'm helping others,
and to be part of the Brookline Senior Community.**

AL

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Steven Maas and Valerie Zimmer

Known by the acronym SHINE – for Serving Health Information Needs of Everyone, the confidential counseling provides free health insurance information to Massachusetts residents who are on Medicare and Mass Health. To become a SHINE volunteer, one must undergo four to five weeks of training, pass a certification test, and apprentice with a counselor. The qualification process continues with a mandatory annual recertification exam.

Among the several volunteers assisting Brookline seniors is Steve Maas, who found his way to the COA's SHINE program through a program that ensures ombudsman oversight at every nursing home in Massachusetts.

"I've always enjoyed volunteering with seniors," said Steve, who had been volunteering his time at the CareOne nursing home on Brookline's Park Street when the coordinator of the MetroWest ombudsman program told him about the SHINE volunteer opportunities.

During the recent enrollment season, he put in "20 hours a week or more," he said, counseling seniors remotely, especially about the prescription drug plan changes that take effect in the new year.

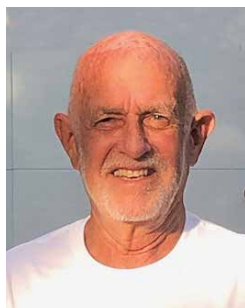
The Medicare recipients served by SHINE "come from all walks of life – even from insurance companies," Steve said, and they often find the rules to be complicated when having to choose from among the 24 drug coverage programs offered. "We try to help them determine the best value for what they need," Steve said. To do that, SHINE volunteers must stay current with the costs of all the options, and that means "we have to keep on learning."

Brookline resident Valerie Zimmer is in her second year as a SHINE volunteer, putting in about 15 hours a week during the recent open enrollment period. Another open enrollment period, this one involving Medicare Advantage supplementary coverage plans begins in January and continues through March. "SHINE counselors see clients all year-round," Valerie noted.

Volunteering with SHINE comes naturally for Valerie, given her background in health economics and her previous work with an HMO. "Everybody needs this kind of counseling," she said, explaining that people who had worked and had their health coverage purchased through their employers are not necessarily conversant in all things Medicare-related.

The advisory responsibilities required of SHINE counselors are considerable, and the COA's volunteer team, which also includes Sybil Levinsohn, Sonia Wong, and most recently Chris Leonesio are proving they are up to the task.

Larry Rosenberg



A graduate of Brookline High School, class of 1958, Larry Rosenberg has been volunteering with the Tech Buddies Tablet Program since it started in the early days of the pandemic. Initially a program through the Office of Emergency Management, it is now run by the Council on Aging through a grant from the Brookline Community Foundation. Tech Buddies provides free tablets (small hand-held computers) to eligible seniors and individuals with disabilities in Brookline who otherwise do not have access to computers or the internet. These tablets are loaded with community resources and everything needed to stay connected, as well as technical support provided by volunteers. So far, 175 tablets have gone out to Brookline residents, with another 50 ready to go.

While originally providing technical support to seniors with their new tablets, Larry is now responsible for loading all the tablets with programs so they are all set up and ready to be distributed. With a background in computers, Larry developed a process to clone the tablets so that each of the tablets are loaded with programs identically to a master tablet. This makes it easier for seniors to learn how to use their tablets and get support when needed.

Larry says, “I think it’s a great program connecting people who were not previously connected. It has given a lot of housebound people or those with disabilities a connection with the library, the town, the senior center, transit schedules, password managers, and just the ability to go online. The tablets are fairly easy to use. For someone who is not technical at all and afraid of computers, this is an easy way to feel connected. I’d like to see more cities and towns follow Brookline’s lead doing this.”

Not only does Larry volunteer for the Tech Buddies program, he is also a long-time and active volunteer with the Brookline Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), the Brookline Medical Reserves Corps (MRC), and the Red Cross. Larry is also an elected Area Council Member in Newton.

Dick Morse



Boston-born Dick Morse has spent most of his 92 years in Brookline, giving back to this community and beyond – most recently, and indeed notably, teaching English as a second language two days a week at the Brookline Senior Center.

For his efforts, which date back 20-plus years, Dick was honored by the Council on Aging six weeks ago with a Volunteer of the Year Award, which this tall, soft-spoken man acknowledged with a gracious acceptance speech before a crowd of more than 200 other Senior Center volunteers and supporters.

Having grown up in Brookline, Dick was taken with the Russian language during his college years. Following military service with the U.S. Navy, he went on to a career in business and then served on the boards of several Boston area non-profits.

It was a friend who was teaching English as a second language who was the inspiration for Dick’s decision to begin doing the same at the Senior Center not long after it opened in the early 2000s. Every Tuesday and Wednesday he has been presiding over a class of about eight students, most of them from former Soviet republics.

“The smartest people are the first to leave from their country,” Dick said of his students, noting that several had been working in the law, engineering, and other professions. The Tuesday class is at the intermediate level and Wednesday’s is advanced.

The first hour of each class consists of a conversation “in English only,” and the second hour is devoted to a discussion of the homework the students were assigned – to read news stories published in major newspapers and engage in an exchange with Dick, using correct words and punctuation, about what they learned.

Clearly, his students appreciate what their teacher is doing on their behalf. He said that the week after the April 19 Volunteer Appreciation Event at the Senior Center, his Wednesday students came to class with presents and flowers for him.

Kelley Pope



A North Carolinian by birth, Kelley Pope found her way north nearly 30 years ago, settling first in Boston and then in Brookline where she is making her mark as a valued volunteer with non-profit groups serving senior citizens.

But before that she took a detour into music promotion – a career that advanced her from receptionist to business manager to producer and sent her on tours worldwide. Even then the volunteer spirit within her led her to produce a major fundraising concert in Los Angeles in 1985 that aided homeless people.

Following the profound losses of her mother, her brother, and a love of her life named Alex, Kelley realized she was in need of a helping hand. In 2019, a doctor introduced her to FriendshipWorks, whose mission is to reduce social isolation, enhance quality of life, and preserve the dignity of older adults in Greater Boston.

In a May 21 tribute, Kelley was honored by FriendshipWorks for her voluntarism. The organization's director of programs, Julie Burkley, took note of the fact that her volunteer work began in 2020 just as the pandemic set in. She more than met that challenge, Burkley told a gathering assembled for the award ceremony.

"As FriendshipWorks moved from in-person visits to calls and online visits, Kelley took on the responsibility of making check-in calls to at least 15 elders in the Brookline area," Burkley said, adding, "Kelley went above and beyond her role as call-maker and often delivered food and medicine" to those she was assisting.

Even as the pandemic has receded, Kelley continues to be involved with FriendshipWorks, and she also has found her way to the Brookline Senior Center. Kelley has volunteered in several areas, including lending her skills as a photographer, helping with our Annual Craft Fair and Rummage Sale, and also creating and leading upcycled jewelry crafts classes.

Not only is she giving of her time and generosity of spirit, Kelley finds she is getting something back in return. With traces of her upbringing in the South still audible as she speaks, she explains that tradeoff this way: "Friendship is a two-way street. And I find that even as a volunteer, I really also need this in my life."

Mary Kuchinsky



Mary Kuchinsky comes from a family of volunteers. Her father volunteered in food service for many years, and Mary has cherished memories of assisting him in his last years of helping others. This is what prompted her to take on the role of volunteer with the Brookline Senior Center Springwell lunch program back in 2018. Mary likes to create a restaurant-like atmosphere for seniors dining at the Center, chatting, listening, and turning lunchtime into a special experience.

What started out as a Tax Work Off position has become so much more to Mary. "I love this place. There is so much going on, it's great! I think of my dad every time I'm volunteering here." Kristine Farley who manages the lunch program says, "Mary is so lovely and positive all of the time, she just brightens everyone's day."

In addition to serving lunches, Mary enjoys participating in the Qi Gong classes and attending the wonderful concerts at the Senior Center. Beyond the Senior Center, she also volunteers two days a week at a cat shelter. Mary's dedication to volunteerism reflects her commitment to both the community and her father's memory.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

*I like meeting people and helping people.
Love seeing when people happy by getting help.*

LL

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Nancy Nitikman



Volunteering Leads To Long-Term Friendships. When Nancy Nitikman retired from work as a corporate lawyer, she began volunteering at the Brookline Public Library. Initially a member and soon President of Friends of the Library, she also ran the used book sale, raising funds for various initiatives that fell outside the budget. Around the same time, she volunteered to support The Library Connection, delivering print, audio and visual materials to area residents who were unable to

get to the library in person. This program struck a chord with Nancy, who recalls bringing her mother, an avid reader, to the local library in their hometown when her mother could no longer drive herself. Nancy knew that in taking on this role she would “make people very, very happy and make me very, very happy.” Twenty-five years later, she is still enthusiastically involved in this program.

This initiative is a collaboration between the Brookline Council on Aging and the Brookline Public Library. Longtime Brookline library staff member, Roberta Blumenthal, initially coordinated the effort. Roberta has responded to patron requests for specific materials, as well as assembled packages of books, CDs, and DVDs based on individuals’ expressed interests (from mystery novels to opera). She also has served as a sort of matchmaker, partnering recipients with volunteer delivery people who share similar literary tastes.

Nancy developed close relationships with many of the people she has met through the program. She finds that “these people have enriched my life.” One woman, a writer, presented Nancy with a book of original poetry. Another patron shares Nancy’s love of show tunes, while some are related to successful opera performers that Nancy admires.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

To have the opportunity to meet wonderful people and new friends.

AES

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Musia Watkin is one of the people Nancy has befriended through the program. At 100 years old, Nancy says Musia is “smarter than I ever was, more talented than I ever was.” An immigrant from South Africa who sculpts and paints, Musia finds that books “make you think, make you imagine” and often gets inspiration for her art through them. Her favorites include thrillers and biographies of “people who have made an impact on the world.” She moved to Brookline about 10 years ago, at which time she reached out to the library and became involved in Library Connections.

Musia and Nancy have formed a deep friendship over the decade since they first met. In each hour-long meeting, Musia shares her art and the pair has discussions that extend well beyond literature. Musia says “We talk about everything - world affairs, family, each other.” Nancy has gotten to know Musia’s relatives and attended her centenary birthday celebration.

Of the program, Musia says “It’s absolutely perfect. Nancy’s a star - she just knows exactly what books I like, what to get for me from the library. She knows me very well and we’ve become close friends, actually. It’s a boon for me. She knows me so well...she’s not just a messenger, but she’s my friend.”

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

I get joy over taking books to elder folks who cannot get to the library.

MJ

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Isabelle Prescott



During her time at Northeastern, Bella worked as an EMT for an ambulance company, where she discovered a passion for connecting with seniors. Spending hours in the back of the ambulance during patient transports, she enjoyed her talks with seniors, learning about their lives and making them feel cared for and valued. This experience even influenced her relationship with her own grandmother, as she started calling her more often and building a closer connection.

Upon graduating, Bella knew she wanted to work with the aging population, although she wasn't exactly sure how. One day while walking through Coolidge Corner, she happened upon the Senior Center and decided to get involved. She quickly became a volunteer, first leading a crossword group and now working on the Reception Desk. Bella enjoys conversing with people while they wait for their rides, inquiring about their lives, and building connections.

One day at the Senior Center, Bella noticed Jamie Jensen wearing a Pro-Aging shirt. She had to have one! After she purchased one for herself, she received numerous compliments from family, friends, and even strangers on the street. Encouraged by this positive response, Bella returned to buy more shirts to share with the people in her life.

Looking ahead, Bella plans to attend medical school and is considering focusing on gerontology or substance abuse.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

It has “pushed” me to reach out to others on phone or in person. It helped me, especially during Covid lockdown.

RF

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Judy Chasin



Judy Chasin began her career as an audiologist in the Boston area back in 1961. After three decades of running Brookline Hearing Services, Judy retired in 2013. Through Brookline Hearing Services, Judy met Miriam Sargon, an instrumental member of the Brookline Council on Aging, who introduced her to the Brookline Senior Center.

Judy started volunteering and over the years, she has assumed numerous volunteer roles.

Currently, she serves as the Vice Chair of the COA Board, leads both the Ukulele and Virtual Folk Singing groups, coordinates our eyeglass donation program, picks up the weekly Trader Joe's flowers for the Senior Center, coordinates donation of our remaining items to Welcome Home after our Craft Fair and Yard Sale, and represents the Council on

Aging on the Springwell Board. Judy is typical of many of our volunteers who donate their time to wherever the need may be. Judy can also be found participating in many of the Senior Center's performances and lectures. “I enjoy my volunteer activities as I feel that I gain more than I give. It is an opportunity to meet other seniors in Brookline and to participate in the many programs that the Senior Center offers. Also, I enjoy working with the amazing staff at the Center. They are always upbeat, hardworking and so helpful,” Judy shares about her experiences at the Senior Center.

While not volunteering or participating in SC programming, Judy generously opens her home to those traveling to Boston for medical treatment at Boston hospitals through Hospitality Homes. She also hosts classical musicians visiting for performances with local chamber music ensembles. As a musician herself, Judy plays cello in various quartets and trios in the area, as well as ukulele with the City Hall Strummers out of Newton.

Judy was awarded the Brookline Senior Center's 2024 John & Molly Dolan Volunteer of the Year Award at Volunteer Appreciation Event in April.

Dayna Freeman



In her last year at Boston College, with an interest in psychology and the senior population, Dayna Freeman's professor recommended she reach out to the Director of the Brookline Council on Aging, Ruthann Dobek, about doing an internship at the Brookline Senior Center. Professor Rosen has had many successful placements at the Brookline Council on Aging. After speaking with Ruthann last spring, Dayna was excited to be offered an internship for the fall. Dayna began her placement at the Senior

Center in August, in conjunction with a class called Clinical Fieldwork In Psychology. Dayna is passionate about seniors' maintaining healthy, productive social lives and seniors' autonomy in the community. For the past three months, Dayna has been busy assisting with the Senior Center's transportation program, helping out with programs and events including the Craft Fair and Rummage Sale, as well as answering phones and signing seniors up for services on the Information and Resource Desk. Dayna has also worked with seniors one on one, from being an active and patient listener to helping with technology challenges.

Dayna expresses that she has thoroughly enjoyed her time here at the Brookline Senior Center and having the opportunity to work with seniors in this dynamic environment. "My experience here has just increased my interest in working with seniors. It has been such a pleasure working with all of the social workers and staff here too. Everyone is so dedicated, empathetic, and hard working. It's so inspiring."

Dayna graduated in December 2023 with her Bachelors of Science in Psychology. Her plan is to start looking for a clinical research position in psychology, before applying for graduate school programs in Clinical Psychology. We wish Dayna all the best in what comes next!



WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

Being Appreciated, and being helpful

HH



Jess Diulio



Jess Diulio, Future Social Worker. A California lawyer turned tutor, Jess Diulio relocated to Massachusetts in 2021 to be closer to family and provide care for her mother. Taking a break from the work world, Jess wanted to focus on her family and volunteering. She began volunteering at Steps to Success at Brookline High, and later joined the Food Bank at United Parish. Looking to volunteer with the aging community, Jess found her way to the Brookline Senior Center in 2022.

Jess started at the Senior Center's Information and Referral (I&R) Desk, answering phones, connecting seniors with resources and programs, and referring them to social workers. "I love being on the I&R desk, interacting with the seniors that come here, and learning about all the resources and social programs we have. I just fell in love with it all," Jess remarks.

After a few months, Jess responded to a need for a part-time Medical Transportation Assistant at the Brookline Senior Center and was hired. She schedules medical transportation for seniors in the community to get to their appointments. "I have become so much more aware of all the needs of seniors and the resources we have to help. The gratitude I get from seniors who I assist with medical transportation is so rewarding. I love how I can help take away one stressor for people already dealing with difficult medical issues," Jess shares about her experience coordinating transportation.

Inspired by her experiences at the Senior Center and her daily interactions with our social workers, Jess began considering taking steps to become a social worker herself. A lunch meeting with Sharon Sandalow, a Senior Center social worker, further fueled her motivation for this later in life career change. Encouraged by Sharon, Jess applied to Boston College's clinical social work program. She recently received the exciting news that she was accepted into the program, and she will begin there full time in August 2024!

Reflecting on her experiences at the Brookline Senior Center and her decision to pursue social work, Jess expresses empathy for those lacking family support. "I'd love to serve a purpose by helping to fill that gap for people. I'd eventually like to work in a hospital setting coordinating seniors' care and discharge planning."

From volunteer to employee to future social worker, we wish Jess all the best as she begins her journey into social work school!

Annahita Forghan



During childhood, Annahita Forghan began losing her hearing. She was studying to become a pharmacist when she completely lost her hearing, and she started experiencing other progressing symptoms. Shortly after graduating pharmacy school, Annahita learned that she had a rare genetic disease called PHARC (Polyneuropathy, Hearing loss, Ataxia, Retinitis pigmentosa, and Cataract). Unable to practice pharmacy, and with progressing disabilities, she was unsure what to do. A physical therapist she

had been working with suggested volunteering at the Brookline Senior Center.

Early in summer of 2023, Annahita reached out and had the idea to teach a beginners American Sign Language (ASL) class at the Senior Center, even though she was still learning to sign herself. What started out with teaching one beginner's ASL class, has now grown into two weekly intermediate classes. In teaching others, Annahita has improved her own ASL skills, has developed her skills in teaching, and has come to love the senior community. "The people in my classes teach me about life, suggest books to read, and make grocery store recommendations. Seniors are so motivated to learn and are so wise. I love teaching them! I don't know what life would've been like without the Senior Center", Annahita shares.

Annahita is also a musician, and volunteers her time to play her flute at the Senior Center. She has performed during our Craft Fair & Rummage Sale, as well as other solo performances.

Annahita has a love of travel and has paired that with volunteering as well. When she lost her hearing, she connected with a group called VolunTEars, an organization that arranges trips overseas for deaf, hearing and hard-of-

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

*It feels like the senior center is putting life into me,
I went from feeling disabled to feeling capable!
I love teaching because of you guys.*

AF

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hearing people of all ages. She has since gone on three international trips with them, volunteering, visiting with local deaf communities, as well as visiting amazing local sites.

Annahita feels like she now has a connection with seniors. "My body is aging fast, and most people my age haven't experienced that, but seniors understand. I find positivity here, and a motivation to live. It's all about mind set, and the Brookline Senior Center has made such a difference for me", Annahita shares.

Volunteers Go the Extra Mile

Director of the Brookline Senior Center, Ruthann Dobek, often says, "When you need something done, you ask a busy person!"

Recently one of our staff was out of the office, unexpectedly due to a family emergency. Her responsibilities include the Medical Transportation Program. Phone calls desperately needed to be answered and rides scheduled. A couple of dedicated volunteers immediately stepped into action. They handled over 50 messages in one day requesting medical transportation, all while managing their regular volunteer duties. This commitment saved the day for dozens of folks who rely on this essential transportation service.

This situation highlights the unwavering dedication of our volunteers, who are always ready to jump in and help keep the Senior Center running smoothly. Our volunteers provide essential services. We are deeply grateful for all of our volunteers for the tasks they are schedule to do and the countless "extra mile" efforts they contribute to our community every day.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

It is amazing connecting with seniors on a personal level.

LN

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The SHOP Program

A collaboration between the Brookline Senior Center and the Brookline High School (BHS), has been a community service club at BHS over 25 years. Students are paired with seniors to assist with grocery shopping throughout the school year. In addition to providing practical support for seniors, this program also offers high school students valuable life skills. Not only do they hone their grocery shopping skills, it creates opportunities for students and seniors to exchange stories and life experiences, fostering rich intergenerational conversations. These connections often evolve into meaningful, long-lasting relationships, benefiting both the students and seniors involved.

Anne Mogel, a BHS junior and one of this year's SHOP Student Leaders says, "I've had a great experience participating in SHOP. I have been able to form a relationship with the senior I'm shopping for, as well as experience what it's like to do hands-on volunteering, where I can see my impact up close. I shop for my senior every weekend, and it has become woven into my weekly routine. I'm looking forward to continuing my shopping this year, and furthering my experience!"

Currently serving approximately 25 Brookline seniors, the SHOP program gets high marks from the seniors involved. One senior couldn't say enough positive things about the two students with whom she has been paired. She noted that "It's the highlight of my week!" Another senior reflected that "the student's cheery demeanor is a gift in itself. The program incorporates young people to help older people like me. It's beneficial for everyone involved. Win Win!"

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**PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE SHOP PROGRAM
OR YOUR STUDENT VOLUNTEER SHOPPER.**

*I have no relatives here. I very much felt that my shoppers
were my family here. They even invited me to
graduation and their party.*

Anonymous

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Rhona Hirschowitz



Rhona Hirschowitz, Nominee for Volunteer of the Year 2018: Rhona was born and raised in South Africa, home to an extraordinary variety of flowers. Her father was a horticulturalist and her mother was 'a natural' flower arranger. Rhona became a volunteer at the Brookline Senior Center in October 2004 after responding to an ad for a flower arranger. She said that she started as the only person working with the flowers and soon realized she would need help. While Rhona has

definitely been the mainstay since the program started, many other extraordinary volunteers have joined the team at and for various times. Mei Chu and Akemi Minami are her long term every week volunteers that she depends on the most. All the volunteers share the love of flowers and are able to leave their problems aside while working with beauty.

Another volunteer position that Rhona has done for many years is copyediting the monthly newsletter. She said that she has a real 'typo eye' and finds it fun to find errors before the publication goes to press. She said that she enjoys working with Maureen Deery, the editor.

Rhona closed by saying that Thursday is the best day of her week because of the flowers and that she is proud to be associated with the BSC.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

*Interacting with such kind people while doing
something I love to do.*

CY

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Agnes Rogers

Agnes Rogers, at 97 years old, is now the oldest very regular volunteer serving the Brookline Senior Center. Her age does not stop her from coming every weekday to help with the lunch program.

Agnes is also the Honorary COA Chair Emeritus having served as the Chair for many years until this September when she handed the position over to Roberta Winitzer. Agnes still is an active participant in the monthly COA meetings.

She has been involved in COA and BSC affairs since before this building was built and has been a vocal advocate during Town budget meetings regarding funding for seniors in Brookline. She has also been the President of the Brookline Housing Authority Tenants' Association. Agnes has often said, "When I started fighting for the Senior Center, I didn't realize that I would be fighting for myself someday."

When asked what she liked best about volunteering, Agnes did not hesitate before saying, "getting out every day, making new friends and experiencing different aspects of friendship".

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**PLEASE SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH
YOUR SHINE VOLUNTEER.**

SHINE: I want to also share with you the fact that today my husband and I had a Zoom Meeting with the Shine Counselor. I have just received my Medicare card and we have been overwhelmed by the decision-making process. He was incredibly well-informed and expertly guided us through the decision process, alleviating the tremendous stress that we had been experiencing as we waded our own clumsy way through the information available to us. Please do share with all concerned how appreciative we are of his top-notch assistance!

Anonymous

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Ruth Geller & Marsha Jones

A Volunteer Opportunity Becomes a Real Friendship.

Ruth Geller started coming to the Brookline Senior Center, days after moving from New York to Brookline. Almost immediately she became a volunteer. Over a ten year period, Ruth had volunteered on the gift cart, in the TRIPPS program, with the Out-To-Lunch group, for the annual Craft Fair, co-chaired the Current Events program and did anything else she was asked to do. Years later, Ruth overcame her feeling of not wanting to impose on anyone when she really needed help shopping. Ruth did not need or want someone to do shopping for her; she wanted someone to do shopping with her as her vision no longer made it safe for her to take the train alone.

Marsha Jones has been a volunteer with the library helping to select books and providing pick-up and drop-off library book service for Brookline seniors for 25 years. In September 2017, Marsha retired and called the Senior Center looking to expand her volunteering. She was connected with Ruth for grocery shopping, but soon they started spending even more time together. In addition to shopping, they had added rides to Ruth's physical therapy appointments, forays to the library and a trip to Marsha's recommended jewelry store to repair a piece of Ruth's jewelry.

Ruth and Marsha consider themselves friends and kindred spirits. Marsha said that she was so impressed by Ruth, a spunky person in her 90s who texts her children on her SmartPhone and has a full and enjoyable life. She enjoyed her time with Ruth and says she was a real inspiration. Ruth said that, "Marsha is such a lovely person who gives of herself – a truly generous spirit who always makes her feel comfortable".

Ruth continued to be a volunteer and a recipient - a helper and being helped. When asked why she thought they had formed this friendship, Ruth said that, "She felt they both had the same value system, they were free to discuss any topic openly and were interested to hear each other's perspectives". Both agreed that the original shopping opportunity turned into a very nice experience and a true friendship.

Ruth passed away in 2023.

Carol and Phil Fullerton

Carol and Phil Fullerton started to volunteer at the Brookline Senior Center (BSC) soon after they moved to Brookline in 2005. The two have always been active in community affairs, participating in many hockey and soccer programs over the years and were involved with New Hampshire Travel & Tourism. They had not anticipated joining the Senior Center, but Carol found herself coming to BSC for an Adult Ed. group on storytelling. After noticing the need for help when passing by the gift cart, in 2006 she became one of the earliest gift cart volunteers. Carol has continued to oversee the cart, making sure the cards and gifts are tidy, and Phil has joined her as well. At the cart, Phil enjoys meeting others as they come through the doors. Carol finds that working at the cart boosts her energy and outlook, and she enjoys talking with other volunteers about “everything under the sun”, often discussing challenges of aging. She also helps organize the ‘out-to-lunch’ activities each month. The Fullertons are in charge of the raffle at the November craft fair at the Senior Center, as well as at the Town Hall. Phil is a COA Board Member, has helped with the sidewalk sale and various tasks throughout the year, such as setting up for events and helping individuals. At BSC, he participated in the previous men’s club and now often exercises at the center’s gym. One of their favorite events at BSC is the annual visit of DJ Tommy Bahama**, who gets everyone smiling and dancing. They also like going to the community lunches to socialize with friends. Volunteering helps them to keep active and busy, and Carol finds that they always leave BSC feeling energized and uplifted.

Phil Fullerton passed away in 2023.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

I enjoy helping and supporting others.

Anonymous

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Timmy Sullivan

Timmy Sullivan was a long time Town employee and a long time Brookline Senior Center volunteer. At the 2019 COA Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, having just recently retired as Brookline’s Supervisor of Mail and Print Operations after 41 years, Timmy was the recipient of the 2019 Unsung Hero Award. He started helping with printing and mailing for the Senior Center when it was just a few rooms at 61 Park Street many years ago. Timmy could always be counted on to make time for special and regular print jobs, to fill in distributing the Senior Newsletter and transporting mail to and from the Town Hall – all with a smile and a kind word. After retiring, he began delivering our newsletter all around town. He was the Senior Center’s unsung hero.

When he wasn’t working, Timmy was very committed to civic life in Brookline.

He coordinated annual holiday dinners at Brookline Housing Authority buildings for many years, often at his own expense, so folks could enjoy a nice meal and celebrate together. Timmy said that he followed his father’s example. His dad started the family tradition one Thanksgiving in South Boston by feeding an elderly couple who had no dinner. Timmy did not like to see people suffer so when he saw people with no place to go on Christmas, he felt he had to do something.

Timmy also coordinated the Town’s Toys for Tots collection every year and he helped the Senior Center “celebrate” the Town’s “birthday” every year in November by securing a cake and bringing it to the Center for all to enjoy.

He was a kind and generous soul and he will be missed by all who were lucky enough to know him.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

To see and become friends with patrons and staff.

KK

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Vivian H. Freeman

This year's luncheon is in honor of all the wonderful volunteers at the Senior Center and is dedicated to the memory of Vivian H. Freeman, who served as our Volunteer Coordinator for 18 years.

A Brookline resident, Vivian was a Wellesley College graduate, with a Masters in Education. Her life was devoted to volunteering and service. She published articles about volunteerism, mentored many and put together a multitude of volunteer programs.

Like all of our volunteers, Vivian improved the lives of countless Brookline Seniors. As a volunteer, you not only help others. You keep Vivian's devotion to volunteer service alive, through your acts of kindness, caring and giving.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

Brookline Senior Center is **THE BEST**. It is meaningful for me to give back. Brookline Senior Center has been and continues to be good to me. Thank you!

RK

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Muriel Stark

Muriel started getting involved in Brookline senior activities around 1978 after her husband passed. Once the Senior Center was built, Muriel started volunteering in various activities such as the Quilting Group, the Annual Craft Fair, the Tuesday Food Pantry, the Friday Mailing Team, as a BSC Ambassador and the “Giver of I Love You’s” to all who come to the BSC. She feels that socializing here, having a good time and meeting with a great group of people are all good reasons to come to the BSC. Muriel says that she loves people and that they bring something to her and allow her to forget her problems, live the life she wants to live and think about others. She says that she is truly blessed.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

I feel respected and recognized when I volunteer.

Anonymous

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Eleanor Small

Eleanor Small was a Brookline Senior Center volunteer for over 17 years. She volunteered on the gift cart, in the Tuesday Food Pantry, at the Craft Fair, at the Annual Sidewalk Sale, as well as the Out-To-Lunch-Bunch. She was also an avid bridge player at the Senior Center. Eleanor was a true ambassador of the BSC and exemplified the sharing, giving and paying it forward of John & Molly Dolan for whom the Volunteer of the Year Award is named and she was the recipient of in 2018.

Age never slowed Eleanor's fearless nature or extinguished her strong will. Rather, each advancing year provided additional fuel for her to continue to be active in her community and dedicate a large percentage of her time to the Brookline Senior Center. "My mom considered herself to be an integral part of the Center and was proud to be recognized," noted her son Barry. Eleanor relished the opportunities to manage the logistics for so many of the Senior Center's Lunch Bunch outings. One of her favorite anecdotes was when a businessman picked up the entire tab for the Senior Center Lunch Bunch. When not playing Bridge, or negotiating sales at the Senior Center's gift cart or jewelry table, Eleanor was always available to wield her wicked sense of humor and dispense her unabashed honesty to anyone in earshot. "Eleanor was a tremendous asset to the Senior Center. She was especially fabulous in her warm, welcoming personality. Eleanor always went out of her way to greet newcomers and introduce them to other participants and programs," shared Ruthann Dobek, Brookline Senior Center Director (BSC).

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

It is gratifying that in some small way I can be of assistance.

Anonymous

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Although Eleanor undeniably was a busy person, she was never too engaged to help or lend a genuine listening ear. A conversation with Eleanor always included caring questions about you and your family and what was important. "I didn't have one conversation with Eleanor that didn't include, "how are your daughter and husband doing?" says BSC Supervisor of Services and Operations, Julie Washburn.

Friendship and family were equally rooted in Eleanor's nature. Her loyalty and passion for her friends was not even deterred by the fierce COVID epidemic. Eleanor and her friend Ruth Geller, a duo better known as "the golden girls," understood the importance of support and friendship during both the best and worst of times. Even with the many challenges of COVID, Eleanor and Ruth continued to regularly meet on the Senior Center outdoor benches, keeping a safe distance and a conversation that never lapsed.

Eleanor's passing earlier this year (2023) left many in her family and at the Center missing her contributions, sassiness, advice and valued listening ear. "I have her voice in my head a lot of time thinking, what would Eleanor say about this?" admits BSC Program Manager, Jamie Jensen.

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WHAT HAS MADE YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE MEANINGFUL?

Face-to-face contact with seniors who need help navigating complicated Medicare and MassHealth systems.

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Valued **VOLUNTEERS** **SPOTLIGHT**

This publication was generously underwritten by David Freeman, in loving memory of his beloved mother Vivian Freeman who was the BSC first volunteer coordinator. David recalls,
“My mother had a true passion for the Brookline Senior Center. She enjoyed recruiting, training, and supporting the volunteers. She understood the importance of acknowledging their generous contributions of time and talent. She always planned the Annual Appreciation Luncheons months in advance. She showered volunteers with poetry, decorations, delicious food – and gratitude.”



ADDING LIFE TO THE YEARS
Brookline Senior Center