

## MEDICAL TRAVEL COMPANIONS

"This service means everything to me"



Yvonne and Ms. D

New York City sidewalks are an obstacle course for anyone to navigate. For older adults with mobility issues, trying to maneuver the city without help is not only daunting, but often an impossible task.

To address this issue, Search and Care offers fee-free **Medical Travel Companions**—qualified, personable escorts who meet clients at their homes, transport them to vital appointments, and return them back home safely—even picking up prescriptions.

Yvonne Fitzner has accompanied many older clients to appointments—more than a medical escort, she's also a source of support. "It's important to stay independent," Ms. D, a client, shared. "I've been working since I was eight years old, and have always helped other people. It's hard to accept help for myself. But, honey, I feel very safe and comfortable with Yvonne when I'm with her!"

Linda Ross, also a Travel Companion, accompanied Ms. S to her cataract surgery, and afterward, Ms. S was wearing post-op glasses and needed to be transported home. Linda carefully helped her into the car, and brought her back home safely.

Ms. S revealed with a smile, "I have been pleased with every medical travel companion you've sent to help me. I can't walk alone anymore, so this service means everything to me."

## ONCE LONELY, NOT NOW!

"Out and about again"

Ms. L lives alone. "She stopped connecting with people a long time ago," Jamie Frankenberg, LMSW, shared. Ms. L was referred to Search and Care to secure Meals on Wheels. "She wasn't comfortable speaking to anyone after that and wouldn't leave her apartment."

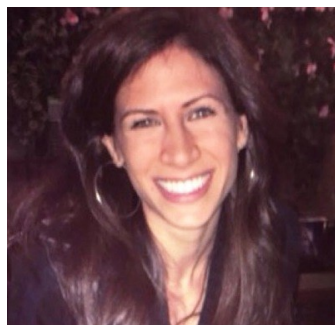
After months of supportive phone conversations, Jamie built a rapport with Ms. L. "She opened up about her feelings slowly, over time."

"I feel empty and can't even think of going out," Ms. L expressed.

"Later," Jamie noted, "she told me she was 'existing, but not living.'"

Ms. L grew comfortable and invited Jamie into her home, which turned into weekly visits. "Ms. L was well groomed, but said she felt unattractive. After months of counseling and esteem-building, she reports feeling much better. Ms. L now goes out for daily strolls, and is chatting up a storm with neighbors again!"

With Jamie's support, Ms. L is no longer existing "in four walls." Looking down, but with a big smile, she expressed to Jamie, "having trust in you has made all the difference."



Jamie Frankenberg, LMSW

## News Flash

Executive Director, Brian Kravitz, shares that—thanks to a Frank E. Clark Charitable Trust grant—we were able to renovate our agency to enhance practicality, client confidentiality, and staff collaboration. The work is complete. Please come to visit us soon!

## PETS ARE FAMILY, TOO

"My guy Gizmo"



Ms. W and Gizmo

**Pets and Elders Together** provides passionate volunteers who help with care of clients' pets. "It started with a handful of folks," noted Robin Strashun, Vol Coord. "Now, 20 'Pet Pros' greatly reduce clients' anxiety with pet support and upkeep as needed." Program Director, Susan Siroto, added, "Sometimes the way to relate to a client is to help their pet first." For many isolated older people, pets are their sole family.

Recently, Search and Care launched an initiative, the **Companion Animal Advocate**. Herbert Duran, East Harlem Vol Coord., helps clients identify emergency contacts to care for their pets in the event they are unable to or, unfortunately, if they pass away. Herbert shared, "It's a sensitive but important conversation to have."

Nothing beats our **Holiday Pet Stocking** which provides goodies to client pet-owners who couldn't ordinarily afford them. "It recognizes pets are family too," said Susan.

Robin is always inspired by how much people sacrifice for their cherished animal companions. She recalled Ms. W who has a chronic medical condition, but focuses on her dog, Gizmo.

"Every time we see Ms. W, Gizmo is well groomed," Robin noted. "She pushes herself to walk Gizmo and wouldn't be as well without him."

Reflections from Two Search and Care Board Presidents

Natasha S. Brown: since 2015

Molly O. Parkinson: 1972-1982



“I first got involved about 10 years ago through the Yorkville Ball,” Natasha shared. “At first, it was a social connection, but I became excited about the mission of Search and Care.”

“After joining the Junior Board, a group of young professionals, I learned so much. The many stories of clients hit home. Leaving one’s home at an older age must be terrifying. Your house is your anchor.” She paused and shared, “I lost both parents and spent a lot of time in nursing homes. I saw firsthand how difficult it is to leave your home.”

“I wanted to get to know clients—some stories are uplifting, but the reality is many older people are struggling.” Natasha explained, “I met with this sophisticated, intelligent gentleman. It was sad—because of his physical limitations—he couldn’t function without Search and Care.”

“I remember visiting a woman—a warm person, upbeat, even though her husband was bed bound.” Natasha made friendly visits over time, and was touched by how appreciative the woman was. “She didn’t ask for a lot, but loved playing chess, so I set up a chess board for her.” Natasha was silent. “She told me it was one of the nicest things anyone had ever done for her.”



Molly leaned back in her chair and shared, “I really connected to the work of Search and Care.” Molly served on the Board for 40+ years, and ten years as President. She discovered the work of founder Reverend Clarke Oler, The Church of the Holy Trinity, caring for at-risk, unseen older neighbors who were falling through cracks. Molly moved forward, sharing, “It was devastating to hear the story of an older woman who starved to death in her home.”

Molly has worn many hats during her years of service—not only as President of the Board, but integral in starting the agency’s first stipend program for clients in need, helping to secure new agency funders (“finding a new Tooth Fairy” as founding Executive Dir, Sue Chandler, described), and much more. She spoke with excitement describing Sue’s community, grassroots efforts to identify at-risk older neighbors.

“There is a personal connection, too,” she noted, hands clasped. “A family member called me because of financial troubles. Like so many older people, he didn’t have access to services to help him make better financial decisions.”

When asked about the direction of the agency, she responded, “Executive Director Brian and the whole Search and Care team are doing terrific work and should keep up their strong community outreach and services.”

MONEY MATTERS PROGRAM

“HERE, I GET TO TALK WITH FRIENDS”



Mark Troy, Financial Specialist

Mr. J, aged 87, reached out to Search and Care in 2008—needing assistance with bill-paying. “I’ve been handling things by myself,” Mr. J expressed, “but I would appreciate your help.”

Mr. J told Mark Troy, Financial Specialist, he could call creditors on his own, but it was clear that he was having trouble advocating for himself. “We’re off to a good start,” Mark explained, “but maybe we should call your creditors together.”

Mr. J also attends agency events and groups, including “Tea and Creativity”—a space to explore artwork and chat. One afternoon during a painting exercise, he opened up:

“I’m one of 14 children and grew up in South Carolina. After coming north at 17, I was drafted into the Army.” Mr. J recounted with pride, “It was 1952 outside of Waco, Texas when the bus me and my buddies were riding crashed head-on with another bus.” The bus caught fire. He broke windows and pulled people out. “Not everyone was fortunate, but we saved a lot of lives.”

With Mark as advocate, automatic payments to scam artists were stopped, Mr. J’s proper rent was reinstated, and they have begun petitioning for unclaimed funds. “Search and Care helps me a lot,” Mr. J shared. “And not just with money. Here, I get to talk with my friends.”