

## THE POWER OF A SMILE— WHY FACE-TO-FACE VISITS MEAN SO MUCH!



Older neighbor and her daughter

Since the onset of the pandemic, Search and Care did not miss a beat: transitioning from in-home services to providing care virtually, usually by phone. Recently, as staff and clients became fully vaccinated, we resumed visiting clients at home. The importance of these face-to-face visits cannot be stressed enough. They help build rapport and trust, lead to in-depth conversations, and decrease isolation. As one homebound client, Mrs. R, said, “*It’s so nice to see someone in person again.*”

Take Mr. T—a Search and Care client for 15 years—who lives alone,

is medically frail, and reports severe anxiety. Being anxious often makes him feel so ill that he calls 911 and ends up in the hospital. Joseph—Mr. T’s social worker—made a point of calling him regularly during the last year to help ease his stress, and to simply listen. This investment of care kept Mr. T out of the hospital for several months. When Mr. T finally got to see Joseph in person again, it put a big smile on his face—something Joseph will always remember.

Another client, Ms. B, speaks to her Care Manager Esther every day. When in-person visits resumed, Esther was surprised to see how much Ms. B had declined. Ms. B lost her significant other during the pandemic, and her son is recovering from cancer. Now that Ms. B sees Esther, friends, and family again—experiencing the warmth of in-person visits—she reports feeling a lot happier.

For older people like Mrs. R, Mr. T and Ms. B, home visits can provide a profound sense of safety and security.

## EXPANDING IN-HOME SERVICES TO THE UPPER WEST SIDE

In July, Search and Care embarked on an expansion that will *double our service area* from Manhattan’s East Harlem, Yorkville, and Carnegie Hill neighborhoods, to now also the Upper West Side. Research and conversations with community stakeholders and organizations indicated that Upper West Side older residents may often be underserved, functioning under the radar and in need of our agency’s compassionate, individualized and most especially *in-home* care.

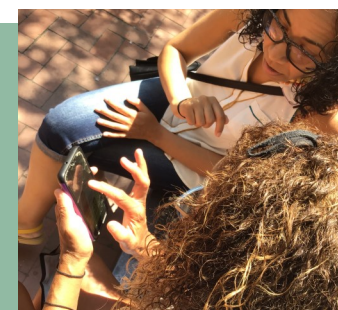
The Upper West Side is documented to have one of the highest concentrations of older people in New York City: approximately 37,000. According to Comptroller Scott Stringer, nearly 17,000 of those live alone, putting them at risk for the health ramifications of isolation. In addition, according to Live-On NY, about 20,000 Upper West Side older people are on waitlists for affordable housing—on average, for

more than a decade! While we likely cannot influence waitlists, we already have an Upper West Side team in place comprised of a bilingual Licensed Master Social Worker, Money Matters Financial Navigator, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator, and other professionals offering diverse supportive services. We help secure benefits and entitlements, provide money management support, offer computer tutelage, nursing, home reintegration after hospitalizations, handyman assistance, occupational therapy and falls prevention techniques, informal “Talkin’ It Out” counseling, diverse groups that foster socialization, and can provide groceries and pet supplies in emergencies.

Toward identifying those most in need, we are forging collaborations in the West 70s to West 110th Street area, Central Park West to Riverside Drive. We view ourselves as a complement to other

organizations’ services, with a focus on reaching increasingly homebound, frail, isolated older people who are living on constrained finances with few other supports in their lives. Search and Care’s approach is to build rapport, comfort, and trust in our abilities to better our clients’ lives, and we are excited to now also be available on the Upper West Side with our agency’s always compassionate fee-free care.

## TECHNOLOGY IN THE PARK



Older client and Computer Coach

On a Saturday in July, Search and Care’s Silver Circles program hosted a three-hour outdoor event across the street from our agency at Normandy Court Park. Silver Circles helps older people increase their confidence and abilities using technology, such as hardware and software support for laptops, tablets, smart phones, and other devices. Clients booked appointments in advance for one-on-one sessions with one of our Computer Coaches. Everyone received ample time with a coach, and some even stuck around to chat about various topics and how technology has been pushed to the forefront of their lives due to the public health crisis. Participants expressed being grateful to Search and Care for hosting this event. Shared Ms. D, “*I feel less alone now that I understand how to use email, send texts, and connect with my family who live out of state.*”

Like the rest of our programs during the past year, Silver Circles could only perform virtual coaching sessions over the phone or through a webinar. Now that our clients, staff, and volunteers are vaccinated, in-person coaching has resumed and we hope the success of this outdoor event will pave the way for similar opportunities in the future.

### PRESERVING PET FAMILIES



#### Older neighbor and her pet

Through the agency's Pets + Elders Together program (PET), Search and Care is one of three joint recipients of a PetSmart Charities grant: "Preserving Families in Times of Crisis." This award will strengthen our collaboration with Animal Haven and PAWS NY—offering emergency support, as well as engaging healthcare institutions and community-based programs to join us in our work to preserve the special bond between companion animals and their older pet parents. These animals are not simply pets, they are family—often the only source of love and attention that older people have, especially if they live alone or are homebound.

*"Search and Care helps older people and their pets age in place together, and our collaboration with these two New York City organizations is both exciting and challenging,"* said Robin, PET Coordinator. *"Together we are encouraging social service, homecare, and healthcare organizations to incorporate vital pet-related information during intakes so that both owners and companion animals have every opportunity to remain together. New Yorkers are devoted to their pets and, with the help of PetSmart Charities, we are united in raising awareness about the importance of advance planning for companion animals as they are an integral part of the family."*

#### —Kindly Support—

Search and Care's  
ANNUAL HOLIDAY APPEAL!  
[SearchandCare.org/Donate](https://SearchandCare.org/Donate)

### STIMULATING THE BRAIN: NEW "STRONGERMEMORY" PROGRAM

Search and Care announces a new group program, *StrongerMemory*. It is designed for older people who may feel their memory, organization, or retention skills are just not what they used to be, or who simply want to improve their cognitive skills before the possible onset of such issues. The program consists of a 12-week virtual curriculum of simple reading, writing, and mathematical activities practiced daily, and includes a weekly check-in with the group's facilitator. Activities challenge memory and trigger the brain's

prefrontal cortex that research indicates helps stabilize or improve cognitive functions.

*StrongerMemory* originated at a nonprofit, Goodwin House in Virginia, and has been tested nationwide. If you or an older person you know reports feeling more forgetful, a little less organized, or seems a bit confused, this program may be of value. Participants are encouraged to chat about what they are doing to stay mentally and cognitively fit.

For information, contact MSW Austin at 212-289-5300 Ext 221.

### PROTECTING YOUR MONEY WITH SUZE ORMAN

In June, Suze Orman known as the "World's Personal Finance Expert," conducted a workshop for our clients, "*Protecting Your Money: Tips to Ensure a Financially Safe & Secure Life.*" During this client hour-long presentation, Suze addressed questions on topics ranging from offering money saving tips, to avoiding scams, understanding IRAs and annuities, gift-giving children, explaining life insurance policies, reverse mortgages, and much more. Ample time for a Q&A also gave clients a chance to ask Suze about more individual concerns. Afterwards, Suze generously gave our clients free access to her legal document forms as a starting point to use in thinking about their own estate planning.

Facilitating such educational workshops—in addition to our personalized "Money Matters" services—further Search and Care's goal to help older people improve their financial literacy, stability, and comfort while safely at home. Search and Care is grateful to Suze Orman for her valuable time and expertise. Many attendees expressed appreciation to Suze for this valuable and informative hour.

All the Best in 2022

### GIVING OLDER PEOPLE A VOICE



#### Older neighbor at a rally

Search and Care has always sought client feedback and in September 2019, we started a Client Advisory Committee. Fifteen clients have joined and their input is invaluable shaping our agency's programs and services. Per Mr. B, "*No two meetings are alike, but I enjoy how lively the talks are.*"

It is also a place for older adults to express neighborhood issues. They brought up concerns such as transportation accessibility, voting access, and vaccine fears—resulting in workshops such as Ranked Choice Voting and Demystifying Covid-19 (presented by Dr. Luba Illyach, Uptown Care Pharmacy).

*"Engaging and listening to clients just makes sense. Their input is helping us know how effective we are in developing programs and services that meet their needs. After all, they are the true stakeholders of Search and Care,"* said Brian C. Kravitz, Executive Director.