



INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING AT SEARCH AND CARE

When two first-years at Dominican Academy, a local high school on the Upper East Side, reached out to Robin Strashun, Search and Care's Outreach Coordinator, she was touched by their initiative and passion. The two students wanted to show older New Yorkers that someone cared and so collaborated with Search and Care to write creative, handmade cards that are now being hand delivered to clients when staff makes home visits—a wonderful surprise that brings a smile to their faces. The collaboration between Search and Care and students at Dominican Academy is just one example of our growing Intergenerational Connections initiative, an enhancement of several key services to combat the loneliness epidemic in young and older adults. As we enhance these initiatives, we are bringing together young people and older adults to utilize a model designed to develop empathy between generations, build friendships, and improve the wellbeing of older adults, while providing young volunteers with an evidence-based curriculum that develops self-esteem, patience, sense of meaning, community, and more. Included in these are our Silver Circles Tech and Telehealth Education program,

Socialization and Educational Groups program, iChoose afterschool program, and Telephonic Monitoring service. In an increasingly divided world, where shame and stigma can present a significant obstacle to getting the connections we need, these services have a significant effect on the mental health, connection to community, and wellbeing of participants. From providing one-on-one technology coaching that bridges the digital divide to fun and engaging socialization groups and friendly telephonic check-ins, they provide an impactful community service while improving self-esteem, belonging, and mutual understanding and respect for all participants. As our agency continues to grow, we are working to increase the scope of these programs to bring positive outcomes to more older adults and young people, while bringing the same level of dedication and in-depth, personalized service that makes Search and Care so special. With a city full of passionate young people like the students at Dominican, we believe that Intergenerational Connections has tremendous potential to help create a more connected community for tomorrow.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: BRICK CHURCH

In March of this year, Search and Care collaborated with Brick Church for their “Day of Discipleship”—dedicated to giving back to the community—engaging volunteers of all ages to craft 35 pet beds, which will go to Search and Care’s Pets + Elders Together (PET) program clients and to a local shelter. This is just the latest of Search and Care’s collaborations with Brick, which has provided “Day of Discipleship” volunteerism for many PET program projects—providing immeasurable support for clients whose pets often serve as their primary source of companionship and joy.

Since the early days of Search and Care, Brick has been an important supporter of the organization. In the late 2000s, they helped us engage a new Community Outreach Social Worker, reinvigorating the “Search” aspect of our name—a critical function that ensures that isolated older community members who may otherwise go without support or companionship don’t slip through the cracks—a position that has been fundamental for Search and Care since.

Since then, collaborations with Brick have improved the lives of countless older community members. From volunteering at Search and Care’s office, where one of the Church’s Deacons, Ann, volunteers at the front desk and is one of the first people clients see or talk to before she refers them to our Social Workers, to participating in pre-Valentines Day callathons to show hundreds of clients and older adults that they are not forgotten, volunteers from Brick are continuing to show older New Yorkers they care.

As Search and Care continues an agency-wide expansion in which we are enhancing services across our catchment, taking on more clients, and building new partnerships, work with community partners like Brick is essential to scaling our impact, strengthening community bonds, and ensuring that all of our older neighbors get the support they need.



Search and Care's iChoose Program Celebrates 17 Years



Joanne wears many hats: for twelve years she served as the Search and Care Controller, before eventually retiring. She is also a certified meditation instructor, who during the height of the pandemic began to work with iChoose students and other agency clients to use yoga and meditation to help treat isolation and anxiety, and continues this work as one of the core instructors of iChoose today.

iChoose was initially developed in 2008, with support from the Washington Square Fund to help reduce teen pregnancy. Bringing together students at Central Park East High School with community leaders and mentors of all ages for one of Search and Care's first intergenerational programs, iChoose has evolved into an in-depth, semester long program that helps improve the confidence of students, creates a community where they feel comfortable talking about their concerns and dreams, and helps prepare them for college and their futures.

This year, iChoose featured mentors from around New York City, including Pastor Isaac

Scott, who is the lead artist at The Confined Arts at the Center for Justice at Columbia University; Xavier Santiago, a film producer and chair of New York's Community Board 11; a former iChoose participant who is now a student at the prestigious Macaulay Honors College, and more. These mentors provided valuable wisdom to students, helped them develop plans for the future, and taught them valuable skills to help them make good decisions in their lives.

Within the program, Joanne occupies a special role. After students' discussion with the primary mentor that day, Joanne leads the students in meditation, teaching them techniques evidenced to improve health and happiness and introducing them to concepts like mindfulness. For her, the experience can be profound. "Working with young people always has an impact," she says. "They can shake up your view of the world, remind you how to look with new eyes and open once again to the possibilities of life."

Search and Care Thanks Participants in Legacy Giving Program

At Search and Care, we are keenly aware that planning for end-of-life arrangements is an important, and often difficult, part of getting older. While a sober topic, Search and Care recently hosted a presentation that taught older clients how to use MyChart's end of life planning features—including sharing financial information and final wishes they might not be able to later—to ensure they can make all the arrangements important to them.

This idea for this presentation came after Search and Care recently received an influx of donations from estates—a testament to how we often serve as a surrogate family member for many clients, who wish to support the agency after their passing. As more people join our "Legacy Circle" program—where commitments cost nothing and plans can be changed any time—we are thankful to everyone who has made Search and Care family. To learn more about the Legacy Circle, please contact Monica Aravena, maravena@searchandcare.org.

Providing Personalized Care to Ms. C

Search and Care has always provided its care according to a core tenet of traditional Social Work: building trust over time to understand and fill the totality of clients' needs. Recently, Search and Care engaged a client who attended a Silver Circles Telehealth event hosted at the Corsi House: an innovative workshop series part of our larger initiative to teach older New Yorkers who often have limited access to healthcare how to use MyChart, so that they can communicate with their doctors, schedule appointments, view charts, and more.

Ms. C, a 69 year old resident of the Upper East Side, talked with our Silver Circles staff at the event, who spoke with her about her needs and realized she that she could benefit from our work. Ms. C quickly became engaged with a number of our programs, including Silver Circles tech help events and one-on-one coaching sessions with our Tech Intern, Groups programs including Tea + Creativity and Art for Health, which provide an important chance to socialize, as well as engaging with our Nutrition program during a presentation on healthy eating, picking up "Health Bucks" to use at a farmers market to buy local fruits and vegetables. For Ms. C, like many more Search and Care clients, these programs have provided technology skills, community, and mental and physical stimulation essential to aging independently in place. As we provide care to more and more older New Yorkers, we are committed to listening to all of our clients, understanding their needs, and providing them with the personalized support they need to be happy and healthy in their homes.



Silver Circles Client and Volunteer