



SEARCH AND CARE AND PAWS PARTNER FOR MASSIVE GIVEAWAY

On a sunny day this September, a crowd of older adults, community members, and beloved pets gathered together at Search and Care’s Upper East Side office. They were not disappointed. Search and Care’s Pets + Elder’s Together (PET) Program teamed up with PAWS NY for a major giveaway to serve low-income, older pet owners in our catchment and beyond, providing a package of supplies to every attendee at the event. Delivering over 1,200 pounds of food and supplies to 76 pet owners and 150 of their pets—including 10 agency clinics—the event was a major success for Search and Care, PAWS, and the older pet families who will continue to thrive together.

A significant collaborative effort, the event brought together funding from the Brady Hunter Foundation for pet food and supplies, donated items from Best Pet Rx and our local Furry Paws pet shop, as well as catnip toys made in collaboration with Brick Church. In addition, wet/dry food and litter, harnesses, leashes, toys, reusable treat bags, and more were provided to older pet guardians in need.

Part of Search and Care’s larger “Preserving Families” initiative with PAWS, which combines our PET program with their volunteer network and foster, rehoming, and house-call programs, the giveaway addressed a growing difficulty in NYC, as “Petflation” continues to rise—pet supplies are now 26.1% more expensive in 2024 than 2019. Matched with a growing older population and reduced SNAP benefits, many older pet owners are having difficulty providing for their own needs and their pets. In fact PetSmart Charities has estimated that 170,000 older New Yorkers need help caring for their pets. Through the “Preserving Families” partnership, our Advanced Pet Planning initiative, further events, and the dedicated work of volunteers and staff, we are committed to tackling this issue so that our older neighbors and their loved pets can live happily and healthily together in their homes.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH ACCESS: “YOU SAVED MY LIFE”

Mr. G had been getting a lot of calls. “Unknown number” would flash across his screen, and wary of spam, he wouldn’t pick up. On the other end of the line, however, Mr. G’s doctor was anxiously trying to reach him. It wasn’t until Mr. G attended a Search and Care tech event and learned how to use myChart’s messaging feature that he found out his doctor had been calling. Mr. G rung him back, and after reading his blood pressure over the phone, he was urged to come to the hospital—where Mr. G suffered a heart attack, which was treated successfully. Now recovering well, Mr. G’s story epitomizes how changing technology can be both obstacle and solution to healthcare access, and the efficacy of programs like our telehealth initiative.

Launched in March with Metropolitan Hospital, the initiative addresses significant gaps in health access for clients. As our healthcare system increasingly adopts telehealth—there has been a 63-fold increase in its use since the beginning of the pandemic!—the initiative utilizes Silver Circles volunteer Computer Coaches to teach clients how to schedule in-person and virtual appointments, message providers, have virtual sessions with doctors, and more. With coaches now certified to provide training in-home and onsite at Search and Care and Metropolitan, we are opening the program to all Search and Care clients, and accepting referrals from other aging service agencies and healthcare providers!

This will be a significant step forward as we continue to build on our new Community Health Access Initiative, launched earlier this year after identifying major care gaps and health barriers in our community. Thanks to generous funding, we have made enhancements to our Nutrition and Groceries program, Silver Circles technology coaching and telehealth initiative, Medical Escorting service, Care Management, Stronger Memory cognitive support group, Groups program, and Money Matters service. With increasing demand and unaddressed needs, we are working to expand all of these programs so that clients like Mr. G get the care they need.



### Nutrition Program Addresses Food Insecurity



**K**itty grew up around food. Her parents own a restaurant, and she soon developed a passion that led her to study nutrition in college. Now getting a Masters, she connected with Search and Care through school and has become our Nutritionist, providing one-on-one coaching to help clients maintain a balanced diet, presenting to Search and Care Groups, and consulting on our Emergency Grocery Fund. Getting adequate nutrition can be a significant challenge for many of our clients: lack of access to affordable, healthy food, financial insecurity, health problems, limited mobility, and changing dietary needs can all be obstacles. In fact in a study by the Urban Food Policy Institute, nearly one half of older adults reported food insecurity in the last year.

This challenge is key to the wellbeing of our clients. “Nutrition plays a role in every aspect of your life,” says Kitty. “We have clients with a lot of different needs. Some have questions about their health concerns, others just have basic questions about eating, nutrition, and grocery shopping. A common theme is debunking myths, incorporating more variety and balanced meals. Protein is really important for preserving muscle mass, and for clients with medical needs, like kidney disease or diabetes, we have to limit certain nutrients or groups of nutrients.”

In addition to one-on-one coaching, the Nutrition program distributes NYC Health Bucks so that clients can try new healthy foods. Krystal, the program manager, approves grocery orders that utilize amazon fresh to deliver food directly to clients’ homes, and provides support so that clients with emerging needs have access to our Care Management. The program also hosts events, such as one with non-profit Grow NYC this fall, that discussed farmers markets and provided healthy food samples. Together these strategies work to promote healthy eating by increasing access, educating clients, and motivating change.

### Silver Circles Helps Forge Intergeneration Connection

Just two years ago, Melvin moved to New York City from Puerto Rico, and after receiving an IT certificate from CUNY City Tech, he joined Search and Care as an IT intern with the Silver Circles program. Amanda, a student at Pace University, began volunteering with Search and Care as part of a technology course she was taking around the same time.

Two of many students and young professionals who join Silver Circles to give back and gain professional experience, working with Search and Care had a special impact on them. Amanda, whose exposure to older adults had been limited to her grandparents, said that while she would meet with clients to address their technology issues, she ended up spending most of each session socializing and chatting. “It was cool to hear about their lives—they had so much to share,” she said. Melvin’s experience was similarly positive. “Clients feel like an older member of your family,” he said. “Teaching them something so simple for us makes them so happy.”

Encouraged by these feelings, Melvin and Amanda have locked in on their work at Search and Care. With support from Jacob, the Silver Circles Coordinator, Amanda began running an art therapy group, while Melvin joined the team to increase outreach efforts, connecting with Spanish speaking clients and increasing the scope of Silver Circles. Not only is it a great program for older people to stay connected, he believes that Silver Circles is a powerful tool for young people to build important skills and know the rewards of working directly with people, face-to-face.



### Search and Care Hosts Fall Forum

**T**his November we hosted our Fall Forum at Knickerbocker Plaza, bringing together over 50 older neighbors to celebrate. Attendees enjoyed remarks from NYS Senator Liz Krueger, Assembly Member Alex Bores, and NYC Council Member Keith Powers, while learning about our services and sharing neighborhood concerns. The event fostered connection and gratitude; participants pinned heartfelt notes to our Gratitude Tree, with sentiments like, “I’m grateful for being here with these lovely people,” and “At Search and Care, your sad days will become happy days.” A big thank you to all who joined and made this event so special!