



Program Director

Judith Amorsen

When I look at the calendar and see autumn approaching, I think about how COVID-19 has affected myself and my family (even those in Denmark) – and Eras clients. We have all isolated from our friends and families for longer than we had anticipated and are grateful for the nice summer weather. That said, it's been difficult.

Prayers and kind thoughts seem to help many people during this time of uncertainty. And looking for ways to enrich each day have also been helpful. But the isolation we are all experiencing continues and as autumn marches forward, the days will get shorter.

Today's world is digital meaning we can talk and continue relationships using a computer. Some people's computer is their mobile phone still others use computers that stay at desks and others use laptop computers that open and close and finally, some people use "tablets," which are thin and lightweight.

Having one of these computers and learning how to use them can help with isolation. If you have one, consider asking a family member to help teach you. If you don't have one, perhaps someone in your family could pick one up for you. Or you could ask family if they or anyone they know has a computer they no longer use.

Using a computer can help you connect with people in your life - whether they are longtime friends or young people. And that can help dramatically with isolation and your health. Herein lies something interesting. Despite the distance from Wisconsin to Denmark, my children are close to their grandparents in Denmark because of the computer.

Years ago, moving away meant moving ... away. Today, people are only a phone call or a quick in-person video away from a friend or relative. And that can make all the difference when it comes to connecting with those we care about.

September 2020
Client Newsletter



Artists Connecting with Clients to Create Memorable Connections

Weekly check-in telephone calls for 100 Faith in Action clients are a bit different during the next few months. Instead of discussing what they are doing, their families or general concerns, conversations are focusing on "Beautiful Questions" designed to tickle the client's storytelling impulse. These questions are open-ended, with no right or wrong answers, and are asked by 10 Milwaukee artists trained in this method of conversation. The artists telephone each client once a week for 12 weeks. The calls last for 30 minutes each.



Anne Basting

"Beautiful Questions" are geared to help with isolation, which is especially prevalent during the COVID-19 crisis, and spark conversations. An example of a Beautiful Question is "If you could fly anywhere right now, where would it be?" "Time has been emptied and our daily rituals have been upended," says Anne Basting, Founder of TimeSlips, which offers the Tele-Stories program for Eras clients through a grant from MKE Responds. "These conversations help build a connection over three months with an older adult that we hope offers a sense of growth and purpose."

Tele-Stories had been geared to be done remotely over the telephone to help seniors with isolation and loneliness challenges. But when COVID-19 struck, the need to have a program like this in place took on more importance. "It was our chance to provide something when people are more isolated than ever before," says Sammy Goodrich, TimeSlips program manager. "The goal of these questions is not to create a real-life story but rather to capture creativity."

When the 12 weeks are over, sometime in mid-November, the artists, who range from poets, songwriters and writers to singers, sculptors, and muralists, will have each developed a legacy gift. These gifts, based on the weekly conversations they have with their seniors, could be for each individual senior or could be a larger gift that is displayed in the community. The gift is matched with each artist's specialty: a songwriter would write a song; a painter would paint a picture.

Basting says TimeSlips is excited to be working with Eras and is hopeful that this type of conversation will continue between Eras volunteers and clients. "We're really thankful and appreciative to be working with Eras," says Basting. "This only works if there is already an established relationship and Eras provided that." This isn't the first time that TimeSlips engaged Milwaukee seniors. In 2017, it did a similar program with Interfaith Older Adult Programs and previously, it spearheaded the "Islands of Milwaukee" program.

Training in TimeSlips has already assisted at least one Eras staff member. "For our immediate clients, it gives me as an employee a different perspective on how to talk to the client and make the conversation more creative and interesting," says Program Coordinator Betty Smith. "TimeSlips gives me a better way to communicate with our clients, especially those who may be experiencing slight changes in their memory."

Important Phone Numbers

MILWAUKEE COUNTY:

Transportation, Grocery and Yard Work Service Requests (Milwaukee County): (414) 488-6500

Telephone reassurance for Homebound Older Adults Living in Milwaukee County: Vital Voices: (414) 771-4368

Milwaukee County Transit Plus: (414) 343-1700

Milwaukee County Department on Aging Transportation (Able Access):

- For new riders (to enroll): Aging Resource Center (414) 289-6874
- To schedule a ride (once enrolled): Able Access (414) 536-5800

Aging and Disability Resource Center of Milwaukee County: (414) 289-6874

Milwaukee County Energy Assistance: (414) 270-4653

Hunger Task Force: (414) 777-0483

WAUKESHA COUNTY:

Aging and Disability Resource Center of Waukesha County: (262) 548-7848

Transportation, Grocery and Yard Work Service Requests (Waukesha County): (262) 549-3348

BOTH COUNTIES:

IMPACT 211: 2-1-1

Wisconsin Elder Abuse Hotline: 1 (833) 586-0107

National Elder Fraud Hotline: 833-FRAUD-11 or (833) 372-8311

Eras Ramps Up Wellness Calls to Once a Week

2020 has been a rough year for Mehri. Her husband passed away, and then COVID-19 struck, forcing her into isolation during a time when that was the last thing she needed. Having a Wellness Call every week from an Eras Senior Network volunteer since the health emergency began has been a lifesaver.



And even though the 82-year-old connects regularly with two grown sons and grandchildren, the telephone calls have enriched her days. “This has been a very hard time and I am so glad somebody else cares about me,” says Mehri, who has lived in her Glendale house for 41 years. “The virus has affected my life. The house is so quiet. I love getting these calls as I cannot have friends or family coming over now.”

Mehri is one of about 1,300 clients who are receiving wellness calls from 150 volunteers to help offset the isolation seniors are experiencing with the virus. Each volunteer has been assigned up to 10 seniors to call once a week.

Making these calls has been easy and rewarding for volunteer Pam Paulson. “Because of work, there’s a lot of things I can’t do for Eras and this is something that I can do,” says Paulson, who also serves as an Eras board member. Paulson says the clients she speaks with “love” the telephone calls. “When you cannot see friends and you cannot go out and about, it’s so nice to be able to get a phone call. I make sure to ask each person every week if I can keep them calling them and they all say, ‘Yes! Absolutely.’”

Paulson says she lets the clients lead the conversations and finds that while they like to talk about their lives and family members, they are also interested in her life. And sometimes the calls result in Paulson learning that the senior needs assistance with something else. “I then reach out to the office and tell the staff what I learned,” Paulson says. “And the office has been very proactive in calling the senior back to help.”

Volunteer Laura Brunke has been regularly calling six women since the pandemic began and she says the calls have helped her as much as the clients. “Sometimes I’m stressed about work but speaking with them is something I look forward to and brings me back to a calm, happy mindset,” she says. Brunke says she enjoys how the conversations have gone from check-in calls to friendships. “We laugh and feel like we’ve known each other for longer than a few months,” Brunke says. “It’s a break in my day and life that brings me such happiness!”

Brunke says many of the calls involve the seniors sharing stories with her from the “good ol’ days” or stories about their families and friends. “They are such great conversationalists,” she says. “As we distance ourselves physically, we need to remember the impact of emotional connection. Calling someone is a simple way to spice up all our lives.”

Tony, an 84-year-old retired industrial electrician who lives in Menomonee Falls, says the calls don’t just spice up his life – they are a “morale booster.” Tony lives with his wife and the two are grateful for the wellness calls. “I have learned that my caller is from the area and by talking, we learn what we have in common.”

While Tony and his wife have family nearby, he admits that COVID-19’s isolation has been difficult. “We don’t see anybody,” he says. “Everyone is afraid to associate with the next person. You’re locked up in your home and that’s it. Period.” But the wellness calls have helped. “The experience has gone really well. The calls are so important with COVID.”



Expert Article

By Daniel Idzikowski, Program and Policy Coordinator, MCDA;
Joseph Beckmann, MCDA

Medicare & You Updates

Much like sports leagues that have recently begun their seasons, “open enrollment” season for Medicare is almost upon us! You may have received mail mentioning that you are eligible to enroll in Medicare with details about different plans. This information can be confusing. Please do not worry – your County Elder Benefit Specialists are here to help! Please call your local Aging and Disability Resource Center for free and impartial assistance regarding Medicare enrollment and benefits eligibility. Milwaukee County: (414) 289-6874. Waukesha County: (866) 677-2372.

What is Open Enrollment?

When you’re first eligible for Medicare, you have a 7-month Initial Enrollment Period to sign up for Medicare Parts A and B and to choose a Medicare Advantage Plan if you wish. This period extends from three months before your birth month to three months after your birth month. Every year after this Initial Enrollment Period, Medicare offers an Open Enrollment Period or Annual Election Period. This period begins on October 15th and ends on December 7th.

Open Enrollment lets you add, change, or drop your Medicare plans and/or prescription drug coverage for the following year. Your choices during Open Enrollment include changing Medicare Advantage plans, switching between Medicare Advantage and Original Medicare, and adding or switching a Medicare Prescription Drug plan.

You do not have to change plans if you are happy with your coverage, but plan details change annually, so it is important to compare your options to be sure that your health and medication needs are covered by your plan for the next year and to consider annual plan costs.

Original Medicare

Original Medicare is the federal government’s health insurance program for adults aged 65 and older and some younger people with disabilities. Original Medicare covers medical care throughout the United States, as long as the provider accepts Medicare payment. Original Medicare includes Part A (Inpatient Care) and Part B (Outpatient Care).

Part A – Also known as hospital insurance, pays for inpatient

hospital care and some costs for a related short term stay in a skilled nursing facility or home healthcare. It also covers hospice care for those who are terminally ill.

Part B – Also known as medical insurance, pays for physician and allied health care and services like screenings and lab tests, outpatient hospital visits, and home healthcare and therapies not covered by Part A. After a premium and deductible, Medicare Part B generally pays 80% of these costs, while you pay 20%.

Original Medicare does not cover physical exams (except for an annual “wellness” visit), long-term care, acupuncture, massage therapy, eye exams, routine foot care, cosmetic surgery, hearing aids, dental care and dentures, or medical care outside of the United States.

Supplemental or Medigap

Supplemental (Medigap) plans can be purchased from private insurers to cover your remaining out-of-pocket costs not covered by Original Medicare. You pay an additional plan premium.

Medicare Advantage

Medicare Advantage plans are health insurance plans offered by private companies that contract with Medicare to provide you all of your Part A and Part B benefits, and many include prescription drug coverage. With most Medicare Advantage plans, you must use providers in their plan network. Medicare Advantage plans have different cost structures and may include additional benefits not covered by Original Medicare.

Prescription Drug Coverage

Medicare Part D provides optional prescription drug coverage through a separate drug plan you may purchase. There are many plans available, so it is important to choose a plan that covers the medication prescribed for you. In Wisconsin, you may also choose SeniorCare.

COVID-19 and Medicare

During the current Public Health Emergency, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid have expanded telehealth coverage and waived some rules regarding nursing home admission. However, these changes are temporary and will only last during the declared emergency.

Sign up for a personal Medicare account at www.myMedicare.gov. During open enrollment, you can review plans and make choices online at www.medicare.gov/plan-compare/. Or, you can call your ADRC office for guidance.

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Register Now for Fall Yard Clean Up

Fall is just around the corner and before you know it, your leaves will need to be raked and your yard prepared for winter. If you need assistance with those tasks, please call our office at (414) 488-6500 if you are in Milwaukee or (262) 549-3348 if you are in Waukesha.

Senior Dining Program Continues During Pandemic

- Milwaukee County's Senior Dining Program continues to offer lunchtime meals for those 60 and older on Monday-Friday for drive-through service between 11am-12pm. All five senior centers are participating in the pickup program during the COVID-19 emergency. Suggested cost is a \$3 donation. If you cannot pickup your meal because you do not have transportation, delivery is available at no charge. For more information, call (414) 289-6995.
- For Waukesha County, Senior Dining Centers are closed until 2021. Home meal delivery continues with a one-time per week delivery of five meals. Call (262) 548-7848 for more information.

Milwaukee County: Mobile Grocery Store Stopping at Senior Housing Complexes



Is grocery shopping difficult? Hunger Task Force and Piggly Wiggly are partnering on the Mobile Market to make it easier! This grocery store on wheels travels throughout Milwaukee County to visit select senior centers and senior apartment facilities to help make individualized shopping as easy as possible.

The market is an active store, not a food pantry or donation center and prices are 25% less than the sale price at Piggly Wiggly. In light of COVID-19, shoppers line up outside the Mobile Market truck, appropriately distanced from others. You then provide the staff with your grocery list and staff will then shop for you.

The market carries fresh vegetables and fruit, dairy and meats. There are no canned goods. No cash is allowed; only QUEST/EBT cards, debit cards or credit cards are accepted. The Mobile Market is at each stop for one hour and 30 minutes.

Here are the dates the market will be at senior centers and senior residences in September; note, the senior centers are closed but the Mobile Market will still be there:

- Sept. 8 - Clare Meadows Apartments, Franklin, 10 am
- Sept. 9 - Highland Gardens, 11 am
- Sept. 10 - Walnut Park Apartments, 10 am; Hillside Family Resource Center, 1:30 pm
- Sept. 11 - Evergreen Square, 9:30 am; Lapham Park, 12:30 pm
- Sept. 14 - Sacred Heart Senior Living, Saint Francis, 10:30 am; Juniper & Canticle Courts, Saint Francis, 2:30 pm
- Sept. 15 - Saint Peter's Apartments, 10:30 am; Williamstown Bay Apartments, Cudahy, 2:30 pm
- Sept. 16 - Brentwood Park Apartments, Franklin, 10 am; Layton Gardens, 2 pm
- Sept. 23 - Cherry Court Apartments, 3 pm
- Sept. 24 - McGovern Park Senior Center, 12 noon
- Sept. 25 - GreenTree & Teutonia Apartments, 11 am; Lapham Park, 2 pm

Dates and times may change. For more information about October/November dates, call Hunger Task Force at (414) 777-0483 or visit www.HungerTaskForce.org/mobilemarket.