

## WHAT IS THE PROGRAM?

The **Senior Visitors Program** is a community service program of Mental Health America of Fredericksburg (MHAF) that promotes independence, dignity and healthy living for older adults in their own home environment. The program matches isolated homebound elderly with trained volunteers who provide weekly, home-based visits for companionship and socialization, as well as respite care to caregivers.

There is no cost to the client as MHAF, a non-profit organization, provides this program as part of its community service mission. The **Senior Visitors Program** offers an opportunity to make a significant difference in the life of an individual in need.

## WHO ARE SENIOR VISITOR CLIENTS?

The program serves individuals who are 60+ years of age, but that is negotiable. If the client is in need, then we want to help. Most are seniors who are lonely, homebound, isolated, or just in need of a good friend. They may live in their own homes, adult apartment settings or in an assisted living facility.

Our clients are referred to the program by physicians, healthcare providers, agencies serving the elderly, civic organizations, churches, friends, neighbors, or by self-referral. Upon receipt of a completed referral form, an initial visit is scheduled with the potential client to determine program appropriateness and provide information about the **Senior Visitors Program**.

## WHO ARE SENIOR VISITOR VOLUNTEERS?

Volunteers are people in our community who want to serve the elderly. The **Senior Visitors Program** welcomes adults, including retirees, and those who are contemplating retirement, couples and families as volunteers in the program. Matches are made based on time availability, geographic proximity, and common interests and background.

Volunteers are expected to visit one hour per week and are asked to make a 6-month commitment to the program. Visits may be made weekdays, weekends, and evenings at the senior's home. The ongoing relationship can make the **Senior Visitors Program** an especially meaningful and satisfying experience for the volunteer while it fills a void in the life of the senior.

Volunteers, age 18 and older, complete an application, provide references, and a police background check is done. Volunteers attend a mandatory orientation and training workshop prior to being matched with a client. Training focuses on an overview of the program, myths and stereotypes of mental illness and aging, the normal aging process, elder abuse, safety issues and hazards in the home environment, communication skills, and education on depression and dementia.

The Volunteer Orientation and Training is scheduled twice every month – one on a weekday and the other on a Saturday.

Place: General Washington Executive Center  
2217 Princess Anne Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room

In-service programs are offered periodically for volunteers on a wide range of topics associated with the older adult population.

## DO I NEED SPECIAL TALENTS?

The answer is NO! If you enjoy working with seniors and want to make a difference, you can help. By becoming a **Senior Visitors Program** volunteer, you will be alleviating loneliness and isolation, improving quality of life, and providing friendship to someone in need. Maybe you will enjoy lunch together, or take a ride through the park or view the river. Whatever a friend would do with and for another, you can do.

For more information or a volunteer application form, contact:

Teresa Bowers, OTR/L  
Director, Senior Visitors Program  
540-371-2704 or 1-800-684-6423  
mhafsv@mhafred.org

## OTHER SENIOR VISITOR SERVICES

- Newsletters are sent to clients and volunteers to keep everyone aware of what is going on with the **Senior Visitors Program** as well as events of interest in the community.
- A Card Remembrance Committee greets clients on birthdays and holidays, and sends best wishes when ill or hospitalized.
- An annual picnic in the summer and a winter holiday party for volunteers, clients, and staff of our referral agencies.

## ARE THERE OTHER WAYS I CAN HELP?

**Yes.** We need volunteers and financial support. The Senior Visitors Program provides free weekly visits to homebound elderly. No fees are collected for services. Our funding sources include the Rappahannock United Way, City of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania County, Stafford County and generous citizens in our community. Thus, contributions and memorial gifts from individuals and businesses help to ensure that older adults in our community continue to receive needed services while remaining in their own home environment. Please help us make a difference for so many older adults who simply need a friend and a helping hand. Send your tax-deductible contribution to MHAF today.

## ABOUT THE AGENCY

Mental Health America of Fredericksburg, formerly the Mental Health Association in Fredericksburg, is the oldest nonprofit organization in the Rappahannock region dedicated to addressing all aspects of mental health. Founded in 1955 by local citizens, MHAF is one of over 320 national affiliates working to improve the mental health of our community through education, advocacy and service. For many, calling MHAF is the first step toward getting the help they need. MHAF offers Information & Referral services, a Mental Health Resource lending library, support groups and many other services. For more information, please call us.

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**A BETTER WORLD...  
BEGINS WITH YOU!**

# SENIOR VISITORS PROGRAM

**Promoting Independent,  
Healthy Living for Older Adults**



**Serving the City of Fredericksburg  
and counties of Caroline, King George,  
Spotsylvania, Stafford and Westmoreland**

**A Community Service Program of  
Mental Health America of Fredericksburg**