



# Network News

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #2 - Winter 2011

*To enhance the quality of life and promote the independence of older adults, their families and care providers.*

## Foster Grandparents

### Join us today!

When you share your love, time, and experience, you have the power to help a child who needs you. If you're 55 or over and want to share your experience and compassion, you have what it takes to be a Foster Grandparent. Help Wanted



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## Traveling Grannies & Grandpas Nationally Recognized Program

Since 1992, the Traveling Grannies/Grandpas Program has positively altered the lives of at-risk teens here in Kent County. The intergenerational program which pairs older adults with youth would not be possible without the long-standing financial support of The Sebastian Foundation and Heart of West Michigan United Way. Be a part of this winning team.



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## Experience Corps Growing by Leaps & Bounds

For the last five years, Experience Corps here in Grand Rapids has seen notable results with reading literacy rates of at-risk youth. Thanks to funding from the Grand Rapids Community

Foundation, the Experience Corps program came to Gerontology Network and Grand Rapids. The on-going financial support of Amway and other corporations has been critical to our success. Now, five years later, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has invested in the growth of the program over the next four years with an \$800,000 grant.



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## Outpatient Therapy

Trained counselors work with families and clients to understand drug interactions, dementia, depression, alcohol and drug abuse.



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## Case Management

Case managers offer a fairly unique approach to case management by working closely with the psychiatrist and physician's assistant.



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## Life Connections

Gerontology Network's Life Connections program assists older adults with maintaining their independence, allowing them to remain in their home, often preventing a move to an assisted living arrangement.

Statistics support that the leading cause of hospitalizations, nursing home admissions, rehabilitation, are a result of falls and/or medication mismanagement.



The personal response service (PERS) consists of a communicator connected to a private phone line with a personal help button worn as a necklace or on the wrist. Pushing the button sends a signal to one of several available communicators. Once activated, the subscriber is connected to the 24 hour monitoring center staffed by highly trained operators. The operator talks to the subscriber to determine what level of assistance is required, and dispatches a responder to the subscriber. The responder can be a neighbor, a relative who lives close by or local emergency services. The operator follows up to ensure that help has arrived.



Statistics support that older adults with access to a device that will call for help will live more independently, while maintaining a quality of life, as evidenced by:

- ▶Of the 35 million Americans over 65, about one in every three will fall in a given year (Center for Disease Control, "CDC")

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# Continuing Care Services

## Case Management - Outpatient Therapy - Outreach & Assistance

Continuing Care Services is part of the continuum of care in the Behavioral Health Services Division of Gerontology Network. Continuing Care Services provides Outreach & Assistance, Case Management and Outpatient Therapy all designed to maintain or improve the mental and physical health of older adults in the community. Licensed social workers with appropriate certifications work with the agency psychiatrist, physician's assistant and nurse to offer psychiatric evaluation, treatment, counseling and management services to clients experiencing anxiety, life transition issues, substance use disorders, caregiver stress, or any combination of these sometimes co-occurring issues.

### Case Management

Case managers offer a fairly unique approach to case management by working closely with the psychiatrist and physician's assistant. Case managers accompany the clients to medication reviews and psychiatric evaluations and serve as a conduit for information between the patient and the doctor. This has proven to be very effective in ensuring that the clients communicate the most accurate information about their health, compliance with medication use and living environment. It also allows the doctor to determine instructions for care with the assurance that the case manager will assist with professional follow up. Case managers meet regularly in the clients' home (private home, apartment, adult foster care home (AFC), etc.) or at our office. Case managers advocate for older adult clients, coordinate necessary supports and services, and communicate with family members, caregivers, guardians and AFC providers.

### Outpatient Therapy

Outpatient Counselors provide mental health and substance abuse counseling for clients in their home or at our office.

Counselors are trained in geriatric counseling which takes into account age related issues that contribute to aging related behavior that may appear in the form of dementia, Alzheimer's disease, frailty, major organ dysfunction, grief/loss and depression.

Other problems stemming from alcohol consumption, including interactions of alcohol with prescribed and

over-the counter drugs, far outnumber any other substance abuse problem among this population. Older adults are prescribed benzodiazepines more than any other age group! The dangers associated with these prescription drugs include problematic effects due to age related changes in drug metabolism, interactions among prescriptions, and interactions with alcohol. Counselors receive referrals from, network180, our own Outreach and Assistance Program, on-line referrals from Gerontology Network's website as well as family and physician referrals.

### Outreach & Assistance

We continue to provide a valuable information and resource service for families, caregivers and individuals.

Our referral program is one of the most active for adults of any age.

Please call or email with any questions 616-456-6135

[Outreach@GerontologyNetwork.org](mailto:Outreach@GerontologyNetwork.org)

### Continuing Care Services

The staff of Continuing Care Services are compassionate and committed to the adult population that we serve. Trauma informed care delivered in a culture of gentleness permeates throughout all the services that are provided.

Call 616-456-6135 or email today if you or someone you care for would benefit from our services.

### CareTree Adult Day Health Services

Our Participants need **Gloves, Scarves, Hats & Robes**. All sizes of **Women's and Men's** items can be dropped off at our **800 East Beltline NE, 500 Cherry Street SE and 516 Cherry Street SE** locations any weekday from **8AM to 5PM**. **Questions? Call 616-464-3665. Thank You!**



## Experience Corps

Experience Corps, a national leader in engaging older adult tutors to improve K-3 student literacy in disadvantaged schools, is currently recruiting more seniors locally to be part of this winning team. Our members tutor children who need basic literacy skills; they mentor students who count on them for guidance; they partner with classroom teachers to make schools better places to learn; they help create healthier communities.

If you or someone you know is at least 55 years of age and hoping to give back to your community, the Experience Corps program would like to hear from you. Call or email to find out more about this wonderful program! 616-771-9752

[Volunteers@GerontologyNetwork.org](mailto:Volunteers@GerontologyNetwork.org)

## Traveling Grannies & Grandpas

The Traveling Grannies/Grandpas Program has been recognized for outstanding programming from the White House and many other organizations. Partner with us today to enable Gerontology Network to pair more seniors with youth. Desired behavior changes of at-risk teens can be achieved through intergenerational mentoring. As the family has changed over the last 70 years, there have been fewer opportunities for children and young people to interact with and learn from 'elders'. These 'elders' are often the ones young people trust when they are rebelling against other parental or professional authority figures.

The cost of incarcerating and monitoring one juvenile offender in Grand Rapids is over \$182,500 per year. In comparison, the cost of one juvenile receiving one-to-one intervention mentoring services through the Traveling Grannies & Grandpas Program is \$800 per year.

Each Traveling Grannie and Grandpa is assigned to mentor 6 to 8 students. Partner with us today by sponsoring one Traveling Grannie or Grandpa for \$4,800/year. Help us help our teens!

[Volunteers@GerontologyNetwork.org](mailto:Volunteers@GerontologyNetwork.org)

## Foster Grandparents

As a Foster Grandparent, you're a role model, a mentor, and a friend. Serving at one of thirty-two local organizations, you help children learn to read, provide one-on-one tutoring, and guide children at a critical time in their lives. You give the kind of comfort and love that sets a child on the path toward a successful future.

Foster Grandparents serve up to 20 hours a week. Some volunteers may qualify to earn a tax-free, hourly stipend. You'll receive pre-service orientation, training from Gerontology Network, and supplemental accident and liability insurance while on duty.

And remember: When you volunteer, you're not just helping others – you're helping yourself. Volunteering leads to new discoveries and new friends.

Studies show volunteering helps you live longer and promotes a positive outlook on life. So get involved, call or email to join Foster Grandparents today! 616-771-9752

[Volunteers@GerontologyNetwork.org](mailto:Volunteers@GerontologyNetwork.org)

## Senior Companions

Governor Snyder proclaimed November 16, 2011 as Senior Companion Volunteer Day. The Senior Companion Program directly impacts our city, community, state and country. The Senior Companion Program (SCP), which began in 1974, helps frail seniors and other adults maintain independence primarily in the clients' own home.

The SCP was established in Kent County in 1985 as a service of

Gerontology Network.

The SCP is a program in which everyone, the client, volunteer and community benefits. Tapping the power of friendship and the experience of a lifetime, Senior Companions in Kent County stand as a powerful testimony to the value of older adults as a community-based resource for other seniors in need. In 2010, over 60 Senior Companions provided nearly 57,000 hours of service to over 400 older adults in Kent County. The Senior Companion Program is one of this area's Best Kept Secrets whose time has come to let everyone know about this under recognized group of heroes.

For more information, please call or email! 616-771-9752

[Volunteers@GerontologyNetwork.org](mailto:Volunteers@GerontologyNetwork.org)

## Life Connections

- ▶ Seniors are hospitalized for fall-related injuries five times more than from all other causes and falls are the leading cause of death. (CDC)
- ▶ 50% of people who fall require assistance from someone else to get up. (Advance for Providers of Post-Acute Care)
- ▶ 90% of people who get help within one hour will continue independent living, but after 12 hours, only 10% will live at home...or live at all. In other words, odds of survival are proportionate to speed of response. This is called the "Golden Hour". At least 300,000 older people are discovered dead or helpless at home every year because they were alone and unable to call for help—leading cause of helplessness is falls. (New England Journal of Medicine "NEJM")

For more information, please call or email! 616-771-9752

[LifeConnections@GerontologyNetwork.org](mailto:LifeConnections@GerontologyNetwork.org)



## Your Parent Could Be a Victim of Identity Theft and Not Know It

Anyone can become the victim of identity theft, including elderly people.

And they don't know their identity has been stolen until unexplained charges start showing up on credit cards or their bank accounts have been emptied.

Identity theft "occurs when a thief steals the elderly person's social security number, bank account numbers and other financial or personal documents. With this information, he can open a new credit card account for his own use, apply for loans in the victim's name, drain the victim's bank accounts, and illegally obtain professional licenses, driver's licenses and birth certificates.

Why are seniors targeted?

Seniors are seen as an easy opportunity. Identity thieves love older people because they are vulnerable. They are often socially isolated, lonely, tend to be trusting and vulnerable, and may have early dementia or memory loss. This is the perfect victim profile for an identity thief to prey upon. Too often, seniors are like sitting ducks.

How do criminals take their identity?

Scammers are always coming up with new ways to get information to commit identity theft. There are many ways a criminal can steal an identity.

Stealing mail - ID thieves can easily steal a senior's mail, including bank and credit card statements, checks, tax information and more. And it's not only the mail that gets stolen: Thieves will steal a senior's garbage, rummaging through it for personal and financial information carelessly tossed into the trash.

Sending mail - Identity thieves not only take the mail, they also send it to seniors. The mail appears to come from trusted sources, such as the victim's bank, charitable organizations or well-known companies. The scam mail usually contains "official" letterhead, authentic looking logos and registered trademarks.

Calling victims on the phone - Thieves will also call elderly people, pretending to represent charities, associations and the elderly person's bank or financial institution. Unfortunately, many senior citizens believe that these phone calls are coming from a trusted source.

"Phishing" online - Online, phishing is a common practice. Thieves pretend to be financial institutions or well-known companies (like the eBay scam a few years back) and send spam messages asking seniors

to "verify" account information and social security numbers.

Swiping credit cards - Even sales clerks and wait staff in restaurants can get access to financial records when they swipe a senior's credit card for a purchase. Thieves use tiny scanning devices to steal the numbers and then use the cards, running up exorbitant bills before the senior is even aware that their identity has been stolen.

Where are the common places identity may be stolen?

Identity theft can happen anywhere: over the phone, online, in a restaurant or store, or in person.

Tips to prevent identity theft

- Never give out personal information on the phone, through mail, or over the internet unless you know the receiver and have initiated the contact.
- Shred all financial documents, bank statements, sensitive mail, credit card solicitations, and documents that contain any type of personal information.
- Guard credit cards. Watch sales people, wait staff in restaurants, and anyone who asks for your credit card.
- Cut up rarely used or unused cards.
- Don't let anyone copy your aging parents' driver's license. Anyone doing this has instant access to the senior's address and from there, can get bank account numbers and personal data.
- Get a locked mail box or post office box.
- Have checks delivered to your bank or post office box, not your home address.

Is identity theft common among seniors?

It's impossible to say how often seniors are scammed, or even what percentage of known fraud targets seniors. The Federal Trade Commission regularly compiles identity theft complaints, but these are voluntarily registered by victims over the telephone or by e-mail. According to the FTC, nine million Americans have their identities stolen each year.

By Marlo Sollito

["Your parent Could Be The Victim of Identity Theft and Not Know It" originally appeared on AgingCare.com](#)

<http://www.agingcare.com>