

## BETTER TOGETHER



## FRESH VEGGIES FOR SENIORS



## OUR NEW VOLUNTEER MANAGER



**When you enter the home where 93-year old Tecla has lived since 1973**, her welcome is warm, friendly and lively. As you chat and learn about her early widowhood, her determination to raise her two children

## Better Together: Companionship & Community

independently, and her long work life cleaning homes, her resilience is inspiring. Tecla is animated on many topics, but when she touches on how important remaining in her home is to her she gets emotional about the role that Springwell services and its volunteers, Peter and Myrna, play in helping her. Tecla retired in 2010 at age 85 when illness compromised her lungs. Her physician introduced her to Springwell and Tecla emphasizes that Springwell's home care services, home-delivered meals, Medical Escort volunteers, and Friendly Visitor program allow her to live comfortably in her home.

A visit with Tecla, Peter, and Myrna reveals how important these three have become to each other. Peter, a Medical Escort volunteer since he retired 7 years ago, has escorted Tecla 41 times in the 3 years that he has been driving for her. Tecla views Peter as a "guardian angel." She beams as she says that he is "patient, kind, has wonderful manners and is a prince of a man who makes me feel safe" when he takes her to medical appointments. Peter has done volunteer board work but finds this direct service delivery more rewarding. Peter adds that he and Tecla "hit it off. Tecla is a survivor, really smart and an inspirational role model." Peter always looks forward to talking with Tecla on the drive to and from appointments.



"...now that Myrna and Peter are both part of her life, Tecla feels she has two guardian angels."

Myrna's role as a Friendly Visitor began about 16 years ago. She visited with one lovely woman for 13 years. As luck would have it, Myrna was requesting another senior to visit at the same time that Tecla was seeking a Friendly Visitor after her long-time companion retired out of the area. Myrna has been visiting Tecla since May

and says, "We are still getting to know each other. Tecla is warm and open, and we can talk about almost anything. I think I probably benefit more from the visits than she does." Tecla loves people and now that Myrna and Peter are both part of her life, Tecla feels she has "two guardian angels."

Tecla knows that some seniors may be nervous about having caregivers and volunteers come to their home, but she recommends trying some of the Springwell programs because she has found them so valuable.



Farm Shares for Seniors

Each September, Springwell Care Advisors are asked to identify seniors who would benefit from access to farm fresh veggies, but who are no longer able to get out to a local farmer's market. Springwell then works with the Lowell-based non-profit, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, on a delivery of farmer's market boxes, stuffed to the brim with sun-ripened produce grown by local farmers. New Entry, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, is dedicated to training the next generation of farmers and supporting access to fresh produce for people who can particularly benefit, like seniors.

Frequently, recipients of the farm boxes, like Agavni (pictured below) are not able to get out of the house to do their own shopping but still enjoy cooking their own meals. The program, funded through the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture and the USDA, is part of an effort to support elder nutrition. The program meets a unique need for seniors Springwell serves who cannot

participate in our Community Dining programs, who don't necessarily receive home-delivered meals, but who are still in need of nutritional support, and who benefit from access to fresh produce.

When her Springwell care advisor, Hripsime, dropped off her farm box last September, Agavni had a pot of homemade stew simmering on the stove. The box, filled with eggplant, fresh tomatoes, potatoes, and onions was a most welcome addition to her pantry, and she couldn't wait to start planning her next meal.



DID YOU KNOW?

Last year, 221 Springwell volunteers, ranging in age from 19 to 94, provided 11,322 hours of service in seven volunteer programs, serving on average 583 seniors each month:

- Our **Medical Escorts** provided 600 rides last year.
- Each of our seventeen **Friendly Visitors** maintained meaningful relationships with the seniors they visited.
- Our **Shopping Assistants** made more than 200 shopping trips for seniors.
- **Money Management Volunteers** spent 560 hours balancing checkbooks, bill paying and providing other financial assistance for vulnerable participants.
- 141 community members gained evidence-based support and education in workshops led by our dedicated **Healthy Living** lay leaders.
- **Nutrition Volunteers** provided 4,736 days of service last year, helping 5,726 people.
- **Ombudsman Volunteers** made 896 visits to facilities to hear residents' concerns and advocate on their behalf.
- Our 3 skilled **Office Support Volunteers** provided us with 250 hours of critical behind the scenes support.

Meet Karen Chisholm: Volunteer Manager

If you spend a few minutes with Karen Chisholm, Springwell's new Volunteer Program Manager, you will quickly be swept up by her passion for volunteer engagement. Karen loves people and loves connecting them with meaningful, impactful volunteer opportunities. She is responsible for the Friendly Visitor, Medical Escort and Shopping Assistant programs, and Karen also supports recruitment for all of Springwell's volunteer-based programs, including Nutrition, Healthy Living, Ombudsmen and Money Management.



When it comes to volunteerism, Karen says, "There is so much community-based work to be done, and that work gives volunteers purpose. It is a privilege to help people get the chance to do things that matter." In addition to the value to the volunteer, Karen sees first-hand how volunteers make life better for each person they assist. "It is easy to take driving a car to the grocery store or a medical appointment for granted until you are unable to do it. The relief on the other end of the phone is palpable when a senior in need knows that they can depend on a friendly volunteer to escort them to the doctor's office or to help with grocery shopping."

With responsibility for a number of volunteer programs at diverse organizations in the fields of social services and higher education under her belt, Karen is well prepared to lead the program at Springwell. She is busy working on outreach and recruitment plans to bring new compassionate people looking to make a difference in the life of a senior into the Springwell volunteer community. Karen has well-honed infrastructure and community-building ideas, and she knows that starting with these fundamentals is the best path forward to a strong and exciting volunteer program.

For more information or to volunteer, visit Springwell's Volunteer page on our website.



## Surprising Rewards for Community Dining Volunteers

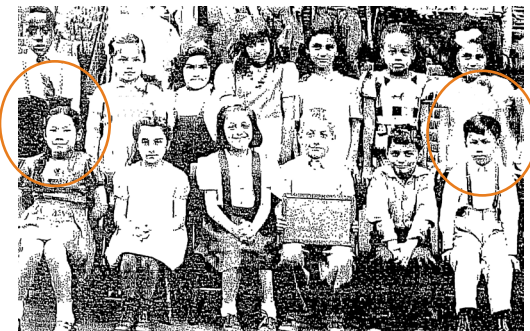
Our recent Volunteer Appreciation event held an unexpected surprise: a reunion of two childhood friends! Sherry and Ed, long-time volunteers at different Springwell Community Dining sites, saw each other and both exclaimed, "I know you!"

Sherry has been a Community Dining volunteer for seven years. When she retired, she began attending movies at the Brookline Senior Center, where she learned that Springwell needed help in the kitchen during the on-site lunch program. Before long, she was happily volunteering five days a week. In addition to serving food, Sherry enjoys welcoming new people and has made many friends at the site.



In his years volunteering in Belmont, Ed has helped in the kitchen and serving food to diners. Serving humanity through volunteerism is one part of Ed's core beliefs, which are grounded in his membership in the Freemason fraternal organization. In the dining program, Ed interacts with many people, and he enjoys being a resource for whatever others need, from engaging in a compassionate chat to teaching iPhone skills.

It's not surprising that Sherry and Ed recognized each other, even after many years. They lived on neighboring streets in Boston during grammar and junior high school (pictured below) and were part of a group of friends who enjoyed skating, basketball, volleyball and picnics together. After they grew up and moved away, they lost touch until this appreciation event, which was Sherry's first.



For Sherry and Ed, volunteering is meaningful, and reconnecting with an old friend over their shared experience made the evening extra happy. At Springwell, we appreciate the difference volunteers make in the daily lives of seniors we serve. This night, we were delighted to see it reconnect old friends as well.

### Solutions in Support of Health and Independence

Springwell is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to helping people who need long-term services and supports to remain independent and healthy in the setting of their choice. Services are made possible in part by contracts with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, MassHealth, contracts with insurance and health care providers, and also through the generosity of individuals and institutions that provide critical philanthropic support.



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