



ST. ALEXIUS OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Winter Update

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From the desk of the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Alexian Brothers and those we serve, we wish you all a very Happy New Year! We just received the following note from one of our newest friends, which beautifully summarizes why we serve:

"Brother Richard, it was an honor to meet you and I really enjoyed the visit with you.... I want to thank you and all of the volunteers for all the beautiful and useful gifts you brought me. It made my Christmas one that I will never forget. Wishing you and everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.... You have helped me through some very difficult times."

During these first two years of service, our Hospitality at Home program received over 70 referrals, which have led to over 40 new friendships! In 2020, we are expanding our services to the greater Hamilton Co. area, continuing to focus on and support vulnerable older adults.

Our second program, the Shopping Shuttle provides free weekly transportation to nine low-income communities that serve seniors and individuals with disabilities. We are expanding our services to three new communities in 2020 and we are grateful to the Chattanooga Housing Authority for their on-going support.

We look forward to having two student interns joining our team in January along with Alexian Brother Robert Podjarsky. We believe our "success stories" will inspire each of you to consider joining with us as we continue to bring hope and assurance to one another. Together, we can create a community where our elders know they are cared for and valued.

Best regards,

Susan W. Chill



A Story of Continuing Friendship

Ms. W had lived alone for many years. Widowed and retired, she often shared how lonely she was in addition to being fearful of not knowing how to get back home after running errands. In the state of Tennessee, every citizen is mandated to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a vulnerable older adult, and Adult Protective Services (APS) received a report on Ms. W. Her children were also concerned for their mother's safety and secured a home care aide, but Ms. W would not accept their assistance. Eventually, she was referred to St. Alexius Outreach to see if our offer of ongoing friendship and support might be able to relieve some of these concerns.

Since we reached out in 2017, we have seen Ms. W's fear and anxiety shift as she has gained new friendships. Once fearful and upset that APS had been contacted, she now understands that it was out of concern for her well-being and safety. Today, she expresses gratitude for our friendship and support. She said, "I would pray to God for a friend, and then you called." St. Alexius Outreach has been with her through an extended hospitalization, rehabilitation, and a move to an assisted living community.

Just a few months ago, we introduced her to Emily, a volunteer. Ms. W and Emily enjoy each other's company and plan outings with very little involvement from us. We recently received a call from a family member of Ms. W requesting that we find someone who could take Ms. W out to lunch for her birthday. It was short notice, but we promised to do our best. When we reached out to Emily to see if she was available, we found that Emily and Ms. W had already planned a birthday lunch together!

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Interested in becoming a visiting volunteer?

We are continuing to grow and are so excited about the friends we're going to make this year - will you join us?

Stay tuned for information on our upcoming volunteer orientation. In the meantime, go ahead and apply online!

www.stalexiusoutreach.org/volunteer

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This story is a “success story” for many reasons. It demonstrates the important role that APS and other agencies play in identifying older adults who are experiencing self-neglect and abuse – many of whom are also isolated and lonely. It also highlights community members’ responsibility to report concerns to APS. In addition, it shows our desire to support our participants while also fostering a positive relationship with family members. We want to see this kind of community transformation – one relationship at a time.

Our vision is a community where our elders know they are cared for and valued, and this is what we see in the friendship between Emily and Ms. W. While we will continue to provide support, we celebrate the new friendship that both Emily and Ms. W have found, and we pray that this sort of friendship develops for more of our community members – both young and old.

We are finding that, due to the complicated nature of self-neglect, people often fall through the cracks of APS and other agencies who do not have the ability to offer ongoing friendship. Our friendship with Ms. W developed slowly and this is not unusual – it takes time to build trust and develop relationships. However, a report to APS is a good and necessary starting point for securing help when you are concerned for the well-being of a friend or neighbor. If you have concerns, remember that you are a mandated reporter and your call is always confidential.

Did you
know?

You can make a report to APS at any time through any of the methods listed below:

1. Online at <https://reportadultabuse.dhs.tn.gov>
2. APS Hotline at 1-888-277-8366
3. In writing by mail to: Davidson County DHS, 1000 Second Ave. North, Nashville TN 37243
4. Fax (866)294-3961

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