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options for independence

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THE GOOD LIFE

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Understanding Caregiver Respite Scholarships *Support for Those in Need*



Caregivers need to be able to take breaks and care for themselves.

Patti Demers, Information and Caregiver Resource Center Program Director

Caregiver Respite Scholarships are a valuable form of support provided by LifePath directly to unpaid caregivers who provide assistance to support individuals to remain in their homes. The caregivers might be caring for a person with a developmental disability, dementia, or complex medical conditions. Caregivers may also be grandparents caring for grandchildren. The scholarships aim to alleviate the pressures experienced by caregivers and simultaneously enhance the quality of care provided to the recipient.

Both caregivers and care recipients benefit from these respite scholarships. They allow caregivers to take a well-deserved break, ensuring the continuity of appropriate care for the recipient. Respite can take many different forms, ranging from temporary care for the recipient while the caregiver takes time off to the provision of activities promoting the caregiver's personal well-being, like gym memberships and massage sessions. Scholarships can be used for things like headphones, tablets, or comfort pets to help provide productive activities for care recipients. They can also be used for camp scholarships, membership fees, or tuition for grandchildren.

Eligibility for respite scholarships extends to any caregiver looking after individuals with dementia, a developmental disability, behavioral health issues, or complex medical needs. Grandparents caring for their grandchildren are also considered eligible.

The Community Engagement Center (CEC), a program of LifePath and The Care Collaborative, is an innovative respite program that provides participants with engaging programming and caregivers with a break. The caregiver and participant also have the opportunity to develop long-lasting community relationships. For more information visit LifePathMA.org.

One of the biggest challenges caregivers experience is finding someone to provide care so they can leave the house for a few hours to attend a support group, go grocery shopping or simply rest. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a respite provider, call and ask for the Neighbor Helping Neighbor program. We can help match you to options that best fit your interests. Training and compensation can be provided.

Recently, we were able to provide a respite scholarship to a woman who wanted to visit

her grandchildren who lived in another state. Using the respite grant, she was able to pay for care for her loved one while she was away enjoying time with her grandchildren. She was able to pay a trusted friend who was known to her loved one. She had a great time away and her loved one enjoyed a change of pace and the company of the friend.

Supporting caregivers is core to LifePath's mission. We encourage individuals to reach out to the Information and Caregiver Resource Center to explore the available assistance. There are several funding options tailored to support caregivers.

With the support of the Respite Scholarships, the caregiver was able to enjoy their vacation, knowing that the care recipient was well taken care of by a trusted friend.

Three Years of Work Culminate in Launch of Age- and Dementia- Friendly Action Plan *Public Invited to Learn More and Celebrate on Nov. 16, Noon-2 PM*



Community members propose ideas for making our community more age-friendly at a June 2023 event. Kemah Wilson, right, steering committee and work group member; Lynne Feldman, center, Director of Community Services at LifePath.

By Lynne Feldman, Director of Community Services, LifePath

An Age- and Dementia-Friendly Action Plan is a comprehensive strategy developed by a community to ensure that its infrastructure, services, and policies are designed and implemented in a way that supports and accommodates the needs of people of all ages, particularly older adults. These action plans are specifically focused on creating environments

that are accessible, inclusive, and supportive for older adults, aiming to promote their health, well-being, and active participation within the community. They are supported by the World Health Organization and AARP.

In 2020, Franklin County and the North Quabbin embarked on a collaborative process designed to support the development of an Action Plan. Through a special grant from the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Fund overseen by HRiA, LifePath together with partner FRCOG assembled a steering committee, presented to individual towns, conducted a needs assessment, and facilitated workgroups to analyze the results. Now, the action plan is complete and ready to be released. It will include guidance for the improvement of outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, special participation, respect and social inclusion, work and civic engagement, communication and information, and community and health services.

The development of the Action Plan involved a collaborative effort between local government officials, community organizations, businesses, and residents. The plan was developed through consultations and engagements with older adults, their families, and caregivers, along with representatives from various sectors, such as healthcare, transportation, housing, and social services. The goal is to identify key areas of improvement and implement changes that enhance the quality of life for seniors while fostering a sense of belonging and social engagement.

LifePath and FRCOG invite the community to learn more and celebrate the launch of the action plan at the John W. Olver Transit Center, Allen Room, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301, Thursday, November 16, 12:00-2:00 PM. Lunch will be served; please RSVP at LifePathMA.org/AgeFriendly.

An Age-Friendly Action Plan is a proactive approach to address the challenges and opportunities associated with an aging population, aiming to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for people of all ages within a community. It serves as a roadmap for local organizations and municipal leaders to implement measures that promote the well-being and active participation of older adults, fostering a sense of community and belonging for all residents. Specific organizations have been included as leads on "action items" with defined goals and outcome measures. The next step will be implementation which may take 2-10 years to complete. To learn more or to get involved, visit: LifePathMA.org/AgeFriendly.

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