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Friends



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SUMMER 2022



Minnesota Radio and Stage Veteran Discovers Meaningful Connections Over Lunch



Community

children's story time broadcasts by a local radio station. "Those stories coming out of that big box that we could sit in front of and let our imaginations go was such a draw for me," Dave said.

Dave got a taste of the inner working of radio early through classes taught at his grade school, which fueled his growing interest. His first job in radio was writing news at a well-known Red Wing radio station. Convinced it was the right career, he studied radio at the University of Minnesota and eventually got a job at Minnesota Public Radio (MPR). Dave jokes that his long career at MPR started as a 90-day trial that lasted 22 years.

Companionship

For more than a decade, Friends & Co (F&C) member Dave would pass the former Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly offices on Lake Street in South Minneapolis. Confused by the name, he assumed it was a religious organization. While serving as president of Prime Timers MSP, a social organization focusing on the enrichment of gay and bisexual men at all life stages, he understood more about F&C's mission and programs but was hesitant to get involved.

Dave took a chance and began attending F&C's monthly *Let's Do Lunch Café* gathering at the Danish American Center for LGBTQ+ older adults, which combines a catered

lunch with topical presentations and friendly conversation. Dave didn't feel the need for any of the other F&C programs at this point in his life. "I was really just looking for companionship, conversation, and a place to share life experiences with other gay people."

The *Let's Do Lunch* gatherings proved to be the perfect balance for Dave and an ideal place to meet like-minded people and share life experiences. And what a life indeed: Dave was born and raised 50 miles south of Red Wing, MN, and developed a fascination with radio very early while listening to President Frankly D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats and

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Dave, right, in "Devil's Disciple" at Theater in the Round, late 1990s

Meaningful connections for older adults.



New Name and Logo, Same Important Mission

James Falvey,
Executive Director

It's been about three months since we unveiled the new Friends & Co name, logo, and graphic identity, and I'm thrilled to share that the feedback from our older adult members, volunteers and the greater community has been terrific.

Our new name was a result of a very deliberate and cautious process that involved legal and financial assessments well before we gathered the thoughts and opinions from our older adult members, volunteers, donors, partners, our staff and board of directors.

More than 30 key stakeholder interviews consistently came back to the same issues: the "Little Brothers" part of our former name was misleading and inaccurately connoted a religious affiliation. It also did not describe who we are and was often misinterpreted as sexist or male centric. The reference to "the elderly" in the name was viewed as outdated and derogatory.

The Friends & Co name pays homage to our past while providing a fresh and vibrant platform for introducing our work and mission to a new generation of older adults in more places across Minnesota. I'm hearing from many in the community that the Friends & Co name and identity is more welcoming and inclusive for older adults, donors, volunteers, and community partners. It truly expresses the essence of who we are: friendship, connection, companionship, and community.

**Friends
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Meaningful
connections
for older
adults.

Community



Connection



Today we stand on a solid 50-year-old foundation, holding true to that original mission forged back in 1972. Yes, the packaging has evolved, but the core of this organization -- our mission, people, work ethic, and our commitment to connecting older adults to the power of friendship -- remains the same.

We deeply appreciate your support throughout these changes, and I welcome any feedback or questions you might have.

Thank you!

What We Know About Social Isolation & Loneliness:

WHO Risk factors of loneliness

50% of individuals aged 60+ are at risk of social isolation and one-third experience some degree of loneliness later in life

People with incomes of \$25K or less report more loneliness than those at higher incomes

Men have a tendency to be slightly more lonely than women

City/suburban dwellers report less loneliness than people in rural areas

Those with chronic, long-term illness or disability report being lonely more often

IMPACT Loneliness & your health

Poor social connections are associated with a 30% increased risk of early death

Prolonged loneliness can lead to heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, and addiction

Loneliness can change the neuro-chemistry of the brain, causing some degeneration

Lonely people have a higher risk of dementia years later than those who are not lonely

Loneliness can be as lethal as smoking 15 cigarettes a day

RELIEF Most effective Interventions

One-to-one in-person social engagement

Virtual and in-person social activities (recreation, exercise classes, meetups)

Support through community resources (in-home care, Meals on Wheels, errand assistance)

Integrating wellness - social connections improve physical health, and mental and emotional well-being

Connecting to a broader community

There is no one-size-fits-all that is most effective

Dave's Lunch Connections *continued*

Dave's other great passion is live theater, working behind the scenes and as an actor. As a teenager, a high school theatre director witnessed Dave's natural talent and pushed him to give live theater a try. He went on to do community theater and dabble in theater throughout his life.



In the late 1990s, Dave was cast in Theater in the Round's production of "Devil's Disciple." He's most proud of his role as Charlie in a 2003 production of "Death of a Salesman" at Loading Dock Theater in St. Paul.

Dave brings this fascinating life story to his *Let's Do Lunch Café* experiences every month.



Dave, left, in "Death of a Salesman" in 2003.

When asked what he would say to someone hesitant about joining him and other LGBTQ+ older adults for lunch and conversation, Dave insists they should just give it a try.

"I'm an introvert, so I understand, but even if you are skeptical, take a chance and just go. You could be surprised and make some new connections."

There Really *is* a Free Lunch

Let's Do Lunch Café is a bi-monthly get-together that welcomes older LGBTQ community members for lunch "on the house." Attendees enjoy educational and informative programming on the local resources available to them in the metro.

Anywhere between thirty and fifty members are usually in attendance.

Community



Let's Do Lunch

Connection



When: Every second Tuesday and fourth Friday of the month from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: Danish American Center, 3030 W River Pkwy, Minneapolis, MN

Sign up at friendsco.org/lets-do-lunch-cafe or contact Dennis at dglock@friendsco.org



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Meaningful connections for older adults.

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Call for Volunteers

Join us to bring connection, friendship, and happiness into the life of an older adult, while adding friendship and purpose to your own. We have openings for the following positions:

Coffee Talker™ to answer Coffee Talk phone line

One-to-one Phone Companion

In-person Visiting Companion

Community Ambassador

Visit friendsco.org/volunteer for more information or contact Ann Fosco at afosco@friendsco.org



Friends & Co, formerly Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly, is a nonprofit volunteer-based organization committed to alleviating social isolation among older adults through community-led service that fosters meaningful connections for everyone. We envision a world where every older adult thrives in meaningful relationships.

To learn more about Friends & Co's programs, staff, board of directors, volunteer opportunities, or to make a donation, visit:

If you have questions about this publication, or to be removed from our mailing list, contact Mike Weiner at 612-746-0739 or mweiner@friendsco.org

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