



Phone Companions

Volunteer Service Training



A no-cost program that connects older adults with caring Phone Companion volunteers to build meaningful friendships and reduce social isolation.

Most companions connect by phone each week at a time that works for them.



PHONE COMPANIONS

What service is provided?

- This no-cost service connects a member with a caring phone companion volunteer ready to create and enjoy an ongoing connection.

Are there program requirements?

- 62+ years old
- Lives in Minnesota or Western Wisconsin

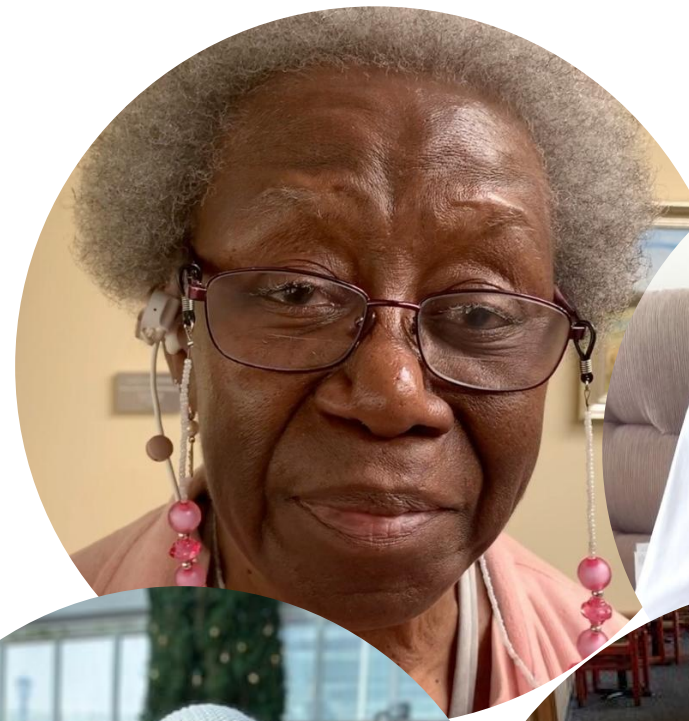
How do members sign up?

- Fill out a short interest form. Older adults, family members, friends, and professional referrers are welcome to submit the form. Each older adult completes a phone assessment before being matched with a volunteer.



CELEBRATING CONNECTION

- Everyone is different and we celebrate this at Friends & Co! Some of our members are talkative, some are quiet. Some like to get out and about, and others prefer connecting at home.
- While we don't have a perfect pairing process, we do our best to pair people.
- We want all our older adult members to feel supported and this means celebrating differences and being supportive to all!



THE PAIRING PROCESS

- After completing the interest form, the older adult will be contacted by Friends & Co staff and complete a phone assessment with them.
- Upon completing the phone assessment, the older adult's biography will be shared with volunteers on our matching hub.
- Once a volunteer requests to be matched with the older adult, the older adult will be contacted first and then the match will be made.
- Upon pairing, you will receive a call and an email with the older adult's contact information.



Friends & Co Phone Companion Duo – Jack and Mary

CONTACTING YOUR PHONE COMPANION

- We ask that you call your phone companion within seven days of receiving their name and contact information.
- When you call:
 - State your name
 - Share you are their new Friends & Co phone companion
 - Let them know you are excited to converse with them
 - Figure out when and how frequently you both would like to chat
 - People chat daily, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, with most companions chatting once a week.
 - Do what works best for you and your phone companion!



DURING A CALL

- Listen attentively
- Add a warm welcome to your voice
- Practice patience
- Ask open-ended questions
- Encourage gently
- Express interest
- Share with empathy
- Enjoy a laugh
- Be positive



COMMON TYPES OF CONVERSATIONS

HAPPY

"We talked about St. Patrick's Day. He said there was no party at the Care Center, but in honor of the day he wore his green sweatshirt!"

SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

"Talked with her about her urgent care experience and family drama. She just needed to vent..."

SAD

"She was lonely today - cried about missing her boyfriend that had passed away."

CONVERSATION SCENARIOS

SCENARIO	POSSIBLE VOLUNTEER SOLUTION
Repetition	Patience and reframing, inquisitive inquiry.
Complaints	An empathetic, patient ear, and possible redirection.
Despair	Kindness, optimism, and patience. Questions directed toward solution-seeking.
Seeking advice	Instead of advising, encourage them to problem-solve and look at all possibilities.
Silence	Doesn't need to be filled right away! The caller may just need a moment to gather their thoughts. Wait before trying to fill it.



SUBMITTING ENGAGEMENT REPORTS

- By submitting engagement reports, our staff gains valuable insights into the progress of the pairing, and it provides an avenue for addressing any questions or concerns you may have. Additionally, these reports play a crucial role in our grant applications and funding efforts, as they demonstrate the impact of our programs.
- Engagement reports can be completed after each conversation or at the end of each month.

[To get access to the engagement reports, please click here to get your volunteer portal link.](#)

Make sure to bookmark the link for future use!



EXAMPLE OF AN ENGAGEMENT REPORT:

- **Volunteer Name:** George Jones
- **Hours spent with older adult:** 1
- **Comments:** Robert sounded better than the past few phone calls. Despite the cold morning, he was getting his errands done at Target.
- **Older Adults Name:** Robert Simon
- **Hours without older adult:** 0



STOPPING YOUR VOLUNTEER ROLE

If you need to stop or pause your volunteer role, please do the following:

- Inform your phone companion
- After notifying your phone companion, please follow up with program staff who will in turn reach out to the older adult about getting rematched.



RESOURCES

- **For any emergencies, call 911!**
- National Suicide Hotline: Call 988
- Mental Health Chat Lines:
 - Minnesota Warmline: 877-404-3190
 - HERE4MN: 833-HERE4MN
- Additional Mental Health Resources:
 - www.mentalhealthmn.org
 - www.namimn.org
- For any information for senior related issues or care, call the Senior Linkage Line:
 - 1-800-333-2433
 - <https://mn.gov/senior-linkage-line/>
- Friends & Co Resource Guide: [Friends & Co Minnesota Resources Guide](#)



REFERRING YOUR COMPANION TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

YOUR PHONE COMPANION...	POSSIBLE RESOURCES
Asks you to speak daily.	Make sure to share that the older adult can also call our Coffee Talk line twice weekly. Click here for more information about Coffee Talk!
Shares with you they extremely anxious or depressed and don't want to be around anymore.	We recommend suggesting the following resources depending on the situation: • National Suicide Hotline: 988 • Minnesota Warmline: 877-404-3190 • Reference the resource guide for more mental health related resources
Is worried because they are running low on groceries and isn't sure how to get to the store or if they will have enough money to pay for things.	It is always best practice to ask the older adult if this situation has happened before, and if so, how they have handled it in the past. Using the guide for resources in their geographic area, make appropriate referrals to other organizations.
Asks you to meet in person.	• Interested in meeting in person? Contact Friends & Co before making plans so we can guide you through the required steps. • Prefer to keep things phone-based? That's perfectly okay, too. Let your companion know they can contact us to sign up for our other programming.



Meaningful connections for older adults.

Thank you for volunteering!