

Sharing the Caring

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A Note from the Director:

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Perhaps the most important lesson of life is to adjust and readjust. When I moved back to Collinsville eight years ago to care for my mother, I had to quickly learn the many aspects of being a caregiver. Each time I thought “I’ve got this!” a shift in Mom’s needs required me to readjust. In the same fashion, accepting the role of Executive Director at CFIA was another deep dive into assessing what our clients need and helping them adjust or readjust to their new reality.

For example, our client Justine was “aging in place.” That’s the fancy term sociologists and others use to describe when people choose to remain in their homes as they age. That may seem a tad simple. After all, who wouldn’t want to stay in the home they’ve spent years paying for and where neighbors have become friends? Well, the reality is that many people need to *adjust* their homes if they want to age there. Perhaps stairs are becoming more of a fall risk, and a shower stall has become even more of a slippery danger. When Justine called, she could no longer climb the stairs from her front door down to the street to retrieve her mail. A phone call to one of our volunteer teams and some more calls to different agencies for funding resulted in our client having a new mailbox that was just outside her front door rather than down the steps to the street level.

This adjustment for Justine was complete, but after some discussion, it became clear that she could use a little more help from our volunteers. Justine needed a bush near her garage trimmed, and she was having more trouble driving to her doctor’s office in Shiloh. One volunteer trimmed that overgrown shrub in just 45 minutes, and Justine has now signed up with our Assisted Transportation service so that our volunteer can drive her to the doctor and help her get in and out of the car.

Since joining CFIA, I’ve met so many clients who don’t have family in the area to help with simple things such as raking leaves. Another client, who I’ll call Laura, had always enjoyed gardening, but keeping up with the flower beds and yard clean up was becoming not just difficult, but actually dangerous. Laura signed up for our semi-annual yard clean up and a crew of volunteers packed up more than 35 bags of leaves in less than two hours. Laura’s beloved garden was accessible and enjoyable to her once more; she didn’t need to quit gardening, or move into a different home, she simply needed to readjust and accept our free service. The day we helped Laura, we had multiple teams working throughout the Collinsville area making a significant impact on many of our clients’ lives. Those clients expressed their thanks in many ways including baking cookies for the volunteers raking in their yards!

Laura also signed up for a new service CFIA offered this year. Each fall season, as many of us change out our smoke



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detector batteries, we may not be aware that many people over the age of 60 and many adults with disabilities cannot perform this important safety task. Partnering with the Collinsville Fire Department, CFIA was able to offer free smoke detector inspection and battery replacement. The firefighters visited CFIA clients' homes and did the work. If a smoke detector was found to be expired or inoperable, the fire department replaced the entire smoke detector. And all of this was

at no cost to the client. Like Laura, almost every client who called for a yard clean up also signed on for the smoke detector inspection.

While life certainly presents all of us with new and interesting challenges, it's reassuring to know that we can have help adjusting and readjusting through the years. Let your friends, neighbors, and family know that they can rely on CFIA to help.

ON THE MOVE WITH BETH...



Transportation - We are truly movin' on up! During the months of July through September CFIA volunteers provided services to 79 individuals 60 years of age or older, and adults with disabilities that live within the Collinsville Unit 10 school district.

We welcomed four new or returning volunteers:

- Tracy H – volunteer driver
- Donna J – volunteer driver
- Jean B – office volunteer
- Andrea M – reassurance caller



Telephone Reassurance - Our volunteers have averaged over 100 calls per month to help reduce feelings of isolation. Many have expressed gratitude for the opportunity to make new friends.

Elder Connection - This program is a wonderful opportunity to socialize and meet new people. The 2022 schedule is in the works. The name of this program may even see a new name that would better reflect what the program is all about. We do require participants to RSVP for these activities, so call in early, and let us know if transportation is needed.



Councilman Tony Hausmann and Derik Reiser, owner of Old Herald Brewery & Distillery, present a donation to CFIA. Councilman Hausmann and Old Herald donated over \$800 when Tony and his wife performed favorite songs on a Sunday afternoon at Old Herald, and the restaurant also contributed a portion of sales that day.



Answers on Aging

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Hello. When I wrote to you last time, I'd been with CFIA as the Answers on Aging (AoA) Specialist for a matter of weeks. And while I was able to find the coffee pot and the rest room, I was pretty naïve as to the many services I could offer clients. Now, I'm a seasoned vet with five months behind me. I have begun to understand the scope of how much CFIA can offer people. Much of my time is spent in a couple key areas:

- Assisting people when they wish to apply for reduced license plate tags and free transit cards,
- As a Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) counsellor, answering questions and providing information about Medicare so that the client can select an appropriate insurance option.



While these are helpful and popular services, I am finding that in our community, too many seniors and disabled people are facing far bigger challenges. These include financial, medical, logistical/transportation, and emotional difficulties that are beyond what I had ever considered. I grew up in this community, yet had been oblivious to the challenges many of my neighbors faced.

Since I was unaware of the problems, I was also unaware of the support organizations in our community that provide services to help alleviate these challenges. Volunteer organizations, government agencies, for-profit businesses, and willing individuals can and do provide direct assistance to people facing difficulties.

I have quickly learned that another of my responsibilities is to help match the individuals in need to the organization(s) most likely able to address the challenges that sometimes come with aging. Because CFIA has developed relationships with many charitable organizations in our 23 years, I am able to direct our clients to these fantastic support organizations, who are then able to provide the needed assistance. Some examples of recent referrals:

- A senior citizen whose front door was warped to the point that it could not be closed and needed to be replaced. *Referred to an organization specializing in home repair to keep people in their homes.*
- A woman returning home after having had a leg amputated and who needed a ramp so that she could get in and out of her home in her wheelchair. *Referred to a church-based volunteer organization who supplied the labor, and secured grant funding for materials.*
- Requests for help in securing housing for a senior couple who were evicted from their apartment. *Referred to the county housing authority, who was able to place the couple in short term housing until permanent housing is available.*
- A client who needed respite care for her disabled husband and his one-hundred-year-old mother so she could take a much-needed break. *Referred to a volunteer visiting nurses' organization who provided no-cost assistance.*
- An elderly husband and wife with an unexpected home repair that left them unable to purchase groceries. *Referred to the local food pantry that provided fresh, frozen, and canned goods to restock their pantry.*
- A woman recently relocated to Madison County from south Texas. She had no winter clothing. *Referred to a local food bank who provided winter clothing and footwear.*
- A gentleman who needed assistance in creating a will and health proxy. *Referred to a no-cost legal aid organization that was able to create the documents.*

It is through our cooperation with the other organizations that we are able to meet the needs of our mutual neighbors and friends. CFIA and the other organizations who directly assist seniors and people with disabilities are all in operation to provide competent, compassionate, and caring assistance to those who have a need.

If you (or someone you know) is having difficulty that impacts your ability to live safely and in good health, and you are unable to find the assistance you need, please contact me, Patrick - your Answers on Aging Specialist, at **618-344 7788**. We are here to help you either directly or by referring you to an organization that can help. Enjoy the rest of Autumn, and have a happy, healthy, and safe Holiday Season.

Thank you for your contribution

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Donations received are updated monthly and acknowledged with a receipt sent by mail to the donor. Donations are then recognized quarterly in this newsletter. Gifts received after our newsletter has been sent to the printer will be recognized in the next newsletter.

During Fall Yard Clean Up Day, nearly 50 volunteers from 4 different local organizations came together to work in client yards in Collinsville and Caseyville.



4-H and Legacy Fire Basketball



4-H



Rotary Club of Collinsville



Legacy Fire Basketball



Volunteer John B.

Options Counseling: How to Live Happily and Safely at Any Age



So often in life, we prepare for challenges, yet it's difficult to prepare for possibilities we don't even know might happen. Many clients we work with have life skills and experiences that have helped them navigate the challenges life presents, yet they are not aware of some of the services that they haven't needed until now. Options Counseling is a chance to learn about services and programs available as we age. For instance, a number of clients have their own cars and can drive themselves, but as time goes on, driving and car ownership present difficulties including the financial obligations to car ownership.



CFIA is here to help! If you or someone you know needs help with transportation, even just occasionally, we offer our free assisted transportation service. Our trained volunteers are happy to pick up clients at their home and take them to their destination. But we're more than a bus or taxi service; we can assist clients by walking them into their appointments if they choose to use more than a drop off. We are happy to assist clients with walkers who may need an extra hand.



Other clients do not need our assisted transportation services but want to use the discount available for license plate stickers. The State of Illinois refers to this program as Benefits Access. Usually, these stickers are purchased every other year at a cost of more than \$150, but with our assistance, clients receive the legally required stickers for just \$25.



Beyond transportation services, CFIA is also pleased to assist clients with access to healthy foods. Clients with a quick need can have a box of food delivered to their home, others make use of the delivered food program known as Meals on Wheels. A new program from a sister organization

is offering delivery of meal ingredients along with an instructional session about how to cook the meal and how to create nutritious and delicious menus.



During the summer season, local farmer's markets provide weekly \$25 coupons to people over the age of 65 so they can purchase locally grown produce. Clients interested in these services simply need to call us, and we can assist them with signing up for these free services.



Home ownership is another area that can present challenges. CFIA assists clients with home modifications to keep the home a safe place while one ages. For instance, this fall, CFIA offered a free smoke detector service in collaboration with the Collinsville Fire Department. Clients who called us had a friendly visit from fire fighters who checked the in-home smoke detectors. Battery replacement was free to clients, and those who needed new smoke detectors were provided with free detectors and installation of those detectors. Rather than climbing up a ladder or living with a faulty detector, clients remained safe with the help of CFIA and the fire department.



Homeowners also can call CFIA for minor home repair and modifications. For instance, our volunteers are honored to put their faith into action by installing grip bars in shower and bath areas so that clients can avoid dangerous falls in the home. These skilled and motivated volunteers have also built a record number of wheelchair ramps this last year so clients could remain in their own homes even if their ambulatory skills were declining.



Social events may seem an extravagance rather than a need, but research indicates that lack of socialization is problematic at any age. People experiencing social isolation are at higher risk for both depression and physical health problems. CFIA addresses social

isolation among our clients by providing friendly phone calls from volunteers and opportunities for social gatherings. Volunteers come together to assemble our quarterly newsletters and do minor yard and garden work. Clients are invited each month to have lunch, visit local sites of interest, and to participate in games and crafting sessions. These simple gatherings result in friendships and fun, and all are at no cost to volunteers and clients who sign up.

Aging can surprise us with the challenges it presents. CFIA offers so many programs and services that we cannot even list them all! If you

have a family member, friend, or neighbor who would like to learn more about the plethora of opportunities that can help one age in a healthy and happy manner, please call us for an Options Counseling session.



Volunteers Carol H. and Luke B. prepare for the Veteran's Day Parade. This was the first time CFIA participated in the parade.



AED and CPR Training with The Greg Holthaus Foundation.



Toni K. and a Willoughby Farm resident during a recent Elder Connection luncheon and field trip.



Johanna, Laura, and Toni during a Willoughby Farm field trip.



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