

## **Commonwealth Council on Aging 2007 Best Practice Awards Winners**

The Commonwealth Council on Aging received 16 nominations for the 2007 Best Practices Awards by the April 20, 2007 deadline. Eight (8) programs were chosen to be recognized through the 2007 Best Practices Awards Program:

### **Modular Wheelchair Ramp Program**

ElderHomes Corporation  
88Carnation Street  
Richmond, VA 23225  
804-233-2827

Since there are no government programs to fund ramps and other home modifications for vulnerable homeowners, ElderHomes created the Modular Wheelchair Ramp/Home Accessibility and Improvement Program (“Modular Ramp”). To make this program work, ElderHomes created strong collaborations with 24 nonprofit groups, 15 businesses, and 500+ individual volunteers. The modular ramps themselves are customized, fast and inexpensive to build and install. Since its inception in 1992, ElderHomes has served 6,700households.

### **ElderFriends**

VCU Dept. of Gerontology  
PO Box 980228  
Richmond, VA 23298-0228  
804-828-6059

ElderFriends is a volunteer-based friendly visitation program designed to help keep elders living in the community, in their own homes, and remaining independent for as long as possible. ElderFriends is operating under the umbrella of the VCU Department of Gerontology, which has seen the benefits of a program like this in promoting the well being of the elderly. ElderFriends was established in Richmond in the Fall of 2005. It was a replicated model of the successful program of the same name established in Seattle in 1996. ElderFriends is now delivering socialization services to address isolation and loneliness among Richmond’s elder population.

**The Senior Advantage Program**

Rockingham Memorial Hospital  
235 Cantrell Avenue  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801  
540-433-4231

Senior Advantage is a membership program for adults 55 years or better. The main components of the program are health education, fitness, nutrition, and social interaction. Ten separate activities are offered each month. The health education component is repeated in four different locations throughout the community. Healthy recipes, fitness tips, nutritious snacks, and blood pressure checks are offered at each program. Additionally computer classes, a walking program, senior dining, a breakfast club, and bingo are offered. Special interest programs such as craft classes, bus trips, and driver safety are incorporated into the schedule. Health screenings and health promotions along with special discounts are all part of the membership package. Members receive a quarterly newsletter announcing upcoming events or they can call a hotline number listing all activities.

**Memory U: Education for Caregivers**

Alzheimer's Association - Central & Western Virginia Chapter  
674 Hillside Drive, Suite 1  
Charlottesville, VA 22901  
434-973-6122

The Alzheimer's Association's Memory U is a comprehensive educational, training, and support program for caregivers of persons with dementia. The program seeks to increase caregiving skills and knowledge through the delivery of the latest scientific, medical, and best-practices information; provide emotional support; recruit experienced and trained caregivers as volunteers; improve the quality of life for caregivers; and improve the quality of life for persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. Memory U ensures that those who care for persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia will have the most current, scientifically and medically complete understanding of how to do so. Memory U offers a stimulating learning environment that fosters emotional support and well-being.

**The Helping Hands Project**

Beth Shalom Home of Virginia  
1600 John Rolfe Parkway  
Richmond, VA 23238  
804-421-5347

Institutionalized older adults often suffer from low self-esteem which may be associated with their loss of roles and responsibilities gained throughout their lifespan. The Helping Hands project at Beth Shalom Home was developed in an effort to help meet unmet psychosocial needs associated with such role loss. The project identifies individual and group opportunities for residents who suffer from a variety of mental and physical impairments to be successful in volunteering within their community. Additionally, students from Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Social Work have facilitated some of the group activities, providing clinical experience to expand upon classroom knowledge. Empowering participants to be successful with such opportunities has enhanced their self-esteem and self worth, alleviated problematic behaviors, and improved the value of the residents in the eyes of staff, family, and the community.

**Volunteer Caregivers Assisted Transportation Program**

Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers  
2A Loudoun Street, Suite 215  
Leesburg, VA 20175  
703-779-8617

The Loudoun Volunteer Caregivers Assisted Transportation Program began in 1995 with the mission of helping frail seniors and adults with disabilities to maintain independence and quality of life. The program provides assisted transportation to medical appointments and quality of life services. Help with walkers and other equipment as needed, escorting clients into appointments, and help in filling out forms in medical offices are examples of the assistance provided. Transportation services include grocery shopping, general errands, food bank pick-up and delivery, prescription pick-up, and other day to day needs. During 2006, more than 250 volunteers provided 5,000 transportation services to 380 Loudoun residents.

**The Aging Together Partnership**

Aging Together  
420 Southridge Parkway, Suite 106  
Culpeper, VA 22701  
540-829-6405

Aging Together, a broad consortium of organizations and individuals in the five counties of the Rappahannock-Rapidan region, is a collaborative effort to help localities prepare for an unprecedented growth in the older population and to assure that local residents will have the services and supports they need as they age. This partnership is built on an alliance of more than 100 organizations and individuals who actively participate in one or more county-based teams and regional workgroups and collaborate across agencies, counties and interest areas. Members include seniors, caregivers, community hospitals, service providers, schools, representatives of the faith community, and other concerned citizens. Aging Together does not provide direct services, but rather focuses on facilitating collaborations that will create and enhance supports for older persons delivered through various partner organizations. All seniors are valued and are able to move smoothly through a continuum of care in a manner reflective of their individual needs and preferences.

**Adopt A Nursing Home**

The Far-From-Barbies Group  
2592 Cantwell Road  
Virginia Beach, VA 23464

The Far-From-Barbies is a diverse and community-service oriented group of more than 20 women who work with the Virginia Beach Citizens Committee to Protect the Elderly. Through this collaboration, the Far-From-Barbies have “adopted” one of the cities larger nursing homes whose residents are mostly Medicaid recipients with no families or friends. The group members make regular visits to the facility and provide their adopted patients with toiletries, clothing, and special-needs items. They also provide regular monthly activities and programs for the residents. The result has been an improvement in the patient’s physical and mental well-being.

7/25/07