

## Senior Friendship Centers



### FriendWorks: The Senior Safety Net

Senior Friendship Centers' mission is to build vibrant communities by advancing wellness, connection, and enrichment throughout the journey of aging. An important program that has advanced this mission for more than 23 years is FriendWorks: The Senior Safety Net. It is the only program in Sarasota, specifically designed for seniors, that offers an array of crisis intervention services that provide financial and in-home safety and stability, nutrition support, and connections to reduce isolation and loneliness for seniors, all with an overall goal of improving physical and mental health.

The proposed initiative for Impact100 SRQ's \$110,500 grant is an expansion of this program, projected to serve 1,000 additional seniors each year, to address urgent needs like hunger, threat of eviction, loss of utilities, isolation and loneliness. These critical needs are rapidly increasing, and additional resources and program staff are required to meet them. Of the 42,000 seniors in Sarasota County, 15,000 are homebound, unable to drive, or lack a support system, making it difficult for them to fill even their most basic needs. The grant will fund approximately \$49,000 for a new full-time FriendsWorks Coordinator's salary and benefits; \$61,000 for client services including emergency food bags, household necessities, and housing eviction assistance for clients; and the balance for supplies and background checks.

The new FriendWorks Coordinator will be 100% dedicated to the program and directly responsible for client intake, assessment, administration of financial support, crisis and in-home intervention services, and all other program related activities. The program's three main components care for a vulnerable population through Crisis Intervention Services, Friendly Visitors & Reassurance Callers, and Emergency Food Bags.

This initiative will provide 370 seniors with nonperishable emergency food bags, fresh produce, and household goods such as toothpaste, deodorant, and cleaning supplies in 2023. This will be overseen by FriendWorks staff and supported by volunteers. Additionally, direct financial assistance and in-home intervention will be provided to 900 seniors facing an unexpected crisis in 2023. Finally, trained volunteers, overseen by staff, will make 1,500 telephone reassurance calls and friendly visits to homebound seniors in 2023 to combat isolation and loneliness.

This initiative will result in a 33% increase in the number of seniors assisted in their ability to live safely, independently, and securely in their own homes because they will have improved access to resources, alleviated hunger, and decreased isolation. FriendWorks will be sustained through charitable support, raised through a comprehensive strategic development plan which guides annual philanthropic activities.

Seniors in crisis face issues that have tremendous impact on physical, mental, and emotional health. This program's expansion will provide more clients with resources that will leave them mentally and physically healthier, and feeling stronger, more resilient, and more optimistic about their future.