

VISITING VOLUNTEER MANUAL



LITTLE
BROTHERS
 FRIENDS
OF THE
ELDERLY®
Upper Michigan
Chapter



"Where Service to the Elderly begins by being a Friend"
Serving the Elderly Since 1982

Heartfelt 
THANKS
TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forever Friends	page 4
Who we serve	page 5
Your role as a visiting volunteer	page 5
Visiting Tip	page 6
Conversation Starters	page 7
Suggested Activities	page 8
How to end your visit	page 9
Creating personal boundaries	page 9
Be a friend, not a fixer	page 10
Inappropriate Activities	page 10
Responsibilities and Reporting	page 11
Confidentiality	page 11

MISSION STATEMENT

Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly (LBFE) is a national network of non-profit, volunteer-based organizations committed to relieving isolation and loneliness among the elderly. We offer to people of good will the opportunity to join the elderly in friendship and celebration of life.

VISITING VOLUNTEER MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to provide you with tools for visiting an elderly friend as well as outlining our expectations of volunteers and what you can expect from Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly.

If you ever have any questions or concerns regarding your friendship or your elderly friend, please don't hesitate to call the Program Manager at **(906) 273-2575**.



FOREVER FRIENDS

Forever Friends are elders who we have determined are in need of friendship. Once they are added into our Friendly Visiting Program, we commit to being their friend for life. Forever Friends receive in-home visits at least twice a month. As a volunteer-based organization, we recruit volunteers to join us in friendship and celebration of life to provide these in-home visits.

YOUR ROLE AS A VISITING VOLUNTEER

Your role as a visiting volunteer is to create a meaningful friendship with a Forever Friend by visiting in their home at least twice a month.

If you choose, you also have the opportunity to support them in their endeavor to age in place by providing them with rides and assisting them with shopping. If you are unable to assist with these additional services, please refer them to the Program Manager.

Throughout the year we celebrate a variety of holidays and special occasions. We give you the first opportunity to deliver a gift and flower provided by Little Brothers to your elderly friend for this event.

Though you become our Forever Friends' primary visitor, the organization continues to be their friend by inviting them to special events and holiday celebrations to keep them happy, social, and connected to their community.

Your Forever Friend may still be active and enjoy getting out of their home. You may invite your Forever Friend to join you at a community event or go out to lunch. You are not expected to pay for them. Be sure you clarify who's paying when you make the plans.

Who We Serve:

Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly provides in-home visits to lonely elderly people age 60 and older who lack a social network of their own. We refer to these elders as Forever Friends.

VISITING TIPS

You may request to be accompanied by a visitor on staff to introduce you to your new Forever Friend. If you feel comfortable, you may go alone and introduce yourself.

Here are a few tips that will assist you in creating trust and a meaningful friendship.

- Call to confirm the date and time of your visit.
- Call if you will be late or have to cancel.
- Knock and wait to be invited in. This applies to elders in nursing homes too.
- Introduce yourself and explain that you are from Little Brothers—Friends of the Elderly.
- Wear your photo ID.
- Respect their personal space. Follow their lead and always ask permission to hug and honor their request if they say no.
- Do not use profanity.
- Refrain from using personal fragrances.
- Do not smoke.
- Be alert and aware of your surrounding, your elderly friend, and other people.
- Don't make promises.
- Set boundaries.
- Don't do things for your elderly friend that he or she wants to do for him or herself.
- Don't overstay your welcome. Visiting length depends on the elder but most visits last approximately 1 to 1.5 hours.
- Don't stay late into the evening.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Sometimes it can be difficult to start a conversation and find something in common. To help get the conversation started, take a look around the room and remark on photograph in their home. This will give an opportunity for your Forever Friend to share a story about their family or their travels. Use caution though, when you admire mementos or other objects that belong to your Forever Friend. They are quick to please and may see your compliment as a reason to give you the item.

Other conversation starters include asking open-ended questions about their:

- Family history
- Childhood stories
- Memorable holidays or vacations
- Personal milestones
- Beloved pets
- Hobbies or pastimes
- Personal fun facts
- Favorite musicians, writers, movies, etc.



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Bring photos of family and friends.
- Create a photo album or framed photograph collection.
- Make a scrapbook of your elderly friend's lifetime.
- Share your own favorite stories and memories.
- Share tales of your travels.
- Read newspapers and magazines.
- Read letters from family and friends.
- Help your elderly friend write letters.
- Have an indoor picnic.
- Play a musical instrument.
- Work on a craft project together.
- Treat your elderly friend to an in-home spa treatment.
- Ask for help in planning your garden.
- Play cards or board games.
- Do jigsaw puzzles together.
- Go "window shopping" in catalogs.
- Bring a favorite recipe book and plan a meal.
- Cook or bake.
- Read a chapter of a novel or several poems.
- Take a walk.
- Challenge your elderly friend to a spelling bee.
- Enjoy good conversation.
- Play recordings of your elder's favorite music.



HOW TO END YOUR VISIT



You may need to end the visit before your friend would like you to leave. You may sense that your Forever Friend is ready to end the visit but is too polite to ask you to leave.

To end the visit, start with an encouraging statement such as “It was a lovely visit and I look forward to seeing you again.” Then you may want to arrange your next visit before leaving or let them know you will call to schedule your next visit.

CREATING PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

You have the right to a safe and comfortable volunteer environment. Boundaries may encompass physical, social, mental, psychological, and spiritual areas.

You start to create a clear expectation of your personal boundaries with each occurrence. Though it may be difficult, it is easier to create your boundary the first time a boundary is crossed. Sometimes it's as simple as just saying “no”. You do not need to offer an explanation. If they persist, you can follow it up with a statement such as “I do not feel comfortable doing that.”

The Program Manager is available for guidance and support if needed. Finally, your boundaries will be respected if you respect the boundaries of your elderly friend.

BE A FRIEND - NOT A FIXER

Fixing occurs when a listener tries to solve all of the speaker's problems rather than responding to them in an empathetic manner. For example, rather than trying to make a grieving person feel good or happy, simply listen and allow your friend to express his or her emotions and be supportive.

Fixing can create an atmosphere of frustration for the 'fixer' and resentment for the elder. Ultimately, fixing may make your Forever Friend reluctant to discuss their problems with you in the future.

INAPPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

All programs and services provided by Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly are FREE OF CHARGE. We can never give the impression that our friendship has a price attached. We ask that you refrain from providing professional services (free of charge or for a fee) as it blurs the line of friendship and service provider.

The following are some examples of inappropriate activities:

- Manage finances, file taxes, lend or borrow money.
- Assist with banking without first consulting with the Program Manager
- Act as a representative payee, guardian, conservator, or executor of their estate.
- Provide legal or financial advice.
- Sign legal documents.
- Accept money.



RESPONSIBILITIES AND REPORTING

If at any time you are unavailable to visit, you are required to inform the Program Manager. We will assign another visitor in your absence. Two weeks notice is appreciated when you choose to permanently resign from being a visiting volunteer.

It is VERY IMPORTANT that you document each visit, errand, ride, etc. on the volunteer visiting log provided. We use this information to support our elderly friends, monitor the relationship and assist you as needed. The information is also helpful for us to study program trends to be used in grant writing and other potential fundraising.



CONFIDENTIALITY

Information regarding our elderly friends is confidential and must be safeguarded. Only discuss their personal information with Little Brothers staff who are directly involved. Casual discussion of an elder's private business is not friendly, and puts the elder at risk if you are overheard by someone who does not have the elder's best interest in mind.



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