

A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I recently visited my friend of many years, Eleanor. We reminisced, she sang a song in Finnish, and I promised to return for another visit over a cup of coffee. After that visit, I reflected on the many people I have met and befriended through Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly (LBFE) and how they have impacted my life.

Over twenty years ago, I met Alan through our signature Friendly Visiting Program. Alan was 80 at the time, a recent widower living alone. His children and grandchildren lived out of state. Our visits started out cordially, two strangers with a 56-year age gap trying to find something in common to talk about. It did not matter as he was just happy to have a visitor to break up his long, lonely afternoons. Since he could no longer drive, I would take him for scenic rides or take him to the cemetery so he could pay his respects to loved ones.

One day, after our visits developed into a friendship, he pulled out an old box of memories. Thinking of the countless family photos that had previously been shared with me, I was not prepared for the moment of vulnerability that was about to unfold. From that box, he slowly removed graphic black-and-white photographs taken during the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. As a young medic in the U.S. Army during World War II, he witnessed the atrocities of war that would remain with him forever. It was a sobering visit that day. As difficult as it was for me to view those images, at the time, I did not fully comprehend how difficult it was for him to share them with me.

Life is meant to be shared, especially raw moments when we need support and friendship. The more vulnerable we are willing to be with each other, the more authentic the friendship.

Last year, the United States Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy released a new Surgeon General Advisory¹ calling attention to the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection in our country.

Your continued financial support is vital to our success in carrying out our important role in addressing this public health crisis. I invite you to join us on a visit, at a social gathering, holiday meal celebration, or a firewood delivery to see first-hand the impact you make on the lives of the elderly community.

Thank you for bringing people together as LBFE continues to foster friendships to relieve isolation and loneliness.



Carol A. Korpela
Executive Director
Phone: 906-482-6944 x1005
carol.korpela@littlebrothers.org



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Carol and Forever Friend Eleanor

¹Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community

Giving Tuesday Gifts to Benefit the Elderly



Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly is overwhelmed by the generosity of the contributions to the Copper Shores Community Health Foundation Giving Tuesday Campaign on our behalf. A check totaling nearly \$139,000 was recently received by LBFE Board Members and Staff at the Copper Shores offices, the greatest amount of any participating organization.

Reducing isolation and loneliness and promoting well-being for our elderly neighbors has been our priority for over 40 years. This tremendous act of kindness from our community will sustain our mission. Thank you for trusting LBFE to deliver impactful programs and services!

International Volunteers Bring Friendship to our Community Elders

By: Christie Serotzke, Donor Relations Manager

I may be a new employee to Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly (LBFE), but I am not new to knowing how much LBFE impacts our communities with all the amazing, creative, thought-filled, and selfless things they provide to our elderly neighbors.

LBFE is fortunate enough to host five young adult Volunteer Program Assistants (VPAs) from either Germany or France who come to the United States for one year. **This year, we are blessed to have Ella, Jeremy, Lars, Marie, and Romy join our team.** Our Visiting VPAs are thoughtfully paired with individual elders, sharing moments akin to those shared by close friends. During these visits, LBFE VPAs not only offer companionship but also benefit from the rich life experiences and wisdom shared by our elders. Each of our VPAs visit our Forever Friends at least twice a month.

The Friendly Visiting program offers the most one-on-one attention for our Forever Friends. Our Forever Friends are 60 years of age and older, and LBFE currently serves 152 Forever Friends in our five-county service area. For our homebound elders, conversation and companionship hold immense value. Little Brothers' volunteers bring the comforting warmth of friendship to our elders, regardless of their location.

These visits provide wonderful interactions between the VPAs and Forever Friends. The VPAs will bake with them, play chess, cards or billiards, paint pictures, crochet or build a puzzle, or just reminisce about family and friends. It is truly heart-warming to see how our Forever Friends look forward to the visits and to watch the friendships deepen throughout the year. One of the VPAs favorite experiences so far was delivering Christmas presents to their Forever Friends during the holidays and seeing their faces light up with joy.

Visiting is just one of our seven core programs your generous donations support to provide our elderly friends throughout the five county service areas of Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, Marquette, and Ontonagon. Not only do our "Fab 5" VPAs attend to their Forever Friends but they are also the backbone of each fun-filled small group activity. Whether they are planning a Valentine's Day party, a birthday party, or a coffee clutch, they take pride in making each event a special experience. They create festive invitations and decorations, plan the menu, cook, bake desserts, and provide the fun and games to be had by all.



Volunteer Program Assistants Romy, Ella, Lars, Marie and Jeremy



VPA Ella and Forever Friend Judy



VPA Lars and Forever Friend Carlene

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ◆ **Volunteer! Volunteer! Volunteer!**
- ◆ **Send us your Tadych's Marketplace receipts-**
They are valuable to us.
- ◆ **Donate food, office supplies, or used medical aid equipment.**
- ◆ **Check, cash, or credit card donations**
- ◆ **Monthly Giving:** Sustain our mission by supporting our elders with monthly giving. You will receive regular updates on how your gifts support our mission. For more information about monthly giving, please contact Christie Serotzke:
Phone: 906-482-6944 ext. 1022
Email: christie.serotzke@littlebrothers.org

Online Donations can be made at:
<https://events.org/donate/lbfe-donate>

FOOD PANTRY: PLEASE HELP REPLENISH OUR FOOD GAPS

According to the USDA, the price of food has increased 11.8% since December of 2021. This is a pressing issue for our elderly friends on fixed incomes. Our monthly food pantry supplements their monthly shopping. Fortunately Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly benefits from the amazing efforts of the annual Michigan Tech Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity food drive through their National North American Food Drive, the TV6 Canathon, and more.

The greatest need is small portion, non-perishable proteins like tuna and simple meals like ravioli.

While this fills a large portion of our pantry, we still have shortfalls. We have seen a drop in donated food by about 4,000 pounds, due in part to increased food prices. We need your help keeping this vital program running.

Each month we deliver about 80 personalized food bags to elderly friends, 60 years and older. The greatest need is small portion, non-perishable proteins like tuna and simple meals like ravioli.

Removing Barriers to Independence through the John and Cookie Johnson Needs Fund

Lack of transportation poses a barrier to our elders' independence and community participation. One of our Forever Friends, Tracy, was facing a difficult circumstance when all four of her van's tires needed replacing as they were no longer safe for driving. Her tires were in such poor condition that one blew out, making for a dangerous situation. As a temporary fix, she replaced it with her spare which was equally bad. To make it safe to drive, all four tires needed to be replaced.

After getting estimates from a few shops, she found some good tires that came with a warranty, but she could not afford them. Tracy lives on disability, has no savings, and was still paying off her vehicle.

Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly replaced all four of Tracy's tires just in time for winter driving. Fine Line Tire discounted the labor, the tires, and did not charge for the shop supplies.



This was made possible by the John and Cookie Johnson Needs Fund. John and Cookie established an endowed fund at the LBFE Foundation to assist our Forever Friends who have unique needs and financial limitations.

To learn more about how you can contribute to the Johnson Needs Endowed Fund, please contact Cathy Kass-Aten 906-282-3406 or email cathy.aten@littlebrothers.org

Phone: 906-482-6944

Fax: 906-482-6106

Email: michigan@littlebrothers.org

Website: houghton.littlebrothers.org

Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly
527 Hancock Street
Hancock, MI 49930

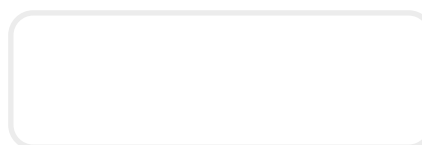
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THE ROSE

Annual Donor Newsletter

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Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly Upper Michigan Foundation Surpasses \$2,000,000!

Our local Little Brothers FOUNDATION was established in 2014 under the leadership of Mike Aten, who wanted a way to secure the future of the Little Brothers Chapter here in Upper Michigan. Thanks to his vision we are proud to say we recently surpassed \$2,000,000!

LBFE Upper Michigan Chapter benefits from the Foundation with quarterly 1% payouts from our main fund, annual payouts from our three endowed funds, and additional payments from wills received. This support is crucial to the chapter and is a part of their annual income budget to help them carry out their programs.

You can help us secure the chapter's future by remembering Little Brothers in your estate plan!

Here are some ways you can help:

- Gifts through your will or trust
- Gifts of property
- Life insurance gifts
- Retirement plans
- IRS Required Minimum Distributions (RMD)

You can also designate your gift to any of our *Endowed Funds*

- John and Cookie Johnson Needs Endowed Fund – supports special needs of our elderly Forever Friends
- Wood Program Endowed Fund – supports the Firewood Program
- Lola Yoder Expansion Endowed Fund – supports expansion efforts in Upper Michigan

For more information contact Cathy Kass-Aten 906-282-3406 or email cathy.aten@littlebrothers.org