

Innovative Practices: Finding Community Resources to Support Senior Centers Initiatives

Here are a few of the creative community resources, organizations and businesses that the Norwell Council on Aging collaborated with during COVID-19.

Local Businesses

Hairdressers

Ambrosia Salon – we previously did dementia training for their staff after they had an issue with a client. During COVID, they provided dry shampoo & shampoo caps for a senior unable to get their hair washed while salons were closed. Hairdressers are also a good referral source too, since many women discuss family concerns with their hairdresser

Restaurants/Breweries/Farms

- Burke's Alewerks - Local brewery that donated hand sanitizer to us to distribute to seniors in the community.
- Hornstra Farms - Donated perishable items nearing expiration, to distribute to those in need. Donated ice cream for grab & go lunches. Educated owners about COAs and how milkmen can help make referrals based on daily client contact.
- Kiss Flower Farms - Donated soups and jams
- Lobster Express - Donated chowder and lobster rolls for "Grab & Go." It was a way to support seniors, but also the local fisherman.
- Trattoria San Pietro - Donated 800 meals (100 for 8 weeks) for "Grab & Go" and food pantry families. Also donated packaging supplies for meals.
- Partnered with several other local restaurants to offer small group, on-site boxed lunches and periodic "Grab & Go" lunches. Helps us provide a meal program and also supports local businesses.

Realtors

- Assistance with grocery shopping, food donations and referrals to other service businesses like tree removal and junk removal.
- Realtors are a great resource to refer individuals to COAs, as families are considering both buying and selling homes.
- One realtor was closing a storage unit and approached us about donating items that were used for staging homes.

Car Repair Shops

- Joseph's Garage – Donated small spray bottles to distribute hand sanitizer. Also donated postage for card mailings. Owner runs the CERT team, so he is very familiar with COAs.
- Good referral for us especially if they are seeing patterns in accidents or concern about older drivers.

Other businesses

- Norwell Package & General Store - Donated 500 paper bags for packaging "Grab & Go" lunches, as well as cases of soda and water bottles.
- North River Party Rental - Donated folding chairs and other supplies for outdoor programming. Offered a deep discount on the purchased of a 20' x 30' tent.



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Other businesses (continued)

- Curry Hardware - Donated 100 rolls of toilet paper and paper towels that were purchased anonymously by another small business owner. We shared with the Hanover and Weymouth COAs who were running food pantries. We distributed these items during mask pop-ups, food pantry and meals on wheels.
- Signet Electronics – Co-sponsoring our Veteran’s Recognition Lunch. Historically, their staff volunteered to prepare and serve a meal at the center.
- Lunn Electric - Donated \$1,900 in grocery gift cards to support seniors in need.

Civic Organizations

Friends group

- Purchased gift certificates to grocery stores
- Paid postage for card mailings
- Assisted with sponsoring some grab & go lunches

Norwell Men’s Club

- Donated 1,000 surgical masks and held a pop up mask distribution day at the senior center. Masks were distributed to 175 people that day and 400 overall.
- Assisted with grocery shopping, errands and trash removal.

Norwell Women’s Club

- Coordinated sign up genius to collect and deliver snacks and fruit to supplement HDM and grab & go lunches for 3 months.
- Made a donation to use as needed.

Chamber of Commerce

Made a donation to use as needed.

Garden Club

Helped with spring clean-up at the center and also updated seasonal flower boxes in our outdoor programming space.

Faith Communities

Many have outreach or mission teams. Contacted us to donate masks, assist with shopping and any other needs.

Civilian Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Assisted with weekly “Grab & Go” distribution and delivery for 16 weeks. Also helped with mini food pantry distribution at the senior center.

Norwell Spotlight TV

- Filmed and/or edited fitness classes to air on cable TV and online
- Partnered to create the “Seniors Celebrating Seniors” video tribute to the Class of 2020
- Aired periodic video updates on the senior center.

Norwell Emergency Management

Included regular updates from the senior center as part of daily reverse 9-1-1 calls.



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Schools

Norwell Public Schools

- Food Services - provided fresh produce to distribute early on in COVID to seniors in need. Assisted with preparing 50 “Grab & Go” meals weekly, for 10 weeks. Purchased supplies to help us supplement Meals on Wheels, from March 23 to June 20.
- High School Volunteer Corp. - assisted with creating 600 greeting cards for a National Good Neighbor Day mailing.
- Administration - loaned us a fogger for our vehicles until they became available for purchase.
- Jazz Combo – students played an outdoor concert for senior housing.

South Shore Vo Tech

The Culinary Arts Department donated 100 pounds of chicken and 30 dozen eggs upon closing the school. Items were distributed to seniors and Food Pantry families. They will be assisting with holiday “Grab & Go” lunch if restrictions permit.

Senior Housing Communities

- Partnered to run pop-up masks distribution for residents or supplied masks to site managers to distribute.
- Residents in one community ran a food pantry collection.
- Another took over prepping our newsletter mailings.

Other Community Support

- Families/individuals wrote notes or painted inspirational rocks to distribute to seniors.
- Received \$4,000 in gift cards donations to grocery stores, pharmacies, Amazon and other retailers. These were used to support seniors and families in need and supplement out meal programs
- Received \$7,000 in monetary donations to support seniors in need or assist where needed. This will also help with holiday lunches and support.
- Donated non-perishable and paper goods for food pantry
- Donated PPE supplies including masks, wipes and hand sanitizer.
- Assisted with food shopping and errands for homebound seniors
- Assisted with meal delivery
- Made and donated 900 fabric masks. One resident is a seamstress and made 500 by herself.
- “Seniors Celebrating Seniors” video tribute by older residents to the Class of 2020. This was done in partnership with local cable TV.



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Some best practices to keep in mind when working with other community organizations.

- Take the time to educate the public about what you do. Use as many outlets as you can; newsletters, social media, email, newspapers, local cable access, public meetings, face to face meetings, social gatherings, community events, etc. Social media has been a fantastic tool for us!
- Meet with different groups to better understand their mission. Find a common connection and brainstorm ways to create partnership opportunities to support the center in ways that are beneficial for you both.
- Be thoughtful about your “ask” and how it may impact the business or organization. For example, we partnered with local restaurants to offer “Grab & Go” Meals. We didn’t ask for donations, but in some cases they did donate or offer a discount. It was a win for everyone.
- Try to reciprocate. For example, participate in their events, have the Friends group make a small donation, help publicize events in your center, newsletter or social media.
- Thank you, thank you, thank you! Thank you and public recognition go a long way! We send handwritten thank you notes to everyone who has made a monetary or in-kind donation. For especially large donors, we send a follow up note to share how we’ve used a donation. We also use social media a lot. We make it a habit to thank and tag the business, person or organization, unless they prefer to be anonymous.

