

## AMONG FRIENDS FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER



Greetings,

We are still here and relevant in the lives of our participants. Our contacts are only once each month, sometimes face to face, and other times just a wave from a sidewalk, but we keep our connections with the good folks who have been a part of Among Friends.

In September we delivered flowers and cards to a dozen people that have been involved with Among Friends. Enjoy a pre-delivery picture of our flowers on Facebook.

We also had a volunteer get together that was enjoyed by all. About a dozen of us gathered on the First Congregational lawn to chat and hope for the future of Among Friends.

October was dominated by bursts of orange, yellow, and red as our trees display the colors of fall. Even though we had a bit of snow in the middle of October, we still celebrated Halloween. We partnered with the UWRF group Acts of Kindness who purchased stuffed animals and candies to fill cloth pumpkins that we delivered to our Among Friends folks. Please see Among Friends face for pictures.

Next, we are planning a "Window Singing by Small Choirs" event for early December. We will also deliver Yule Logs to our participant.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED—two opportunities

If you have a willing heart and a voice to share, we need 4-6 individuals who are willing to be part of a duet or quartet sharing 2-3 songs while being socially distanced outside of our participants' homes. This can be done at a time convenient for you that also works for our Among Friends participants. Please contact Bonnie at 715-307-1182 phone/text or email me. Thanks.

### FINANCIAL REPORT

As many of you know Norma requested unpaid furlough until we resume our program in person. We hope for mid-late spring. We have minimal expenses so we continue to maintain a checkbook balance that will allow us to easily reopen.

GREAT NEWS—we received a \$1500 grant from the Viola E. Lundeberg Foundation via the United Way. The grant just came to us last week and is a firm reminder that others value the work of Among Friends. So, we continue, to the best of our ability, to support our participants, stay in touch with our volunteers and Board, and continue a presence in our community.

### MY THANKS

My thanks to everyone who has donated a little time or help here and there along our journey. If anyone has time to sing or deliver Yule Logs, please just contact me.

Peace and Grace, Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn, board chair

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (WDHS) STATE DEMENTIA TASK FORCE  
Report from Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn, Task Force member

Some of you know, but others might not, that eighteen months ago I was selected from several applicants to be a member of the WDHS—Caring in the Community Dementia State Task Force. It has been a learning curve and honor to be part of this task force. Though Covid19 has slowed our work we have some exciting developments to share with all of you.

Our goal is to identify, connect, and expand, community services for individuals with dementia and their caregivers in the state of Wisconsin. As well, our Task Force is working toward finding creative ways to encourage families and friends of folks with dementia to use these resources. We recognize the long continuum of care needed by individuals with dementia and their families, so our task is broad and multi-focused. My responsibility has been to identify the social respite dementia services in our state, work toward connecting these services, and strategize how to expand them within our state. But that is only a small part of the work of this WDHS Task Force.

At our November meeting we participated in a presentation/conversation with Kathleen O'Toole Smith, director of the Wisconsin Dementia Resource Network followed by a discussion of our potential connection to her work. The Network has a thirty-member advisory board including state leaders, medical researchers, and other dementia providers. There are approximately 600 members of this network. She outlined the Network's cooperative efforts with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Association, and the Bader Trust partnership that is targeting equity and access issues in the underserved in rural, Black and Latinx communities in Wisconsin. Among Friends will be applying for membership in the Wisconsin Dementia Resource Network this fall.

When we resumed our regular agenda meeting the discussion focused on the expansion of Broad Band Internet in rural areas of Wisconsin and its importance to the health and well-being of folks with dementia. Along with the Health Task Force of the WDHS project, we have identified the need for reliable Internet for the health of families coping with dementia. As a result of our research, we have discovered what some of us know anecdotally—rural Wisconsin has inadequate internet service.

Kaitlynn Marshall, our chairperson and DHS state coordinator of ADRC and Dementia Care Specialists, introduced the global movement Dementia Friends that started in Japan and came to the USA via the United Kingdom. There are globally 2200 members, and we have 240 members in Wisconsin, with a majority of student membership. Kaitlynn is a Master Trainer and provide training perspectives for us at the next meeting.

Our Wisconsin State Dementia Task Force continues to meet monthly, continuing our work, sometimes quietly, toward the goals of creating a stigma free environment for individuals with dementia and providing community services for them all along the spectrum of their journey. I am available for questions or conversation about our work any time at 715-307-1182.