

Northwoods Partners 2021 Annual Report
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Annual Report Data from January 1 to December 31st 2021
Annual Fiscal Year January 1 2021-December 31st 2021

Mission Statement

The mission of Northwoods Partners is to provide resources that promote independence and healthy aging

Vision

A community where people are able to age with dignity

Values

Compassion	Relationships
Dignity	Respect
Independence	Volunteerism

Volunteers and staff spent 8123 hours serving area seniors and caregivers from January 1 through December 31st 2021.

Thirteen board & committee members provided 2080 hours of volunteer service to Northwoods Partners.

Northwoods Partners recruited, trained and coordinated eighty-one volunteers this year.

Of the eighty-one individuals who have enrolled in our volunteer program, fifty-three would be considered active volunteers in 2021. Volunteer coordination and time management are tracked through our Elderberry software system. Volunteers are trained and surveyed annually to get feedback and suggestions to improve their volunteer experience. Pre-Covid, quarterly volunteer social/ trainings were offered. Those will return in 2022. Volunteers are recognized annually at a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner as well as at the Donor/Volunteer Reception. Volunteers were recognized via social media, newspaper ads, hand written letters of gratitude and an appreciation gift in 2021.

Transportation Program

Northwoods Partners transportation program continues to be a vital service for the continuum of care for our area seniors.

- In 2021, nine hundred and six rides were provided. Twenty-six thousand seven hundred and forty-seven miles were driven to long distance medical appointments to Virginia, Hibbing, and Duluth. Local rides also included trips to the grocery store, pharmacy, dentist and social outings. An additional thirty thousand miles were driven serving clients locally. These rides are provided by trained volunteers and coordinated through the Northwoods Partner office. Select volunteer drivers continued to provide medically necessary rides during the COVID-19 pandemic by following all CDC and MDH safety protocols. Drivers receive reimbursement for long distance rides only. Transportation participants are given a survey and recommended donation request to cover costs but are made aware that no ride is ever denied due to inability to pay. Survey results state participants are pleased with their experience and state this service helps them remain living independent.

One client stated, “My life was actually saved by a NP volunteer! I had no where to turn and needed to get to Duluth for a heart procedure. NP’s transportation program got me there and I will forever be grateful!”

In 2021 the transportation program costs approximately \$26,500

Exercise Programs

Northwoods Partners offers a variety of programs to help community members take a preventative approach to living well by offering a variety of exercise opportunities.

- These include an evidence-based program called Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance. A certified staff member offered six twelve-week sessions that met twice a week to sixty-four participants. Many in-person classes were held socially-distanced outdoors. When weather no longer afforded us the option to gather outside class moved indoors and to an on-line Zoom platform. This evidence-based class improves muscle strength, flexibility and balance. One participant stated, “I thoroughly enjoyed the class and feel better after every session. People have told me I stand up straighter and don’t look at the ground as I walk. Thank you!”
- Our director continues to work closely with the Arrowhead Well Care Network to integrate delivery networks of evidence-based programs through the creation of reliable pathways that connect healthcare providers, community organizations, public health and health plans. This includes being a part of the Juniper Network which connects individuals to programs that provide education, fitness instruction, and self-care strategies. These efforts have helped create a “well-care” culture which complements our mission.
- Northwoods Partners’ Exercise Buddy program matches volunteers to assist clients with a tailored exercise program they do in their homes. This program also helps increase their strength, flexibility and balance. The staff and volunteers provided three hundred and forty exercise sessions with individuals this year.
- Northwoods Partners group exercise class continues to meet weekly; for one hour in a local church basement. In 2021 twenty-eight individuals participated. This class appeals to clients interested in gathering with other individuals to increase physical activity, reduce falls and improve overall well-being. This group also provides a wonderful social opportunity as this group meets before class for refreshments and conversation.
- Northwoods Partners Memories & Movement class continues to meet once a week at the Senior Center. Up to sixteen individuals participate in this weekly gathering. This class provides a pleasant diversion and stimulates the mind as well as provides an opportunity to keep the body active. Those individuals experiencing MCI (Mild Cognitive Impairment) are also encouraged to attend. M & M provides a safe and supportive environment for all. Participants shared the importance of the relationships this group has given them. They often connect and support each other even outside of class time.

In 2021, the total for all exercise programs cost approximately \$16,500.

Friendly Visits Program

- Our friendly visit program connects individuals who may be homebound or living alone with volunteer visitors. This program helps reduce isolation and connects individuals with their community. Volunteers have spent over seven hundred hours with thirty-five clients this year. Many of these friendly visits continued during the pandemic using CDC guidelines. One participant shared, “My friendly visitor gets me out of the house, a reason to dress up and connect with the community. She’s gives me something to look forward to every week and makes me feel alive!”

Northwood’s Memory Care Program

Northwoods Partners conducts activities to increase awareness of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, and strives to connect caregivers to expanded services, education and resources. Our caregiver consultant has spent over nine hundred hours supporting caregivers, care receivers and their families dealing with dementia related issues. This year over eighty caregivers, care receivers and family members have benefited from participation in this program. Our Northwoods Memory Program provides the following support:

- A monthly caregiver support group and one to one consulting services. Our trained caregiver consultant uses evidence-based approaches to support family members and others who are caring for a loved one. Often this includes family meetings to help develop care plans, solve problems and provide tools to help manage difficult behaviors. During the pandemic caregivers were supported through a variety of ways including outdoor and virtual meetings, phone reassurance, in person support groups, cards & information through the mail.
- Social activities such as our Memories & Movement program; a variety of exercise programs; and companion care/friendly visitor to help reduce isolation.
- Resource library which offers a variety of literature and videos to share with caregivers, families, health care professionals, and volunteers for support and education.
- Caregiver Consultant is as a trained REACH facilitator (Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer’s Caregiver Health in the Community) providing assessments and intervention program.
- Activity kits for clients with dementia to help them engage and stimulate their minds and help reduce stress. These kits also provide the caregivers with resources and tools to build caregiver confidence and improve the caregivers’ ability to cope. The creation of these kits fostered collaborations with local church groups, the community hospital, local wellness center and other community organizations who share a similar passion for this cause.

Northwoods Partners Memory Care program continues to partner with Essentia Health on providing a Dementia-Capable Health Care Home. Northwoods Partners and Essentia share a common commitment to a coordinated, integrated partnership between primary

care and community –based services for individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. We continue to work on implementing a better continuity of care to improve the quality of life and care for these individuals and their caregivers. Through this collaboration we have created communication tools, built relationships, and improved service to allow for more effective and efficient communication flow between patients, providers and community resources.

In 2021, the memory care program costs approximately \$24,125.

Caregiver Consulting Services/ Resource & Referral

Northwoods Partners provides information, education, resource & referral, and coordination & training for caregivers, community members and health care providers.

- Website and Social-media are used to keep information on programs and updated calendar of classes and events
- List of resources, brochures, Senior Reporter, St. Louis County caregiver guide and other informational booklets are distributed as needed
- Collaborations with both local and county wide services provide an effective referral system including ROI (Release of Information) forms when necessary
- Our Caregiver Consultant is a certified facilitator for Advanced Health Care Directives. At intake NP clients are asked if they have a healthcare directive and if not, they are provided the forms and education about the importance of Health Care Directives.
- Caregiver Consultant is certified in Family Mediation and provided guidance through family meetings

In 2021, the Caregiver Consulting / Resource & Referral program costs approximately \$24,200.

Respite/ Hospice

We continue to coordinate volunteer help for the person who cares for a chronically ill home-bound loved one. We continue to partner with Essentia Health Hospice & Palliative Care. This partnership includes referrals, brochure and flyers disbursement and volunteer recruitment as needed.

Age to Age / Rural Aging Initiative

Northwoods Partners has collaborative with Ely Community Resource in an effort to bring generations together. This program enables elders, adults, and youth to explore how their generations are both a like and different. A variety of opportunities including Tech & Coffee, Tree Brigade, Slovenian Fest & Polka Dance, to name a couple have been created to help strengthen relationships among all ages. Many of these activities have been adapted or on hold due to Covid restrictions. During 2021 youth have created cards/pictures that have been sent to NP clients to uplift their spirits letting them know they have not been forgotten. We look forward to resuming these activities as well as new ones in 2022.

Ely Community Care Team

Northwoods Partners director is an active member in the Ely Community Care Team (CCT). The CCT is a partnership of community members and organizations representing health care, behavioral health, education, government services and non-government social services. The mission of the CCT is to provide collaborative care and support to help individuals achieve their wellness goals. Northwoods Partners plays a vital role on the CCT as it provides resources and tools for older adults facing a variety of challenges. A care coordination model is used to ensure that needs are identified and addressed in a timely, comprehensive manner that includes referral, collaborative care and follow up. Northwoods Partners has been a part of the Community Care Team since 2011.

Ely Community Planning and Care Coordination Project 2020-2022

Northwoods Partners is serving as the lead organization of a local coalition that involves a wide array of organizations working together as a team. The grant was awarded by the Northland Foundation as part of its three-year special initiative, the Integrated Rural Community Aging Program. In 2020-21 Northwoods Partners with the support of the Northland Foundation, lead an intensive coalition-building and planning process with an array of community and aging services participants. Funding from the Northland Foundation will support the coalition's action plan over the coming year. Among the broad goals outlined in the Ely area project are to:

1. **Reduce Food Insecurity** through direct delivery of food, including fresh produce, through the Ely Food Shelf and in collaboration with AEOA and the Ely Senior Center. Another activity will be ramping up the SNAP-Ed Program for Healthy Eating for Seniors working with the Food Shelf, Senior Center, and AEOA Meals on Wheels.
2. **Promote Independent Living with Improved Access to In-Home Services** by addressing the area's current lack of in-home health care through programming to provide personal care assistance and home medical (nursing) support to older adults, to help them remain in their homes for as long as possible.
3. **Increase Knowledge and Awareness of Available Senior Services** through the creation of an easy-to-use and up-to-date directory of senior services in the area and marketing efforts to help area seniors understand what services are available to them.
4. **Reduce Isolation by Increasing Social Interaction** will stimulate mental and physical activity through expanded intergenerational programs and by providing local seniors with training/assistance in using technology and social media.

The Ely Area Coalition vision is to support a well-connected community where all seniors, regardless of social, economic or cultural status have knowledge of and access to a full range of health, social, and independent living services

COVID-19 Response

Northwoods Partners continued to adjust and adapt its services this year as restrictions were loosened but Covid cases experienced upticks in our area. NP followed CDC and MDH guidelines while still providing many vital services to our area's seniors and families. As stated above many in person classes and services were moved outdoors

socially distance with protocols in place. The following is a list of additions/adaptions to our services made due to Covid-19:

- Grocery delivery service (Nine volunteers and two staff provided 233 deliveries to thirty-three community members)
- PPE distribution to volunteers, clients and community members
- Transportation continued using CDC guidelines
- Telephone reassurance increased in hopes of reducing isolation
- Use of remote working systems/ platforms for compliance
- Mobile health care system coordination with Essentia/CCT
- Caregiver support using CDC guidelines, virtual, and in person
- Exercise programs were held outdoors (seasonally), in person &/ or virtually
- Director became a part of both local and county response teams. This work included the coordination and distribution of PPE, Mask Up MN/ Ely campaigns, Senior Support bags provided by United Way distributed as well as Food Kits distributed to Covid-19 positive individuals who need support, CCT Info bags which included masks, hand sanitizer, soap, & resources, support for essential workers i.e., meals if needed, recruitment & coordination of MN Respond Volunteer base, weekly meetings with Public Health/Essentia clinic/EBCH/ County Officials/ Arrowhead Agency on Aging

**Attached Covid Response Team Highlighted efforts this past year

Who are we serving?

Northwoods Partners clients include those individuals who are aged, and or chronically ill as well as caregivers and their families. The majority of these clients are considered low income by the Federal Poverty guidelines for 2021. Our services are provided to individuals living within an area of approximately 480 square miles. This includes Ely, Winton, Babbitt, Tower, Soudan and surrounding townships.



CCT COVID-19 Response Team - Activity Report

At the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Care Team pulled together a group of individuals representing various local health agencies, including Northwoods Partners.

Established Funding to Aid the Response Efforts

- Established a GoFund Me account in response to public inquiries of how they could help
- Applied for and received Cares Act Funding
- Funds were used to accomplish the projects listed in this report

Masks and Faceshields

- Coordinated the local mask making efforts in within community
- Distributed over 2500 masks locally to individuals, schools, businesses and healthcare workers
- Continue to support the community as masks are needed by providing baskets of masks to local businesses

Information Distribution

- Provided 5 informational packets to public housing (and other) residents in Ely, Babbit, Embarrass and Tower
- 775 bags per distribution
- Supported local businesses by purchasing "goodies" for each bag such as local soaps, masks and hand sanitizer

Mask Up Campaign

- Coordinated the Mask Up photo campaign
- Featured 25 local individuals and families
- Distributed 100 posters around the community

Healthcare Worker Relief

- Provided treats for local healthcare workers
- Prepared to provide meals to helathcare workers should the pandemic force them to be away from their home lives for long periods

Food Boxes for COVID Positive Patients

- Prepared 15 food boxes for COVID positive patients
- Distributed boxes to local hospitals and clinics so they were available for immediate distribution
- Boxes provided fourteen days of food for families that would need to isolate or quarantine

Vaccination Education

- Created several campaigns to increase awareness of the importance of getting vaccinated
- Produced three informational flyer inserts for the Shopper targeting specific audiences including businesses, young adults and vaccine hesitant individuals
- Created a radio spot to encourage vacciantions
- Created regular social media posts to let the community know where and when vaccinations were available

Banner Campaign

- Created and purchased two styles of banner promoting the importance of following the COVID-19 guidelines
- Mask Up, Social Distance, Wash Your Hands
- Distributed banners throughout the Ely, Babbitt, Embarrass and Tower areas