

Northwoods Partners 2022 Annual Report
Executive Director/ Caregiver Consultant Lisa Porthan
Annual Report Data from January 1 to December 31st 2022
Annual Fiscal Year January 1 2022-December 31st 2022

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

Staff

Lisa Porthan Executive Director Caregiver Consultant	Candy Schindele Office Manager
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Board of Directors

Rae Bentz	Craig Haberman	Caroline Owens
Heather Fitzgerald	Leah Hiller	Pat Rolando
Dick Flesvig	Walt Leino	Sid Thomson
Sheila Gruba	Dave Nichols	

Volunteers and staff spent 10,614 hours serving area seniors and caregivers from January 1 through December 31st 2022.

Twenty board & committee members provided 2109 hours of volunteer service to Northwoods Partners.



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

Of the eighty-five individuals who have enrolled in our volunteer program, fifty-seven would be considered active volunteers in 2022. 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. 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 2022. We are ever so grateful to our volunteers for sharing their love, passion, dedication, selflessness, talents, and time with us and our area older adults. In 2022 Northwoods Partners volunteers provided ten-thousand, seven hundred and thirty-four hours of service which equates to \$321,483 according to the Value of Volunteer Time report by the Do Good Institute

Transportation Program

Transportation is a large obstacle for seniors wishing to be independent. Without groceries, rides to medical appointments, or the ability to attend a local event, seniors are less likely to thrive and remain in their homes. In service of Northwoods Partners our volunteers traveled sixty-nine thousand, three hundred and ninety-two miles during 2022.



- Our **Local Transportation** program is a volunteer-supported program that provides rides to and from local services, including running errands such as shopping, banking, haircuts, and local medical appointments. Volunteers can also provide transportation to meetings, social events, and religious services. Five-hundred and forty local rides were provided to our area older adults in 2022.

- **Long-Distance Rides** are specifically provided for Medical Appointments. Using our network of volunteer drivers, we are able to help area seniors get to out-of-town medical appointments that are essential to maintaining their health and independence. This service is especially important in northern Minnesota, where residents must travel long distances to receive the specialty care they require. Volunteer drivers ensure that the senior is safely escorted from their home to the appointment and back home again. Volunteer long-distance drivers are reimbursed by NP per mile driven and clients are asked to make a donation to NP to help us sustain our programs. This past year, Northwoods Partners volunteer long-distance drivers put on thirty-four thousand, five-hundred and ninety-three miles taking our area seniors to seven-hundred and eighty-eight out-of-town medical appointments.



- **Grocery Delivery** is available for those who find it difficult or unsafe to navigate our local grocery stores. Grocery orders are taken every Monday and groceries are delivered every Wednesday by volunteers. Northwoods Partners clients received four-hundred and thirty grocery deliveries in 2022.



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. In 2022 ninety-six older adults participated in our exercise programs.

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.

- **Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance** is a research-based balance training regimen designed for older adults and people with balance disorders. TJQMBB is a 12-week progressive learning course where participants learn an adapted 8 form Tai Chi routine that is intended to address common and potentially debilitating movement and balance issues. A certified staff member offered six twelve-week sessions that met twice a week to fifty-two participants. Classes have been simulcast on-line via the Zoom platform for those who did not feel comfortable participating in a group setting. This evidence-based class improves muscle strength, flexibility and balance. One participant stated, “I love this class. We’re doing slow, methodical, breath-driven movements and somehow I’ve worked muscles I didn’t even know I had.”



- New to Northwoods Partners program line-up in 2022 was **SAIL**. SAIL stands for Stay Active and Independent for Life! The SAIL exercise class is a strength, balance, and fitness program for community dwelling older adults that meets two times per week for one hour. Attendees perform exercises that improve strength, balance, and fitness to stay active and reduce their chances of falling. The entire curriculum of activities in the SAIL program can help improve strength and balance. SAIL, this past fall in Babbitt, had twenty participants. One attendee shared proudly, that after having a stroke, she thought she would “never be able to walk without assistance ever again, look at me now”, as she walked into class that day.

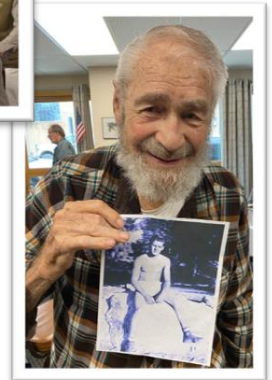


- Northwoods Partners’ **Exercise Buddy** program matches volunteers to assist clients with a tailored exercise program they do in their homes. This program also helps increase their strength, flexibility and balance. The staff and volunteers provided three hundred and twelve exercise sessions with individuals this year.



- Northwoods Partners **Community Exercise Group** continues to meet weekly; for one hour in a local church basement. In 2022 twenty individuals participated. This class appeals to clients interested in gathering with other individuals, in a group setting to increase physical activity, reduce falls and improve overall well-being. This group also provides a wonderful social opportunity as they meet before class for refreshments and conversation.

- Northwoods Partners **Memories and 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.



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. Participants and volunteers share how wonderful it is to have new friends to share their life stories with as well as share their joys & struggles. Clients feel heard and cared for which improves health and over all well-being.



Northwood's Memory Care Program

Northwoods Partners helps guide clients, caregivers and their families through the stages of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia by providing resources, referrals, and consultation to help reduce stress and increase family and community support. We also collaborate with other partners to make Ely and our Service Area a more dementia friendly environment. Our caregiver consultant has spent over eight hundred hours supporting caregivers, care receivers and their families dealing with dementia related issues. This year over seventy 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.

- 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 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.

Healthy Aging Expo

Our Annual Healthy Aging Expo is a daylong event dedicated to Senior Adults’ Healthy Lifestyles, Education, and Caregiver Support. The expo is also a way for businesses and organizations to promote their resources and services which support seniors’ healthy living and for families and patients living with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia related disorders.



On June 27, 2022 over one hundred and twenty-five attendees heard from eight experts in their respective fields. During the 6½ hour expo, experts like Dr. Isaac Hunt, Clinical Neuropsychologist, Department of Neurology, Essentia Health Duluth: ‘Your Aging Brain’, Angela Lunde, M.A. Co-director and Education Manager for the Outreach, Recruitment, and Engagement Core at the Mayo Clinic Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center: ‘Mindfulness and You’, Dr. Nick Cooley, Family Physician, Essentia Health Ely: ‘Good Sleep, How & Why’, and Dr. Katie Evans. Podiatrist and Owner Range Foot & Ankle Virginia: ‘Your Aging Feet’.

Participants come away with a renewed sense of self and are inspired to make healthier choices. They leave with the knowledge and tools to practice healthy habits on a daily basis to thrive, rather than just survive.

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
- Monthly calendar listing activities, resources and food access is distributed to over 3000 households through distribution in a local paper
- 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

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. In 2022, students provided art work and valentines cards for homebound residents and helped assemble computer carts for seniors to use with laptops Northwoods Partners provided to senior housing complexes and the senior center. Due to continued Covid concerns activities did not return to full capacity. In 2023 there will be more opportunities for seniors and youth to gather.

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 has served 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 2½ 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 has supported the coalition’s action plan over the past year. The goals and accomplishments of this project include:

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. Provided SNAP-Ed Programing for Healthy Eating for Seniors working with the Food Shelf, Senior Center, and AEOA Meals on Wheels. Creation of a Tasty Tuesday program that provides a cooking class focused on providing healthy cost-effective recipes. This class meets monthly and has received rave reviews.



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. Through these efforts seniors were surveyed and need was access which created the opportunity to partner with a home health company to bring services to the community.

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 will be distributed spring of 2023, increased staff hours to provide community navigation services as well as marketing efforts to help area seniors understand what services are available to them. A monthly calendar is also distributed to over 3500 households outlining available services, including food access, exercise and social activities. Extensive marketing efforts from coalition members has seen an increase in participation in programs provided.



4. **Reduce Isolation by Increasing Social Interaction** will stimulate mental and physical activity through expanded programs and by providing local seniors with access to technology and social media. Chromebooks were distributed to senior housing units, senior center and for check out at NP lending library. Through this project seniors were surveyed to find out what activities they would like to see in 2023 and what would help make it possible for them to participate i.e. transportation.

*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*

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 2022. 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.

Vision for 2023

As we look towards the future, we are excited on what lies ahead for Northwoods Partners. In 2023, we will be moving our offices and programs to the Ely Regional Community Complex which will provide us a great opportunity to better serve our aging population. We will have 1000+ sq ft program space where seniors can participate in activities that will increase their physical activity, reduce isolation and provide education on healthy lifestyles and caregiver support. This space will be ideal for intergenerational programming and a variety of community events. Collaborations with the Functional Fitness gym and daycare on site will complement our programming. We will continue to strive to promote healthy aging and provide our community a place where they can age with dignity.