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- [Columns »](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Confessions of a College Park Mom](#)
- [Our Sponsors](#)

You are here: [Home](#) > [News](#) > [Community Spotlight](#) > Neighbors Network helps senior citizens be independent at home

### Neighbors Network helps senior citizens be independent at home

- by [Rachel White](#)
- on November 28, 2017
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Jean Payne retired 20 years ago from her job as an Orange County schoolteacher. These days, the 83-year-old tries her best to stay active and enjoys her free time with her energetic dog.

“You’d think after 30 years of teaching autistic children, I could teach a dog not to jump. It’s a harder job,” Payne said.

As Payne describes her everyday activities, it’s clear to see that the humorous, kindhearted woman is not settling down. Thanks to Neighbors Network, she can continue to do what she enjoys. The not-for-profit organization for adults 55 and older offers support while allowing people to remain thriving in their own homes and community.

Both Payne and her daughter, Shelly Payne Haddad, praise the network for the freedom and livelihood it allows its members.

“Because she’s always been a very independent woman, she’s reluctant to ask me for every single little thing,” Payne Haddad said. “Of course, I’m always there if she needs me, but I think it makes her more comfortable. I think that gives her some independence to be able to call someone and get it handled by herself.”

A member of Neighbors Network since February 2017, Jean Payne said she could not be happier with the help she has received. Whether it’s replacing a light bulb or fixing the latch on the gate, so her dog doesn’t escape, Payne knows her neighbors have her back.

Not only are senior citizens offered help with a range of problems, but the network also presents a variety of activities for entertainment and involvement. Some of Payne’s favorites include lunches with her friends — Payne enjoys Crisper’s soup — and outings to the theater. She is appreciative of the connection Neighbors Network creates and the ability to make friends with whom she can share meals and entertainment.

There are things Payne does not want to miss, and her performances are at the top of that list. She used to sing to her husband, but after he passed away, she joined a group. As seniors singing to other seniors, Payne and her group explore the community to sing at nursing homes, hospitals and churches, bringing light into every place they go. The Neighbors Network’s dependable nature and willingness to help allows Payne to continue all the things she loves the most.

Perhaps the best aspect of Neighbors Network is that it’s reciprocal. Even members can help other members in the ways they know how.

“She said to me this morning that she wished that she could just go be a volunteer and maybe read to someone that’s blind or go touch someone,” Shelly Payne Haddad said of her mother. “She feels like she has something to give even though she has a lot of things to get.”

Jean Payne recalled one situation in which she sensed the love she could bring to others from continuing to be active in the community. After caressing an elderly lady at one of her performances, she was asked for a kiss.

“You can help someone and do so much even when you need a kiss too,” Payne said.

Through Neighbors Network, Payne’s needs are fulfilled, her social life is prospering, and she feels safe and comfortable in her own home.

“I look forward to moving on with them as we serve each other. They’ll be serving me the most, but I’ll do my best.”

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