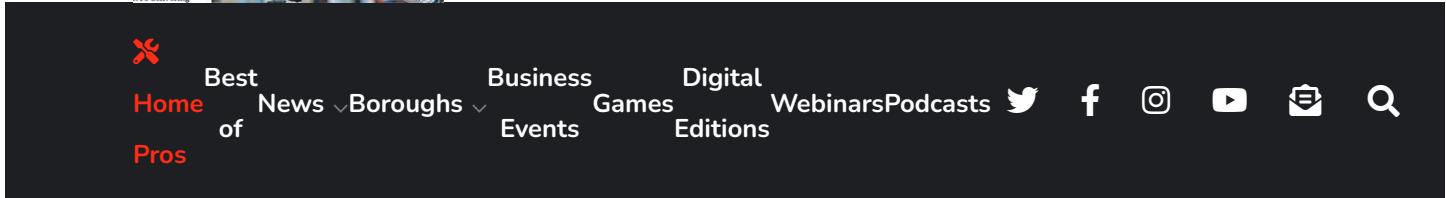


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At Caring Communam people care to help each other

By amNY

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By Kristin Edwards

Though she was already enriching young minds as a third-grade teacher at P.S. 307 in DUMBO, in Brooklyn, Hilary Redman wanted to do more outreach.

“I wanted to get involved in the community, so I Googled ‘volunteer work,’ and the Caring Community came up,” she said.

Through The Caring Community’s Friendly Visitors program, Redman has been visiting Ann Lezinson, a homebound senior, over the last six months.

Friendly Visitors, which sends volunteers to

visit homebound seniors, has been operating since this January. While only a couple of people may have been visiting people's homes from The Caring Community prior to Friendly Visitors, there are now about 20 visitors, said Claudia Jacobson, the new program's director.

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Friendly Visitors is just one of many services provided by The Caring Community, which has four senior day centers located in the Village.

Redman ideally visits Lezinson weekly.

"I try to go once a week, or two to four times a month, depending on my schedule," she said.

"Ann has a hard time getting around, so I'll take her to the park in her wheelchair. I've taken her to dinner at Lady Pompei [one of The Caring Community's four locations]. We've gone to The Strand, anyplace nearby."

The experience is fun and rewarding for both of them.

"I know how much it means to Ann when I visit her," Redman said. "She's such a great person. It's such a reward how happy my visits make her."



“I enjoy people of all kinds, they usually enjoy visiting me,” said Lezinson, who also has been visited by other Caring Community volunteers.

“I’ve been around the world, and had lots of adventures.... Not many people have been to Saudi Arabia. They like to hear about it,” Lezinson said.

Lezinson used to visit Caring Community’s senior centers when she was more mobile. But “sometimes people pick me up and bring me to one of the centers,” she said.

The Caring Community’s four senior centers are located at Our Lady Pompei Church, on Bleecker St.; Independence Plaza, in Tribeca; First Presbyterian Church, at Fifth Ave. and 11th St.; and Center at the Square, at 20 Washington Square North, their main building.



These centers provide meals, classes, entertainment and trips for seniors. While some of the teachers are paid, many are also volunteers. These volunteers teach courses in Italian, French and breathing techniques, among others, which vary by center and from month to month as volunteers change.

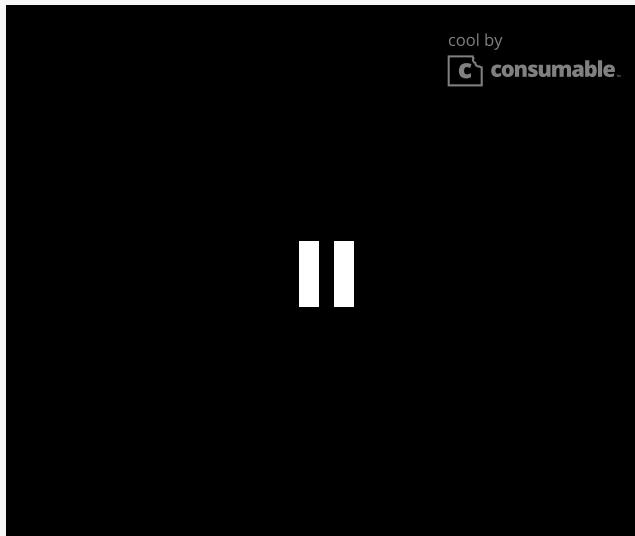
“The breathing teacher just walked in and offered her services,” said Laura Marceca, the director at Center at the Square.

While The Caring Community receives much support from outside volunteers and donors, many people enjoying the centers also are pitching in to help.

Maria Joseffer, a veteran of The Caring Community’s knitting club, has volunteered at the Washington Square North center for 15 years, having started after a friend recommended it.

Ethel Dichter admitted she had been reserved about joining a senior center. The other women agree they were concerned with the

stigma attached to the word “senior” but have come to really enjoy the center.



The center’s diversity allows one to find people “on your own level,” to interact with, said Joseffer.

Leon Farber, who helps out by calling people’s number to come get their lunch and participates in an entertainment group putting on shows, concurs that it’s easy to socialize at the center.

“There are two types of people, the ones you want to know, and the ones you don’t,” he said.

Farber and the knitting club members agree, though, that the Caring Community center is “a very intellectual senior center.”

Many other seniors help out, as well, such as Mitzi Carroll, who is in charge of getting shows to donate tickets to the center. The seniors pay \$5 for a ticket; half of that goes back to the center to pay for supplies, and the other half is

donated to small theaters and programs.



Though the tickets are donated, the Caring Community is selective.

“Some centers, they’ll take anything,” said Carroll. “I only take tickets to things that people will like. There is an intelligent crowd here. They like cultural things, like opera and ballet.”

For more information on volunteering with Caring Community, call Claudia Jacobson at 212-777-3555 or e-mail Claudia.Jacobson@thecaringcenter.org.



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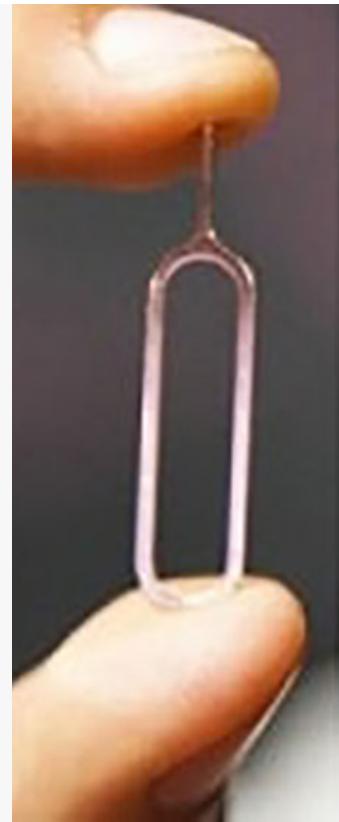


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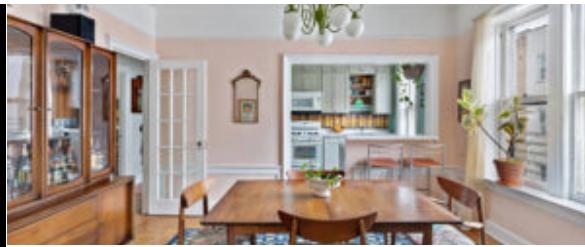
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