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FRIENDS IN ACTION VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

May 1, 2020

We are living in a new era - the era of COVID -19! Now more than ever, our volunteers are truly essential! The world is beginning to understand how important you, our volunteers, are to the fabric of the whole community.

This volunteer newsletter is intended to help you stay in touch with all that is happening in the world of Friends in Action and our volunteers. Improved communications are critical right now and new ways of staying in touch are more important than ever.

We would like to be sure to convey the gratitude that we hear again and again about all that you do – *THANK YOU!*

VOLUNTEER TRANSPORTATION

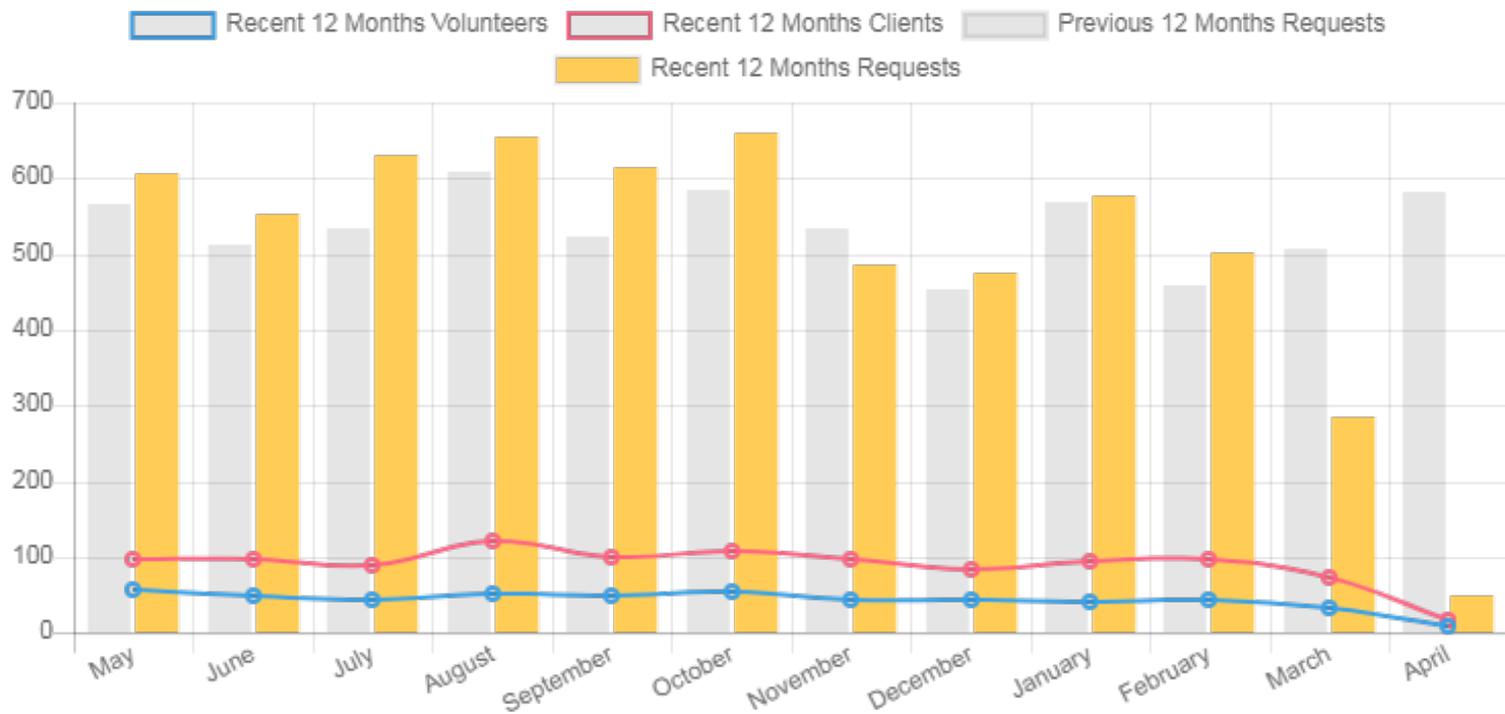
Our transportation schedule was drastically changed almost overnight in mid-March. We closed the Friends in Action Senior Center at the Moore Center on March 13, so as of March 16 more than 50 trips a week were cancelled just because of that. I had just received word that a new Ellsworth bus schedule would begin to include our Senior Center on its route on Tuesday mornings, circulating through several housing complexes and including our lunches. It would have freed up many volunteer trips in town (and it still will do so in the future).

As the next week or so continued, many medical offices and dental practices began to reschedule appointments or to cancel them until further notice. By the last week of March, transportation requests had contracted by 90%.

We have new guidelines to keep volunteer drivers safe (attached at the end of this letter), but it is always an individual decision whether to do a ride. Please let us know if you do not wish to do a particular ride or your comfort level has changed. We want to

reassure you that we still consider you a vital part of Friends in Action even if you have decided to step away from active volunteer driving for the time being.

During April, total numbers of rides were 91.5% lower than April one year ago: we assisted 20 individuals with 50 rides (in April of 2019 we assisted 97 people with 585 rides). We have continued to help individuals with rides to dialysis, cancer treatments, eye treatments, surgeries and other medical care as well as a small number of rides to go shopping. We are urging people to stay home and let a volunteer do the shopping for them.



This bar graph shows the most recent 12 months of 2020 (yellow) compared to the same months in 2019. Until March, 2020, numbers of rides were increasing nearly every month. But in April of this year there were fewer than 50 rides compared to nearly 600 in 2019.



A major new volunteer activity has been the delivery of fresh meals to more than 60 older adults throughout the Ellsworth, Hancock, and Blue Hill areas. Here **Ray Donovan** loads meals from Everybody Eats with **Robin Synder-Drummond**, an EE volunteer and new FIA volunteer. Ray and his wife Jill deliver over 40 meals on Mondays and on Wednesdays from the First Congregational Church of Ellsworth's Welcome Table meal.



Saying Goodbye

In the past month we lost two individuals who were both active in the beginnings of Friends in Action. Joe Taylor was one of our most active volunteer drivers who often did rides every day of the week. In 2009, FIA nominated him for a State of Maine volunteer recognition. He was very pleased, as he had served in the State Legislature in earlier years. Here he is, showing off his award certificate! His wife Emily served as the pastor of the Ellsworth Falls Congregational Church and was on the FIA Board of Directors for many years. When Emily retired, they moved to Orono.

And many of you will remember our first-ever employee and Volunteer Coordinator, Janet L. Bunker (she always insisted on the “L” to differentiate herself from the “other” Janet Bunkers!). But she was one-of-a-kind with a generous heart. She helped develop many of the transportation procedures we continue to use today. Janet lived in Franklin. She died on April 9. Her obituary says, “She was an art teacher, animal lover and supporter of Friends in Action.” She was a musician, artist, and a person of deep faith. We will always miss her! <https://www.ellsworthamerican.com/obituary/janet-l-bunker/>



NEW VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: “SHOP & DROP”!

We have a new scheduling program (“Shop & Drop”), developed in response to COVID –19 that focuses on grocery and pharmacy delivery. It is very simple: volunteers take delivery lists by phone or do the shopping.

LET US KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DO THIS! We will send you a training guide and a video link, whether you would like to be a telephone volunteer or a shopper.

The first step is the request which may come from an individual calling FIA or from a referral from another source. The request is listed as "needing intake".

The next step is for a volunteer to telephone the individual and determine what they need and the date needed and to take down a shopping list and/or pharmaceutical order. Our goal is to respond within 24 hours. These volunteers (the “list-takers”) can access the list and select one to call. They enter the request details and it is now ready for a SHOP & DROP volunteer.

The volunteer shopper checks the list and selects one that they can do and signs up for it. Following the instructions, the volunteer completes the shopping and the pharmacy pick up.

We are excited about this new program, because it is simple and easy to access and will allow us to respond to this new need. It is important for many of our clients to stay home, even those who would usually take care of their own

shopping. And we think it will continue to be useful in the months to come.

If you would like to volunteer either on the phone or as a shopper, please let us know ASAP. The training can be done on your own, once we send you the materials. We will meet online via Zoom with any new volunteers first and will do a background check as usual.

Let us know what you how you hope to participate as a volunteer and
THANK YOU
Call us at 664-6016 or email info@friendsinactionellsworth.org



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