AVP CORNER

As the Assistant Vice President for FCA's Senior & Adult Services Division, I am proud of the work our staff has been doing during the pandemic. Our FCA staff has been working nonstop. Our programs have never closed their doors. They have all transitioned quickly and safely.

FCA staff worked tirelessly to make sure that vital services continued for Nassau County seniors without interruption. FCA chore workers shopped and delivered food. Case managers worked closely with Island Harvest, Meals On Wheels, and the Nassau County Office for the Aging to continue providing vital support and assistance for seniors faced with food insecurity. Staff tripled the volume of calls to isolated homebound seniors, letting them know they were not alone and educating them on how to stay safe. FCA’s OmbudsService team provided a lifeline, offering support and advocacy to distraught families worried about their loved ones in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Alzheimer’s Caregiver Support programs went virtual and caregivers remained connected during these very challenging times.

FCA Senior Financial staff counseled seniors who lost their jobs and had to navigate the process of applying for unemployment assistance. Seniors who needed home energy assistance, health insurance counseling and assistance with paying their bills continued to rely on FCA staff throughout the pandemic.

We are facing a challenging future. Our seniors have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and FCA remains dedicated to

HERO OF THE MONTH

Meet Joe Patellaro
Contributor: Marisa Paladino

Joe's involvement with FCA reaches back almost 30 years, when fellow FCA Board of Trustees member, Scott Treiber, first introduced him to the agency. Joe’s wife, Sandy, became involved as well after meeting Joe in 2003. FCA has played a significant part in their lives together right from the start. Their first “formal” event as a couple was the 2003 FCA Holiday Ball.

Joe and Sandy have always strongly believed in being involved in the community. “Staying focused on how fortunate we are and maintaining a commitment to a sense of community has always been an important part of our lives and our relationship”, stated Joe.

Joe and Sandy support FCA’s Annual Scholarship Fund and Summer Camp Drive. Joe expressed, “In each case, we feel a strong commitment and satisfaction in helping kids and young adults have a broader perspective on what's out there and what can be accomplished. We are proud to contribute towards their ability
helping the community. Our expert staff are here to answer questions, to talk and listen, to share information and to make sure all vital resources are available. This is a scary time, but nobody is in this alone. With darkness falling earlier and the cold weather arriving, there is a tendency to withdraw. Please make sure to reach out to friends and family, and to connect with helpful community resources.

As COVID cases continue to rise, the holidays will look different this year. It is important to remain vigilant and safe. Limiting gatherings, remain home, wear a mask if you must go out, and follow guidelines to help keep everyone safe.

FCA senior staff thank the amazing donors who have been going the extra mile to help seniors feel connected. Through this spirit of generosity, FCA was able to partner with Delicious Moments caterers to deliver 150 Thanksgiving meals to homebound seniors. Our staff has been working tirelessly to deliver holiday gifts to seniors, none of which would be possible without our generous community.

I take this opportunity to remind everyone to reach out to those who are alone. Check in with a phone call. Offer to pick up a needed item or drop off a meal. These are simple gestures that can brighten a life and bring holiday joy. And always remember, FCA is here to help if you are struggling and need support!

Lisa Stern
AVP Senior & Adult Services

In addition, the Patellaro’s generously participate in FCA’s Adopt-a-Family holiday initiative each year. Most recently, Joe and his family provided Thanksgiving meals to over 100 local seniors. Many of these isolated older adults would not have had a Thanksgiving meal otherwise.

In honor of our Hero of the Month, FCA would once again like to thank Joe Patellaro and his family for their kindness and compassion. You continue to make Long Island a better place for all to live.

View our discussion with our Hero of the Month below!

HOLIDAY CHEER

The holidays have always been a time of joy, but they can also create feelings of stress and anxiety. It goes without saying that this year will be stressful for everyone! We are all thinking about the changes we will have to make; limiting the amount of people we spend time with, wearing a mask, or perhaps isolating completely.

Some are self-quarantining. We may experience isolation and loneliness as never before. So many will forfeit traditional rituals this year. Entertaining will be very different. Staying safe means being conscious and aware of our surroundings, and choosing wisely the people we are spending time with.

Here are some ideas and helpful tools from the Mayo Clinic staff to help cope during the holidays. Despite the pandemic, let’s take time to have a little fun and make the most of
the holidays!

**Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

**Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events or communities. Many may have websites, online support groups, social media sites or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship. If you're feeling stress during the holidays, it also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns. Try reaching out with a text, a call or a video chat. Volunteering your time or doing something to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. For example, consider dropping off a meal and dessert at a friend's home during the holidays.

**Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos. Or meet virtually on a video call. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate.

**Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

**Stick to a budget.** Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

Try these alternatives:
- Donate to a charity in someone's name.
- Give homemade gifts.
- Start a family gift exchange.

**Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.

**Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

**Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt.

Try these suggestions:
- Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.
- Eat healthy meals.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Include regular physical activity in your daily routine.
- Try deep-breathing exercises, meditation or yoga.
- Avoid excessive tobacco, alcohol and drug use.
- Be aware of how the information culture can produce undue stress, and adjust the time you spend reading news and social media as you see fit.

**Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Take a break by yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your
mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

Some options may include:
- Taking a walk at night and stargazing
- Listening to soothing music
- Reading a book

**Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Hopefully, the tips shared here might better prepare you to cope with the challenges brought on by 2020. Try out some of these strategies and give yourself a chance to experience the joy and magic of the holiday season!

Marilyn Mohsin, LCSW
EISEP Program Supervisor

**VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**

FCA’s 100+ volunteers are valued members of the Senior & Adult Services team and vital to the success of our programs. There are many opportunities to volunteer at FCA and the experience is rewarding for both the volunteers and the clients. Volunteers assist clients with insurance information and healthcare issues, counsel clients on how to set up and follow a budget, facilitate payment of monthly bills and checkbook reconciliation, advocate for nursing home/adult home/assisted living facility residents, or connect with lonely seniors to reduce isolation. These are just a few of the opportunities available to make a difference and improve the quality of life for seniors!

We celebrated International Volunteer Day on December 5th. FCA recognized Peter Belmonte, a Friendly Visiting Program volunteer. Peter calls a senior once a week for friendly phone calls (in lieu of visiting due to COVID), and has recently started delivering Island Harvest meals to a senior who speaks Italian as a first language. Jessica, *Program Coordinator*, always pays special attention to common interests and compatibility when making matches. She recognized that Peter also spoke fluent Italian, so she hand-selected him for this senior’s monthly delivery. Peter doesn’t just drop off the meal. He has become her friendly visitor, calling her, visiting with her and chatting in Italian (socially distant with masks, of course). Peter is a caring, selfless individual who brings joy to the seniors he volunteers with. They look forward to his calls and visits!

Jessica DiCarlo, *Friendly Visitor Program Coordinator*, spoke with Peter about his volunteer experiences.

Jessica: Thank you Peter for agreeing to be the first volunteer featured for the Spotlight on Volunteering section of the Senior Division Newsletter. I thought of you right away since
you took on the Island Harvest delivery in addition to calling a senior weekly for a friendly visiting chat.

**Q:** How did you find out about FCA’s volunteering opportunities?
**A:** An FCA employee explained to me all about the volunteer programs like Friendly visiting.

**Q:** Have you ever been a volunteer with any other organization?
**A:** Yes, I have at church. I have volunteered before.

**Q:** Are you retired?
**A:** Yes, I am retired.

**Q:** What inspired you to become a volunteer?
**A:** I had my father in a nursing home for a little over seven years and I witnessed a lot of volunteers to come help and I realize the joy they brought him to have all these wonderful people volunteer.

**Q:** What would you say to someone who has never volunteered about the benefits it brings to your life?
**A:** It brings me a great satisfaction in my personal life listening to people that I’ve volunteered with, to spend my time with them and hear stories of their lives. To exchange stories of my life and theirs and become friends... A great satisfaction.

**Q:** About how many hours a week or a month do you volunteer?
**A:** I volunteer, between phone calls and visiting, 3 hours a week or 15 hours a month.

**Q:** Is there Anything else you want to share about your experience volunteering?
**A:** It’s an enjoyable experience to be able to listen to people who live by themselves, their life stories - line of work that they used to be in. To listen about their families – children, grandchildren, the good things they’ve done in life and the sad things that happened to them in their lives. It’s also a learning experience for myself. I also share my experience of life - being a husband and a father, and my experience of work, happiness and sad moments. It’s a great learning experience for both myself to volunteer and the people that I visit and speak to on the phone.

Jessica DiCarlo
*FCA Friendly Visiting Program Coordinator*

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**QUICK TIPS FROM THE SENIOR FINANCIAL PROGRAM**

**Stay Organized!**

- Put new mail in one place (basket, shoe box, etc.) so
Maintain an accordion file for current saved papers.
Keep statements for one year, unless needed for tax purposes
Purchase a security stamp to block out identifying information on discarded papers; or shred.
Do not enroll in paperless statements or billing unless you have access to your account online.

Plan for the Future!

- Develop a spending/ budget plan for retirement
- Apply for county entitlements (SNAP, Medicare Savings Program, EPIC, HEAP etc.) based on income
- If you are a homeowner, complete annual tax exemption forms
- Meet with HIICAP insurance counselor to review healthcare costs and options
- Establish Power of Attorney/estate planning

Protect Yourself!

- Safeguard personal information
- Review all financial statements
- Review your credit reports
- Do not give personal information over the phone to unknown callers
- Verify a service provider before signing a contract
- If you do not understand a transaction or are being pressured to give money, ask a trusted person for help.

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

Eileen Casey, MSW, Senior Case Manager and EISEP Outreach Coordinator, joined FCA’s Senior & Adult Services Division six years ago and has become an intricate member of the team. Eileen is the epitome of a team player, always willing to jump in and help when needed. During her first year as a case manager, Eileen recognized the needs of our seniors during the holidays. These individuals are often alone, and unable to experience holiday joy and celebrations. Eileen took action and connected with a friend in the restaurant business whose family provided meals to the needy. A wonderful partnership was fostered and since then hundreds of Thanksgiving meals have been provided to lonely and isolated seniors for the last five years.

Additional support and resources were especially necessary this year with many seniors separated from their families for extended periods of time. This Thanksgiving was challenging as usual meal donations did not come through. Joe Patellaro, FCA Board of Trustees member, saw this need and donated funds to supply meals. Eileen rallied her coworkers to help and with short notice found a caterer
who could accommodate our senior clients. Eileen organized the deployment of 150 meals which were delivered to homebound Nassau County seniors the week of Thanksgiving. These recipients were very grateful and expressed how much this meant to them.

We would like to recognize Eileen for her continued persistence, dedication, and big heart!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group
December 7 & 21-3pm via Zoom
Spouses, children, and caregivers welcome!
Share experiences, voice concerns, and discuss solutions with fellow caregivers.
RSVP to KHaire@FCALI.org to receive further information.

Millennial Caregiver Support Group
December 16-6:30pm via Zoom
A caregiver support group for those who are balancing their education, employment and relationships all while caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia.
RSVP to KHaire@FCALI.org to receive further information.
Click here to view flyer!

Educational Webinar:
How to Cope When Alzheimer's Steals Your Loved One’s Personality
December 29 - 1pm via Zoom
Presented by Kristen Haire, LMHC.
RSVP to KHaire@FCALI.org to receive further information.
Click here to view flyer!

Our Senior & Adult Services team invites you to learn more about what we do and to support our life-saving programs, especially during these unprecedented times.

Learn More  Donate

Newsletter Editors: Regina Anderson & Marilyn Mohsin

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