



**HENRY STREET
SETTLEMENT**

SENIOR COMPANION COURIER

WINTER / SPRING 2015

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

*"Everybody can be great
because anybody can
serve. You don't have to
have a college degree
to serve. You don't have*

*to make your subject and verb agree to
serve. You only need a heart full of grace.
A soul generated by love."*

— MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Every time I read this quote, I'm completely inspired. Our Senior Companions are rife with "a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love."

Our older population is growing at an unprecedented pace and, although the experts know where the aging trajectory is heading, it feels as if not much headway is being made to prepare for the growth. By 2030, the population of US residents ages 65+ will reach 72.1 million, nearly double the 39.6 million in 2000, according to the AOA. People are living longer and contracting more chronic diseases later in life, which translates to higher demand for resources among seniors, but also more opportunities to serve.

The one national program that can help seniors age in place and live independently is our very own Senior Companion Program. Last year our New York City volunteers helped 92 percent of our clients remain in their homes. As an extra bonus, by the act of volunteering, it has been shown that our senior volunteers will live longer and be healthier. It's a win-win for all parties involved.

In order to promote good health and aging in place I'm asking you, champions of engagement and volunteerism, to spread the word about Senior Companions. Let your friends, family and your community know about the benefits of the program. As you serve, share the joy of volunteering with those around you, help strengthen our program, enhance the lives of countless seniors and experience the life affirming benefits of volunteering.

— DEBBY LOWENSTEIN, DIRECTOR

REAL LIFE STORIES: Howie Square

Howie Square is many things — one of them is Senior Companion's "Mr. Connections."

Always eager to help make the magic happen at recognition events to honor our volunteers and station supervisors, Howie has helped us secure venues like the Metropolitan Hospital and New York University, and booked the band Space Dogs in Jupiter.

It was at our December 2012 recognition, held at NYU, that Howie got his own tribute for his extra contributions to the program, receiving a black fleece sweater adorned with the Henry Street and the Senior Companion logos. "I'm not really a person who likes to give speeches so I just said thank you," admits Howie, adding, "That was a nice surprise and I will cherish it for a long time."

As a Senior Companion supervisor for more than a decade, Howie feels very lucky to have had "a multitude of good Senior Companions," but it is his volunteers who are even more grateful to have him in their lives. He's been described as big-hearted, a good guy, honest, kind and compassionate, and "someone who goes out of his way to help others."

His impressive networking abilities are built on an even more impressive lifetime of unique experiences. Prior to working with seniors, the Brooklyn-bred supervisor attended medical school for radiology, played minor league baseball for the Dodgers, and worked as a recreation therapist at a VA hospital, a production assistant at NBC's Saturday Night Live, a producer at HBO, and in public relations at Columbia Records, where he toured with artists like Bob Dylan, Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen.

These days he performs stand-up comedy, bicycles twice each day rain or shine (his "stress reliever") and, as a self-proclaimed "Beatles freak," listens to a lot of music. But most importantly, he spends time with family and friends, "Friends are really important to me — it's a gift to have really close friends," he said. He has traveled cross country four times, seeing "every state in the Union."

Howie says that working with seniors — through both the Senior Companion Program and Visiting (continued on back page)



MEDICAL MINUTE: Diabetes Mellitus

Diabetes Mellitus is an extremely common disease in New York City and is becoming more common. Between 2002 and 2012, the number of adults diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes jumped from 450,000 cases to 667,000.

Approximately 6,000 deaths related to diabetes occur each year in New York City. Hispanics and African Americans are the hardest hit.



RIGHT: Jerry J. Lasser, M.D., speaks about health issues with seniors at Henry Street's Good Companions Senior Center.

What is Diabetes?

When a person ingests sugars, the body secretes insulin, a hormone made in the pancreas (a gland in the abdomen). This allows the cells to use the sugar to make energy. But in some people, the pancreas does not secrete enough insulin, or the insulin does not work well, and the sugar piles up in the blood. Diabetes is characterized by an elevated blood sugar. A normal fasting blood sugar is less than 110mg or, after eating, 140 to 150mg. The sugar in the red blood cells or A1c is another measure of the blood sugar and is used frequently, and should be less than 6.5 percent — so that is the number to aim for, 6.5 percent in the A1c.

There are two types of diabetes: Type I is diagnosed in young people and requires injections of insulin to control the blood sugar. Type II occurs in older people and pills are used to control the sugar.

One of the big problems with diabetes is that the disease is often discovered in many patients late in life, when complications have already started.



What are the symptoms of diabetes?

Three common symptoms are polyuria — which is frequent urination; polydipsia — or increased thirst; and polyphagia — increased hunger.

What are the complications of diabetes?

Diabetes complications are severe. Diabetes can cause hardening and blockages of the arteries in the body. In the heart, a blocked artery can lead to a heart attack; a blocked artery in the head can lead to a stroke; poor circulation in the legs can lead to gangrene and amputations, and so on. In addition, patients with diabetes often have high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol, and these factors add to the medical problems of the diabetic and must be treated.

What are the risk factors for developing diabetes?

First, and foremost, being overweight and/or obese is a big risk factor. Lack of physical activity, family history of diabetes and smoking are other major risk factors. The first steps are to lose weight and keep it off, exercise and refrain from smoking. These actions will not cure diabetes, but will help to reduce the risk of complications.

How can one treat and manage diabetes?

There are many different pills to control blood sugar. If the pills are not working well enough, one may need injections of insulin. As one ages, the need for more pills, or more insulin, is commonplace.

Diabetes is a nasty disease, and it only gets worse as you age. The trick is to avoid the trap of this disease to start. So, don't gain weight, and keep your weight down. Try to be physically active and eat a lot of vegetables and other lean foods. Then, some good luck!

— JERRY J. LASSER, MD

CON ED TIP FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

We think seniors deserve special treatment, so we offer a number of services for customers age 62 and over. These services include:

Quarterly Billing Plan

If your Con Edison bills are less than \$420 a year, you can arrange to receive bills once every three months rather than once a month. We'll continue to read your meter monthly, although you'll receive bills only four times a year — in March, June, September, and December.



CONCERN Program

As a CONCERN customer, your questions will be answered by a specially trained representative. He or she can tell you about government aid programs, provide safety tips, and explain ways to save money on your energy bill. CONCERN customers receive Con Edison's popular newsletter, SPOTLIGHT, free of charge. Enrollment in the CONCERN Program is free and confidential. Just call us, toll free, at 1-800-872-8846.

Can YOU Become a SENIOR COMPANION?



Henry Street Settlement is seeking healthy, active adults age 55 or older to become Senior Companions. Senior Companions are volunteers who provide assistance, respite and company for frail, isolated or homebound older adults. Senior Companions volunteer between 15 and 40 hours per week and receive comprehensive pre-service training, monthly in-service training, and may qualify for a tax-free stipend as well. Volunteer positions are available in all five boroughs.

Do you know a SENIOR who is HOMEBOUND or NEEDS A LITTLE EXTRA HELP with daily activities?

If you do, then a Senior Companion might be a great fit. Companions can do everything from simply keeping a senior company to assisting them with trips to grocery stores, community centers and health clinics. Senior Companions do not perform any services that are normally done by a home health aide. However, they can be important people in the lives of their clients.



For more information, please
call 212.477.0455, or e-mail
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Neighbors as a Director of Volunteer Resources and Intergenerational Program Supervisor — has been the most enjoyable part of his vibrant career. His dedication to serving seniors and his outgoing personality can be traced back to his “best pal” — his grandfather — and his mother. “He would walk around the neighborhood and everybody knew him,” Howie said. “He was like the mayor of the area, and he was just so well-liked. He was just a down-to-earth, kind, compassionate, good-hearted person. And I always say, if I was half the man he was, I’m a good person because he was great, and my mother was cut from the same thread, the same mold.”

When Howie chooses to retire, he will do so as a Senior Services Companion extraordinaire, having absorbed great wisdom from his time spent working with seniors: “You only go around once that we know of and just to make the most of it and each every day,” he shares. “That’s what I try to do. That’s the wisdom they have imparted on me. Take advantage of it. It’s a gift, and I firmly believe that.”

What do SENIOR COMPANIONS like?



“The best part for me is my clients,” says Deborah Cochran, a Senior Companion for two years. “They’re sweet, funny, independent, and keep you on your toes. I love the fact that I can help them.”



Senior Companions are healthy older adults who help other older adults live independently by providing companionship and other services in all five boroughs of New York City. Senior Companions must be 55 years or older, in good health and be able to travel on mass transit. Volunteers devote between 15 and 40 hours weekly and may qualify for a tax-free stipend.

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