



INSIDE THE ALLIANCE

The people, the work, and the impact moving aging forward

Welcome Inside the Alliance

Across the country, people are quietly changing what aging looks like in their communities—volunteers offering rides, neighbors repairing homes, and older adults rediscovering connection and purpose.

Inside the Alliance gives you a closer look at the people, stories, and momentum behind this growing effort.

Because when you're part of the Alliance, you deserve to see what's happening from the inside.

2026 Issue 1 | Celebrating Volunteers

INSIDE THE STORY

The Power of Showing Up

How a weekly volunteer visit became an unexpected friendship.

Across the country, volunteers are creating moments of connection that help older adults stay engaged in their communities. Sometimes those moments grow into something even more meaningful.

A Friendship Took Root

When Linda, a 71-year-old retired teacher, signed up to volunteer, she thought she would simply be helping someone else.

She didn't expect to gain a friend.

Every Tuesday morning, Linda drives across town to visit George, an 86-year-old retired mechanic who lives alone. Their routine is simple: a ride to the grocery store, a stop for coffee, and time to talk.

At first, George shared stories about rebuilding engines in his garage and raising his children in the neighborhood he still calls home.

Week after week, the visits continued. Familiar stories turned into shared jokes. What began as a volunteer commitment slowly became something more meaningful.

A friendship had taken root.

For Linda, the experience has been just as powerful. "You think you're volunteering your time," she says. "But what you really gain is a relationship you never expected."

Across communities, volunteers like Linda are doing something extraordinary through simple acts of care—offering rides, sharing conversation, and reminding older adults they are valued and not alone.

And because of supporters like you, these moments happen every day.

"Having someone show up regularly makes you feel like you still matter."

**— George,
program participant**

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

A Simple Human Solution



Millions of older adults experience social isolation—a challenge linked to increased risks of heart disease, dementia, depression, and early mortality.

Yet one of the most powerful solutions is also one of the most human.

A visit.

A ride to an appointment.

A conversation over coffee.

These everyday interactions help older adults remain independent and connected to the communities they love.

They also enrich the lives of the volunteers who serve. Research shows volunteers often experience stronger relationships, greater purpose, and improved well-being.

When people show up for one another, communities grow stronger.

Inside Insight



Research increasingly shows that social connection is one of the most powerful protective factors for healthy aging.

Programs that foster relationships, like volunteer companionship and transportation, can significantly reduce the health risks associated with isolation.

ALLIANCE MOMENTUM

From One Community to Many

What began just one year ago in Durham, NC, is already creating ripple effects.

The launch of Aging Forward Durham has brought volunteers, older adults, and community partners together to ensure people can age with connection, dignity, and support—quickly becoming a powerful example of what’s possible.

And others are taking notice. **After seeing a recent story** about the Durham initiative, a leader in another community began asking: *How can we do this here?* He is now exploring how to bring local organizations together to build a similar network of support.

This is how the Alliance grows—one community takes the first step, another follows, and momentum builds.

What started in Durham is not just a local success story, it’s part of something larger. A growing network of people and communities working together to ensure that no one has to age alone.

Together, we are not only strengthening individual communities, we are helping shape the future of aging.



VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Honoring Extraordinary Volunteers

During Volunteer Appreciation Month, we are proud to announce the 2026 honorees of the Donald Owen and Katherine Horridge Smith National Volunteer of Excellence Award.

These remarkable individuals go beyond simply offering their time. They organize rides, repair homes, lead classes, and launch programs that help older adults remain active and engaged.

Named for two visionary volunteers who helped shape our Alliance, the award honors a legacy of service carried forward by today's nationwide network of volunteers.

[Read the inspiring stories of this year's honorees on our website.](#)

And thank you—for making this work possible.



WHAT'S AHEAD

Growing the Alliance

Across communities, a shared truth is emerging: connection is essential to how we thrive. Older adults are seeking meaningful relationships that enrich their lives, while those who serve them are coming together to learn, support one another, and strengthen their collective impact.

In the months ahead, Aging Forward will:

- Expand partnerships with local organizations to strengthen community-based support
- Share proven approaches and stories to inspire new communities and broaden awareness
- Show up on national stages to share our work and engage large, multidisciplinary audiences in shaping the future of aging

The momentum is building—and you are an essential part of it.

How You Can Move It Forward

Aging Forward is working toward a future where no one has to age alone. Here are **three ways you can help** move the Alliance forward:



Get Connected

Explore volunteer opportunities or share this story with someone who may want to get involve.



Support the Work

Your support helps recruit, train, and sustain volunteers who bring connection to older adults every day.



Spread the Story

Share this newsletter with a friend or colleague who believes in stronger communities.

With Gratitude!

Thank you for being part of what's happening inside our Alliance.

Together, we are building communities where no one has to age alone.

Contact us