

THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR SENIOR FRIEND

- Bring photos or souvenirs of your family, holidays, home or pets.
- Talk about what you are studying, your hopes and dreams.
- Ask where they were born. Get an atlas and discuss their homeland. If they were born in Calgary—is their family home still there?
- Talk about what you have both been up to since your last visit.
- Read newspaper and magazine articles aloud.
- Most care centers have an area where you can go, sit and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee together.
- Read inspirational poems, stories, articles and books.
- Take your senior for a walk (with permission). Find a new area in their complex. Ask for a tour!
- Tell jokes to one another...bring a joke book if you need help.
- Celebrate important holidays together.
- Ask your senior friend to share memories of how the community has changed and what their life was like as a teen.
- Make a list of favorites...food, movies, books, people, activities, sports, etc...
- Play charades or the other games available in the resource box.
- Do a craft or puzzle with them (crossword from the newspaper etc...).
- Plan something special to share with the other residents (i.e. songs, skits, games, music, etc.)
- Have your senior teach you one of their special talents or crafts such as knitting, card games like crib, painting, etc.

...OR JUST SIT AND TALK

Welcome to the LINKages Program!

In this handbook we have included information on the LINKages program, the needs of seniors and a few things to help you build a relationship. If you need more information, please do not hesitate to ask your Program Coordinator or visit the website at

www.link-ages.ca

Have a great year!!

EXPECTATIONS OF VOLUNTEERS

- The commitment to the program is from October to May. This includes the scheduled visits, training, orientation, occasional in-school meetings and special events.
- Appropriate behavior, attire, attitude and respect for care centre staff, seniors, teacher sponsor and LINKages Coordinator.
- Volunteer protocol requires that you sign in, wear a name-tag, sign out and return nametag to proper place when visit is over.
- If you and your peer partner are unable to attend a visit, a courtesy call must be made to the Care Centre liaison or your senior's Unit Clerk at the Care Centre.
- Transportation to and from the Care Centre is your own responsibility.
- Report problems or frustration, joys and celebrations or any innovative ideas you may have to enhance the relationship with your senior to the LINKages Coordinator.
- Participation in an evaluation process for both you and the program.
- Have fun, laugh, talk, learn, ask questions and be creative.

COMMITMENT TO YOU

LINKages will provide the following to participants:

- Management of the program for the benefit of both students and seniors
- Organization of visits and events
- On-going support, encouragement and mentoring
- Provision of resources on-site to enhance visits
- Facilitation of feedback between school, care centre, volunteers and corporate sponsors
- Maintenance of volunteer records, hours of service, program evaluation and provision reference letters recognizing students contribution

DISMISSAL POLICY

In the rare and unfortunate situation when a student volunteer fails to conduct themselves in a respectful manner towards seniors, care center staff, LINKages staff and/or fellow students, the following procedures will take place:

1. Verbal discussion indicating what the problem is and how we will address it.
2. If the problem continues, a written warning will be given indicating expectations and consequences should the behavior not change.
3. If the problem still persists, you will be asked to leave the program.

Any behavior, which puts yourself, your senior or your peers at risk will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

The following are examples of questions or conversation starters for your visits.

- Where were you born?
- What did you do before you retired?
- Do you like to read or be read to? What kind of things do you like to read?
- What kind of music do you enjoy?
- What is your favorite movie? Food? Animal?
- What kind of hobbies do you have or did you do when you were younger?
- Describe the places you have lived.
- If someone offered you a trip to any foreign country, where would you choose to visit?
- What bit of knowledge or advice do you have that you would like to pass on to others?
- What is something that you have learned from your parents?
- What is your favorite season of the year and why is it special to you?
- If you could be on the front page of the newspaper, what would you like to story to be about?
- If you could take any job just for one day, what job would you like to have?

COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Begin each conversation by first getting the person's attention. Touch gently on the arm or hand if necessary. Be careful not to startle your senior.
- Speak directly to the person by facing him/her at all times. Stand, sit or crouch to maintain face-to-face and eye contact. Do not move around when talking.
- Call the person by name and identify yourself. For example: "Good afternoon, Mrs. Smith, this is Jane." Rather than saying, "Do you remember me?".
- Speak naturally and clearly in a voice loud enough for the person to hear using familiar words and simple sentences. Talk slowly without rushing your story.
- Give one direction or ask one question at a time. Wait for a response before continuing the conversation. Sometimes you have to be patient by allowing a little bit more time for them to consider their response.
- Take turns in conversation being careful not to interrupt.
- Respond to the message, not to the word. Sometimes your senior may use words that are close to the meaning rather than the precise word they want. Help them find words through their associations with it or try to supply the word if they are unable.
- Restrict the number of questions that require long drawn-out answers. Simple questions requiring short answers are the best. Give immediate reassurance that you understand and are interested in what they are saying. Actions sometimes get through as well as or better than words.

VISITING GUIDELINES

LINKages strives at all times to ensure that student visiting is carried out in a safe and comfortable environment. To help facilitate such an environment, student volunteers will adhere to the following visiting regulations.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you learn about the senior and the senior's family through your involvement with LINKages is to be kept confidential from your acquaintances outside of the program.

VISIT PARAMETERS

If a student experiences any behavior that is inappropriate, they must contact the LINKages staff immediately.

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

It is acceptable but not expected to give small, modest gifts to celebrate special occasions (e.g. birthdays or significant holidays) Examples of small, modest gifts include:

- \$5.00 and under
- Giving a card
- Making a gift
- Something inexpensive but thoughtful

Use the same discretion when accepting gifts. Gifts of any extravagance should not be accepted.

APPROPRIATE TOUCHING

Any touching should be comfortable for both you and the senior, such as holding hands or giving hugs. However, refrain from any form of touching that could be interpreted as being inappropriate.

EXCHANGE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Do not exchange phone numbers!