



**SENIORS Helping SENIORS®**  
...a way to give and to receive®

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## Seniors Helping Seniors® fosters senior friendships

By Jessica Ercolino  
Staff Writer

**Seniors Helping Seniors** provides not only reliable in-home care for older adults, but also a trusted friend.

The Warminster-based organization helps seniors who are having difficulty remaining as independent as they'd like within their homes, said owner Barbara Marte.

"They can't get around like they used to or need a little help straightening up the house or preparing a meal," she said.

But while many services are aimed at helping the elderly, Marte's organization is the only that matches seniors (providers) with other seniors (receivers).

The providers are mostly retirees looking for meaningful work, she said.

"These people would like to do something fun and youthful with the time they have," Marte said. "They truly enjoy being with people and helping."

While receivers will be reminded to take their prescriptions, if necessary, **Seniors Helping Seniors'** services are non-medical. In addition to help with maintenance or shopping, seniors will enjoy conversations and activities with their provider.

"There's one pair that packs a picnic lunch by the lake when the weather is warm," Marte said. "There's another senior who enjoys quilting, so she and her provider go to the quilt shop to get ideas and supplies."

Companions are matched based on needs and personalities in hopes a relationship will be formed, Marte said.

"We use these social amenities to help individuals find enjoyment and a purpose," she said. "The goal is not just to get tasks done around the house — it's about helping to improve lives."

The minimum age of providers is "stretched" to 50, Marte said, meaning most 50-year-olds are not typically considered "seniors," but often strive to do this kind of work.

"They have the maturity, compassion and sense of wanting to help and provide some meaning in the lives of others," she explained.

Age isn't as important as the ability to relate to one another, the owner said, but younger providers might not have the same connection to the seniors as older adults.

"I don't want to be disparaging toward young people, because some are wonderful at this, but there are generations between them and many of these seniors already have family," she said. "When you get to be a certain age, you don't have a lot of your friends around anymore, and seniors relate to other seniors more as friends."

Having the provider available in the home also helps the relationship between the seniors and their family members.

"It relieves you of the overwhelming responsibility of day-to-day chores and gives you back what you value most — time with your loved one to sit, chat and connect," reads the website, [www.seniorshelpingseniors.com/PABucks](http://www.seniorshelpingseniors.com/PABucks) .

Marte also facilitates a support group for children of aging parents.

"Children are struggling with role reversal and how much they should do for their parents," she said. "With our service, you have a trusted individual helping keep your mother safe and comfortable while keeping her dignity."

"It makes the adult child feel as though they can continue being the son or daughter," she added.

**Seniors Helping Seniors** offers its services for a reasonable fee, which helps pay its providers. Hired employees maintain reliable and professional service, Marte said.

"If you depend on volunteers, [seniors] feel like they're getting charity," she said. "We found that if there's a small fee associated with it, people take it more seriously."

The fee is hourly, and the minimum service time is only two hours a month, according to the owner.

"If someone is struggling financially, maybe two hours a month is all they need," she said. "We try to be flexible enough to meet people's needs."

The organization also can provide 24-hour care, she said.

**Seniors Helping Seniors** began as a nonprofit in Wyomissing Hills, Pa., in 1998. Co-founder Kiran Yocom's passion came from her 14 years of work with Mother Teresa before moving to the United States.

After running **Seniors Helping Seniors** out of their home for several years, Yocom and her husband, Philip, opted to franchise the rapidly growing organization in hopes of helping older adults across the country.

Today, **Seniors Helping Seniors** has six regional owners and 60 franchise partners across 22 states, including seven locations in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey. Marte, a retired clinical nurse, opened the Central and Lower Bucks County location in August 2007 after spending years working in community-based services.

"I worked in the administrative end of providing these services. There was an emphasis on quality of life, but it was almost always facility-based," she said. "These seniors really wanted to be in their homes where their lives are."

Overall, Marte says she is thankful **Seniors Helping Seniors** has made a difference to so many people.

"I've heard many providers say, 'I knew I wanted to help people, but I didn't know how much it would help me,'" she said. "And receivers and their families have said we've made their lives better just by coming. It really is a great feeling."

To learn more about becoming a provider or obtaining care for yourself or a senior in your life, call 215-675-6402.

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