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## A Great Year to Volunteer – By Shawn Valadez, Volunteer Specialist

The new year is here and with it comes a world of new opportunities; including new challenges, new partnerships, and new successes. As we move into 2011, I want to take a moment to recognize some of the great things that you, our volunteers, have achieved in 2010 and also discuss how we can make this year even better for volunteers and seniors alike.

Volunteers really stepped up to tackle some urgent senior needs in 2010, particularly in the area of emergency home repairs. With supplemental financial support from Friends of Gwinnett County Senior Services, volunteers managed to complete major roofing and flooring jobs, provide badly needed plumbing and HVAC repairs, and even paint an entire house for Gwinnett County seniors! Special thanks to Steve Mingione and New Prospect UMC; Harvey Anderson and Home Repairs Ministries; Steve Gooch and Ground Zero Grace; Sonny Bettis and Sugarloaf UMC; Joel Shiver and Hamilton Mill UMC; Mike Edgett and McKendree UMC; and Angelica Lakhani and Williams Gas Pipeline for all their hard work in providing repairs assistance for our seniors. We really can't thank

you enough for everything you do for this program.

Other group volunteers utilized their skills and interests to perform some memorable projects for our seniors. From health assessments to talent shows to food drives, volunteers from Kawneer, North Georgia College & State University, Home Instead Senior Care, Ricoh Electronics, Outback Steakhouse in Suwanee, Life Church International, Greater Atlanta Christian School, and many others really broke the mold to show our seniors how much we care.

In an effort to better serve our seniors, I encourage each of you to think about how we can make this program even better this year. If you know of something that we could be doing more efficiently, or an area that can be expanded with use of volunteers, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience at **678.377.6716** or email [hhsvolunteer@gwinnettcounty.com](mailto:hhsvolunteer@gwinnettcounty.com). This year, let us remember the great things that can come from a few hours of selfless volunteering and let us continue to be there for our seniors. Thanks again to all of you!

## Manager's Moments



Linda Bailey  
Senior Services Manager

This has been a very rewarding year for Gwinnett County Senior Services! Thanks to the dedicated service of our volunteers and our collaborative partners, we have managed to overcome some difficult challenges and ensure that an ever-increasing senior population continues to receive much needed help and support. Despite a lagging economy, budget cuts and staff reductions, Gwinnett County Senior Services has been able to provide quality services that enhance the lives of our seniors.

I am truly amazed when I hear of some of the accomplishments from this past year and I am very proud that our agency has made such an impact in the lives of so many Gwinnett County seniors. Gwinnett County Senior Services prides itself on the quality of services we offer to our seniors; but the extra special ingredients that really enrich lives are the compassion and commitment of our volunteers. Thank you for your extraordinary service to our seniors. I shudder to think what would not have happened if our volunteers, donors, and partners had not been there to continually meet the needs.

## Above & Beyond: Extra Special Services

The hype and hoopla of the holiday season can be overwhelming at times, but the selflessness of volunteers reminds us that regardless of the day-to-day struggles we all face, someone else can always use our help. Once again, volunteers stepped up and really made great things happen this holiday season!



for seniors in need.

We are very appreciative that **Homestead Hospice** donated the funds to purchase and pack seventy-five food boxes that volunteers delivered to needy senior households. This new partner responded to a priority need and made the holidays that much brighter

**Kroger** also helped to support this annual project by ordering and gathering all the food items. Cornerstone Church volunteers also collected food, helped to assemble additional food boxes, and delivered many gifts and food supplies throughout the community.



A real bonus to this holiday season was the collaborative support of sixteen grand-families. These households with grandparents or older adults raising grandchildren, great-grandchildren, or younger blood relatives in the absence of a biological parent face enormous challenges which are magnified during the holidays.



As mentioned in a previous edition, the **Home Instead Be a Santa to a Senior** project with gift collection station locations at several Wal-Marts, Belk, and Embracing Hospice generated tremendous public response. Volunteer 'elves' feverishly wrapped and delivered gifts to seniors across Gwinnett County. Almost 500 gift bags with practical items were produced and given out!

**Coliant Solutions** collected and wrapped gifts and hosted a holiday party at Buford Senior Center.

Lastly, the employees of **RICOH Electronics, Inc.** and Airgas donated significant quantities of food to help restock food pantries for all of the grand families! RICOH folks also donated gifts for seniors and organized a Thanksgiving food delivery for twenty-five households.



Thanks to all our volunteers and collaborative partners!

## Unsung Heroes

- **Yanis Latsis**, the managing partner at **Outback Steakhouse of Suwanee** purchased the food and then joined his awesome Outback Steakhouse staff to volunteer and produce more than 200 Thanksgiving meals for seniors who otherwise would have gone without a holiday meal. More than 125 of these meals were delivered by volunteers on Thanksgiving Day.
- **Jennifer Thilo**, Executive Director of **Delmar Gardens of Gwinnett** hosted the annual Holiday Tour of Trees charity event.
- **Bill Gower**, board member and retiring Treasurer of **Friends of Gwinnett County Senior Services** reviewed and organized all financial matters for FRIENDS. Bill also provided fiscal stewardship as a steering committee member of the FRIENDS Charity Golf Classic at TPC Sugarloaf.
- **Sharna Fulton of Alternative Home Care for Seniors** delivered numerous loads of sweaters and blankets collected under the **Sweaters for Seniors** campaign. These items helped seniors as well as grand-family members survive the early-season cold snaps.

## More Than One Million Meals Later



Catherine Montgomery (middle).

Surrounded by friends, family, and co-workers, Gwinnett County Senior Services' cook Catherine Montgomery, pictured middle, finally hung up her apron and retired. Catherine cooked for more than 28 years and was directly responsible for preparing more than one million senior meals! Volunteers delivering meals to at-home seniors know how appreciative the recipients are. Thank you, Catherine Montgomery – now that you have all this free time, can we possibly count on you to help us as a volunteer?

## Opportunities to Support Our Seniors

### Make Your Resolution to Make a Difference

If you are interested in offering your time, talents, and/or treasures to help others, please give some consideration to the following opportunities:

- Inquire to find out how you can get involved with the 'Circle of Friends,' a volunteer group that assists our nonprofit partner, Friends of Gwinnett County Senior Services (FRIENDS) with fund raising events such as the *Shrimp & Crawfish Boil*, Silent Auction, *Outback at Work* Charity Lunch, Holiday Tour of Trees, or the *FRIENDS Charity Golf Classic at TPC Sugarloaf*.
- Donate to FRIENDS or consider sponsorship of one of the charity events listed above.



- Complete an application to serve in some volunteer capacity – we welcome groups as well as individuals. The needs of our seniors are limitless, so consider offering to do what you do or like to do best.
- Sponsor senior meals for a year.

To contribute and make a difference, please call **Gary Galloway** at **678.377.3020** or to volunteer, please call **Shawn Valadez** at **678.377.6716**.

## Pat's Pearls of Wisdom



Pat Baker  
Director, Health & Human Services Division

2010 has been a memorable year – I will categorize it as the 'year of pleasant surprises.' Specifically, we were coming off a year filled with budget jitters and lots of uncertainty, but we knew that the demands were going to be even greater. We are very fortunate to have received tremendous community and corporate support that allowed us to remain committed to fulfilling our mission without compromises. I am very proud of our collaborative projects and achievements. We have actually increased our programming capacity, expanded our partnership networks, enhanced our cultural outreach, and addressed caregiver needs. All these 'pleasant surprises' are directly attributable to the unwavering contributions of dedicated volunteers, donors, and partners.

On behalf of everyone associated with the Gwinnett County Health and Human Services Division, I would like to thank you for all that you have done. We look forward to even greater successes in the coming year.

### Meals on Wheels Corner – By Marilyn Sessions, Meals on Wheels Coordinator

As I look back on 2010, a smile comes to my face when I think about the wonderful relationships our staff and volunteers sustained with our clients **and** how we were able to rally together through the tough times to provide a much-needed service. My grin widens knowing that we are able to serve elderly clients who truly appreciate a nutritious daily meal and a huge 'helping' of some genuine fellowship.

Very few people are aware that there are still hungry seniors throughout our communities. Many of these seniors no longer drive, so trips to the grocery store are not possible. Our delivery volunteers have periodically reported that there was virtually no food in a senior household! Also, we are entering the time of the year when seniors cut back on buying food or purchasing their prescription medications in order to pay their increased utility bills.

Thus, the true holiday gift for our crew was the opportunity to pitch in and transport almost **one ton** of food donated by the public as well as our partners! We loaded 55 gallon drums full of food (courtesy of RICOH Electronics) and huge food boxes from Airgas. We also picked up the food order that Kroger assembled with the Homestead Hospice grant. Just knowing that more than 100 households received additional food is gratifying.

# thevolunteervision

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## thevolunteervision

The **Volunteer Vision** is a quarterly publication of the Gwinnett County Senior Services Volunteer Program. For newsletter questions and comments, as well as all inquiries about volunteer opportunities, please call **Shawn Valadez** at **678.377.6716** or email [hhsvolunteer@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:hhsvolunteer@gwinnettcountry.com).

If you would like to contribute to Gwinnett County Senior Services in an advocacy role or through the assistance of fundraising events, **Friends of Gwinnett County Senior Services (Friends)** may be your place to shine. FRIENDS is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) volunteer-run organization dedicated to raising funds to privately support or supplement select senior programs in Gwinnett County. To find out more about FRIENDS, visit [www.fogcss.com](http://www.fogcss.com).

### Gwinnett Senior Services Center

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770.822.8775  
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## Senior Services Centers

### Lawrenceville Senior Center

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### Buford Senior Center

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Buford, GA 30518-2560  
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### Norcross Senior Center

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