

Be Connected

In today's fast paced world we might think that it is easier than ever to stay connected, but research shows that 16 percent of adults 65 and older report feeling lonely and 12 percent isolated.ⁱ The good news is that community involvement can help reduce many of the effects of loneliness. Staying connected and engaged with your community is a key component of living a healthy lifestyle. Meet new people by joining a book club at the local library, taking an art class at the senior center, joining a walking group at your neighborhood park, or getting involved in your faith community.

Connect with your community by volunteering.

Volunteering is a great way to connect to others and to give back. It also can help people stay engaged in the community and keep them active longer. *"Volunteer activities can strengthen the social ties that protect individuals from isolation during difficult times, while the experience of helping others leads to a sense of greater self-worth and trust."ⁱⁱ*

Why should you volunteer?

- **You can make a difference.** No matter what type of volunteer activity you choose, you are enriching the lives of others.
- **You meet new people!** You will find that the people you volunteer with will inspire you.
- **Everyone is welcome.** Whether you are comfortable speaking in front of people, prefer to work one-on-one or like to be behind the scenes, you will find volunteer opportunities that suit your preferences.
- **It is good for you!** According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, people who volunteer live longer and volunteering leads to greater life satisfaction and lower rates of depression.

"There is something for each and every one of us to do; each and every one of us has unique talents that can be brought to bear on what the world needs."- Dan, state supported living center volunteer

I am ready to be connected!

Here are some tools to get you started:

- AARP's Connect2Affect campaign provides resources and tools to encourage older adults to make connections: www.connect2affect.org
- 2-1-1 Texas, a resource search engine, is a great way to search for local senior centers: www.211texas.org
- Your local Area Agency on Aging can also help connect you with important resources and programs to keep you connected and engaged. Connect to your local AAA by calling 800-252-9240
- Got an hour? The *Give it Back to Seniors* campaign encourages people to volunteer with older adults and has a volunteer opportunity search engine powered by Volunteer Match. Visit www.giveitbacktoseniors.org to find out how you can get involved.

Volunteer with the Texas Health and Human Services

Long-term Care Ombudsman	Volunteer Long-term Care Ombudsmen identify, investigate, and resolve complaints made by, or on behalf of, residents and provide services to help in protecting health, safety, welfare, and rights of residents. http://www.dads.state.tx.us/news_info/ombudsman/
Benefits Counselors	Benefits Counselor volunteers are trained in the areas of Medicare, Medicaid and other private insurance to provide information and counseling regarding these benefits to older persons and individuals with disabilities. www.dads.state.tx.us/news_info/benefits/
Foster Grandparent	Foster Grandparents; age 55 and over, are mentors, tutors, and caregivers to children and youth. Foster Grandparents serve from 15 to 40 hours a week. If you're 55 or older and want to share your experience and compassion with children/youth in need, contact: https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/community-engagement/foster-grandparent-volunteer-program
Nursing Home or Assisted Living	Many nursing home and assisted living facility residents enjoy regular visitors. Share your time and talents at a nursing home or assisted living facility by bringing the gift of companionship. https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/community-engagement/age-well-live-well/nursing-homes-and-assisted-living-facilities
Area Agency on Aging	Volunteers at Area Agencies on Aging (AAA): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead health and wellness classes • Serve as certified volunteer ombudsman • Support benefits counselors https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/provider-portals/long-term-care-providers/area-agencies-aging-aaa
Silver Lining	Silver Lining is a partnership between HHS and the Girl Scout councils in Texas. Silver Lining connects Girl Scouts with a nursing home or assisted living facility. Participating scouts improve the quality of life for the residents and they make friends.
Texercise	Volunteers host Texercise Classic, a 12-week program, for groups of 25 or more. Groups meet once a week for 12 weeks, engage in physical activity, and learn about healthy living. A Texercise Classic coordinator kit containing the necessary resources and materials to host the program is provided.

Call the Texas Health and Human Services Aging Services Coordination office for more engagement opportunities 800-889-8595.

ⁱ Social Care Institute for Excellence: <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/atagance/atagance60.asp>

ⁱⁱ Robert Grimm, Jr., Kimberly Spring, and Nathan Dietz, "The Health Benefits of Volunteering"