

Background Information

The national Faith in Action movement was founded on the ideal of community volunteerism, of neighbors helping neighbors. With more Americans living longer lives, many of us face the challenge of caring for a family member, neighbor, or friend who suffers from arthritis, diabetes, cancer, Alzheimer's, AIDS, or other long-term health conditions. Starting in 1983 with the Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers Program, and continuing in 1993 with the introduction of Faith in Action, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has supported faith-based community efforts to help meet this challenge with volunteer caregivers. These efforts have helped to build over 1,100 volunteer caregiving programs across the country.

What is a Faith in Action Program?

Faith in Action programs bring together community members and organizations such as hospices, clinics, hospitals, faith congregations, service organizations and businesses in a common mission to provide volunteer care to their neighbors in need. These programs provide volunteer services, care, and companionship to people of all ages and faiths who are homebound because of long-term health problems, as well as respite to family caregivers. Faith in Action programs recruit, train, and mobilize volunteers; form governing boards, hire directors to organize, manage, and promote the program's work; and raise the funds necessary to grow and sustain their programs over time.



What are the characteristics of Faith in Action programs?

- Faith in Action programs include a range of religious congregations that is broadly representative of the faith denominations within the community together with community organizations and individuals concerned about the well-being of frail elders and people with disabilities.
- Serve a geographic area with a population of at least 20,000. Most of Minnesota's Faith in Action programs serve at least one entire rural county.
- Recruit volunteers from all walks of life. A commitment to helping others is the most important requirement for Faith in Action volunteers; formal ties with religious organizations in the community are not required to become a volunteer. In keeping with the nature of the program, proselytizing is not permitted.
- Organize and train volunteers to provide non-professional supportive services to homebound individuals who are frail and elderly or affected by long-term health problems. Supportive services may include providing transportation to doctor's appointments, shopping for groceries, cooking meals, doing light housework, running errands, or simply phoning or visiting those who are homebound and lonely because of a long-term health problem. Volunteers may also provide respite relief for those who care for a homebound family member.
- Serve people of all ages and faiths who suffer from long-term health problems of all kinds, ensuring that no person is denied participation as a caregiver or recipient of service for reasons based on age, race, religion, or sexual orientation.
- Develop a system for making referrals to, and receiving referrals from, local hospitals, hospices, visiting nurse agencies, and other service providers.
- Establish a Board of Directors (or, in the case of a program housed in a large agency, a special advisory board) for the program. Boards typically include religious leaders or designated congregational representatives reflecting the coalition, community leaders, health care and social service providers, and individuals with communications and fundraising expertise who can serve other important roles in moving the program forward and sustaining it.
- Employ one or more paid staff that work with congregations, develop relationships with community organizations, and manage the recruitment, training, and other activities necessary to support Faith in Action volunteers.

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Faith in Action Volunteer Caregiving Programs in Minnesota

Funding Crisis

Faith in Action Programs provide a significant amount of service each year to elderly and low-income people throughout Minnesota. These small autonomous programs have a proven ability to mobilize volunteers who each year contribute a considerable amount of time and mileage expense to assure that their older friends and neighbors receive the help they need to remain living at home, for as long as possible. Programs are typically managed by one or two committed staff and local boards with a passion for making a positive difference in the lives of others. Volunteers choose to serve for the same reason.

Although very cost effective, it does cost money to manage a safe and effective volunteer program. Many of Minnesota's Faith in Action programs have received partial funding through the DHS Community Service/Service Development (CS/SD) grant program and some receive federal Older Americans Act money through their Area Agencies on Aging. Although these funds are appreciated, they are clearly not intended to be long-term funding sources.

There is precedent for funding neighborhood caregiver programs. Currently the State of MN provides \$20,000 in permanent funding for 31 Living at Home/Block Nurse (LAH/BNP) sites; 17 of these neighborhood-based programs are located in the metro area and 26 are located in small outstate communities. On May 29, 2008, Gov. Pawlenty signed into law the 2008 Omnibus Supplemental Budget Bill (H.F. 1812). Included in the bill was \$240,000 to fund eight additional LAH/BNP programs and four start-up programs for FY 2009 at \$20,000/program.

Unless a permanent source of baseline funding can be obtained, the future of MNFIA programs is uncertain. Once programs close, it will be very difficult for counties to rebuild the volunteer infrastructure that is now solidly in place. A \$600,000 yearly investment (30 programs permanently funded at \$20,000 each) could help thousands of Minnesota's elderly citizens to continue to enjoy the priceless gift of independence and avoid costly nursing home care. Although these programs would continue to seek public and private funding through other mechanisms, basic funding would enable active members of the MNFIA movement to continue their statewide collaborative efforts to improve local operations and services.

Historic Milestones

- **81** Faith in Action start-up grants of \$35,000 each were awarded in MN between 1994 and 2005.
- **36** programs have closed or never really got established. Some were developed by skilled grant writers at parent organizations as a way to get additional funding for existing programs; others were written by governmental entities with an interest in creating additional senior services in their jurisdictions. In these instances, capable leadership and local community ownership were lacking and program failure resulted.
- **45** of these programs are still operating. They exist by varying names: Faith in Action, Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers, Living at Home/Block Nurse, and programs serving people with developmental disabilities and other specific populations. A few of these programs have been absorbed into larger parent organizations (Mayo Health System, Lutheran Social Services etc.) For a complete listing of MN programs visit: www.fianationalnetwork.org.
- **30** programs identify themselves with the Minnesota Faith in Action movement. Most programs are located in rural counties where the percentage of seniors is already higher than the state average. When families do not live nearby and medical services are miles away, volunteers become a lifeline. Service statistics included in this report clearly indicate the powerful impact that Faith in Action programs are making on the independence, health and well-being of older Minnesotans.



Additional Information

Ideas in Action is a recently published report on the progress of Community Service/Service Development Grants. http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/aging/documents/pub/dhs16_143316.pdf.

Senior Services Provided by Community-Based and Faith-Based Organizations, a 2007 report by the Wilder Foundation, provides an in depth review of Minnesota's informal caregiving organizations.

Visit the MN Faith in Action's website at www.mnfia.org for more information

Overview of Services Provided by Minnesota Faith in Action Programs in 2008

| YEAR ESTABLISHED | FAITH IN ACTION PROGRAM | COUNTY | # VOL | #VOL HRS | # PEOPLE SERVED | # 65+ SERVED | # OF ONE-WAY RIDES PROVIDED | MILES DRIVEN | SELF IDENTIFIED STRENGTHS |
|------------------|---|----------------------|-------|----------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---|
| 2001 | COMMUNITY CAREGIVERS | BECKER | 51 | 3,200 | 80 | 75 | 600 | 6,200 | Helps seniors stay in their homes. |
| 1998 | N.I.C.E. VOLUNTEERS | BELTRAMI, HUBBARD | 176 | 6,000 | 547 | 338 | 700 | 48,700 | Impacts many people each year. |
| 1995 | VINE FAITH IN ACTION (2 programs) | BLUE EARTH, NICOLLET | 1,150 | 46,900 | 2,414 | 1,690 | 35,800 | 314,000 | National transportation award. Provides multiple services to people of all ages. Largest FIA program in the US. State mentor program. |
| 2002 | BROWN COUNTY VOLUNTEERS FOR SENIORS. | BROWN | 45 | 1,390 | 55 | 53 | 196 | 490 | Dedicated volunteers commit many hours of their time |
| 2004 | COMMUNITIES CALLED TO CARE | CARLTON + | 1,393 | 25,400 | 5,200 | 4,055 | 3,900 | 100,200 | Community alternative to long term care |
| 2001 | FAITH IN ACTION FOR CASS COUNTY | CASS | 145 | 5,700 | 236 | 145 | 1974 | 80,000 | Dedicated volunteers drive long distances. |
| 1997 | FAITH IN ACTION IN CHIPPEWA COUNTY | CHIPPEWA | 60 | 14,400 | 250 | 245 | 0 | 0 | 16+ years supporting seniors. Community funding. |
| 2001 | LAKES AREA INTERFAITH CAREGIVERS | CROW WING | 450 | 8,700 | 660 | 570 | 3,200 | 75,000 | Dedicated volunteers. Keep at least 12 people / year out of nursing homes. Received Gov. Pawlenty's Faith and Community Based Service Award |
| 2002 | DODGE COUNTY FAITH IN ACTION | DODGE | 54 | 900 | 81 | 72 | 746 | 13,000 | Make a huge impact on peoples' lives |
| 1996 | ELDER NETWORK | DOUGLAS + | 239 | 4,535 | 242 | 242 | 960 | 6,300 | Provides transportation and peer counseling services for elders. |
| 1998 | INTERFAITH VOLUNTEERS FAITH IN ACTION | FARIBAULT | 188 | 6,200 | 230 | 218 | 1,140 | 13,000 | Dependable transportation provided by volunteers. |
| 1998 | FAITH IN ACTION IN RED WING | GOODHUE | 245 | 7,991 | 247 | 230 | 2,516 | 27,160 | Ten years of service; capacity increases with each year. |
| 2004 | FAITH IN ACTION OF CENTRAL GOODHUE COUNTY | GOODHUE | 67 | 5,000 | 500 | 350 | 1,300 | 35,000 | Many willing volunteers |
| 1997 | TRUST INC | HENNEPIN | 1,000 | 14,000 | 677 | 677 | 2,300 | 25,000 | United 60+ congregations around a mission of service |
| 2002 | PARK RAPIDS INTERFAITH CAREGIVERS (LAH/BNP) | HUBBARD, BECKER | 150 | 7,100 | 219 | 219 | 1,170 | 30,300 | Caregiver support and rural transit |
| 2001 | FAITH IN ACTION AT FAMILY PATHWAYS | ISANTI, PINE | 115 | 20,200 | 115 | 115 | 4,400 | 20,200 | Help keep very rural elders living in their homes. |
| 1998 | C.R.E.S.T. FAITH IN ACTION | MARTIN | 130 | 2,000 | 280 | 260 | 1,600 | 12,000 | Fills a niche not met by county programs. |
| 1998 | RUM RIVER INTERFAITH CAREGIVERS | MILLE LACS | 180 | 13,000 | 210 | 190 | 2,750 | 95,000 | Dependable. Strong focus on developing relationships with care receivers. |
| 2003 | HORIZON HEALTH FAITH IN ACTION | MORRISON | 89 | 3,500 | 125 | 120 | 1,850 | 38,000 | Provides quality volunteer care. |
| 2005 | ELDER NETWORK | OLMSTED, WINONA | 91 | 1,800 | 143 | 116 | 1,300 | 5,200 | Tremendous growth in rides provided |
| 2003 | REDWOOD COUNTY VOLUNTEERS | REDWOOD | 105 | 11,802 | 150 | 145 | 3,250 | 142,200 | Help people live safely at home |
| 2003 | GREAT RIVER AREA FAITH IN ACTION | SHERBURNE | 1,600 | 23,500 | 1,500 | 1,200 | 3,100 | 67,000 | Received Gov. Pawlenty's Faith and Community Based Service Award in 2007 |
| 2002 | SIBLEY COUNTY FAITH IN ACTION | SIBLEY | 60 | 1,500 | 260 | 245 | 1,200 | 7,000 | Provide rides to people not served by public transportation |
| 2000 | NORTHWOODS HOSPICE RESPITE PARTNERS IN ELY | ST. LOUIS | 20 | 800 | 60 | 60 | 800 | 12,000 | Build community; selfless service. |
| 1998 | LYNGBLOMSTEN CARE TEAMS | ST. PAUL | 300 | 3,000 | 371 | 365 | 1,800 | 6,700 | Partners with congregations to serve the elderly |
| 2002 | ST. CLOUD AREA FAITH IN ACTION | STEARNS | 85 | 5,750 | 317 | 210 | 4,500 | 25,000 | Cost efficient volunteer program. Provides opportunities for service. |
| 2003 | RURAL STEARNS FAITH IN ACTION | STEARNS | 85 | 1,700 | 150 | 110 | 1,100 | 19,000 | Available, cost effective, caring! |
| 2002 | OWATONNA HEALTHY SENIORS (LAH/BNP) | STEELE | 120 | 7,500 | 1,500 | 1,400 | 100 | 700 | Provide multiple services. Great local reputation. |
| 2001 | ACTION VOLUNTEERS | WABASHA | 266 | 4,200 | 336 | 300 | 1,560 | 74,000 | Total transportation for the county. |
| 2002 | WELLSPRING FAITH IN ACTION | WATONWAN | 128 | 13,000 | 700 | 660 | 700 | 22,000 | Only transportation in rural parts of the county for isolated seniors |
| 2003 | WRIGHT COUNTY FAITH IN ACTION | WRIGHT | 76 | 2,400 | 70 | 60 | 800 | 6,000 | Demonstrate that people really matter. |

TOTALS

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 8,863 | 273,068 | 17,925 | 14,735 | 87,312 | 1,326,350 |
| Volunteers available | Hours of service | Total people served | People 65+ served | Rides provided | Miles driven |