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***COLLEGE STUDENTS TARGETED TO INCREASE VOLUNTEERS FOR SENIORS***

***National Volunteer Caregiving Network launches campaign to triple volunteers for those in need***

VENTURA COUNTY, Calif. - In anticipation of celebrating 40 years of service, the National Volunteer Caregiving Network (NVCN) is launching a new social media campaign, <https://givebutter.com/c/40forvolunteercaregiving>, aiming to triple the number of volunteers nationwide, and emphasizing leadership opportunities for college students.

“This pilot program is starting in Michigan and will soon roll out to other college markets quickly as local volunteer caregiving organizations engage in this effort. Cultivating a culture of leadership is critical to the future of our nation,” said NVCN Executive Director Tammy I. Glenn. “Volunteer opportunities like the ones our local organizations provide offer safe environments where college students can develop competencies that pave the way toward their future professional and personal lives.”

Over 10,000 people turn 65 daily with 30% of those, 60 and older, living alone. By 2040, projections are that number will increase to 43%. Volunteers are needed to help seniors remain in their homes. There are upwards of 1,000 volunteer caregiver organizations in the U.S., Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands that have limited paid staff and totally rely on donations and volunteers. “Many of our local organizations are overwhelmed with the number of seniors needing our services, but there are not enough volunteers to meet their needs,” she added.

"Our nation needs to develop young leaders who understand the value of our nonprofit sector and the important role these volunteer social services contribute to our healthcare continuum," said Dr. Ron Berkowsky, health science professor at California State University, Channel Islands. Dr. Berkowsky’s capstone students developed an eight-track leadership training that is available for all volunteers. "What makes this especially valuable is that Volunteer Caregiving Organizations take it a step further by offering leadership training with exposure to serving as an ad hoc member to a local board of directors."

Volunteer caregivers come from all walks of life and all ages assisting those who need extra help with mowing the lawn, putting up holiday decorations, changing a light bulb, unloading groceries, yard work, and providing transportation to medical appointments, shopping, and other errands. Sometimes a friendly visit or just holding their hand when they most need it makes a big difference. Many seniors and disabled adults no longer have family or friends and rely on volunteer caregivers to assist them with everyday tasks. This kind of caregiving is non-medical and non-professional care and enables older adults to live more independently while enriching both the seniors’ and volunteers' lives.

“We’re hoping this pilot program will encourage students to become volunteer caregivers, increase the awareness of these organization’s programs in their community, and boost donations to provide for more seniors needing these services,” Glenn added. College students who may be interested in getting service hours, or internships for this academic year 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, are needed as the country grows older every year.

While the basic volunteer caregiving role is based on “neighborly deeds,” that serve a wide range of needs, NVCN also offers Leadership Training augmented by an opportunity for a college-age student to serve as an ad hoc member with a local board of directors. “Across the country, Volunteer Caregiving Organizations provide a variety of services including friendly visits, respite to caregivers, information about many other in-home and senior services, and transportation to their regular medical appointments,” said Helen Howard, executive director, Respite Volunteers of Shiawassee. “We believe these services result in fewer ER visits, hospitalizations and keeping them out of nursing homes.”

”Volunteer roles don’t end with the traditional roles that Howard outlined, Glenn added. Board leadership, social media direction, marketing, and communications are just a sample of the additional areas where students can volunteer their time and talent. Nonprofits are like small businesses, which benefit tremendously when volunteers invest their time in advancing our mission.”

Gearing up for the National Volunteer Caregiving Network’s (NVCN) 40th anniversary kicking off January 1, 2024, NVCN will lead the development of outreach programs to universities and colleges to triple the number of individuals serving the volunteer caregiving mission. NVCN Ambassadors Tracey Holt and Karyn Curro, who both direct local programs, will champion the effort, starting in Michigan. “As Volunteer Caregiving approaches its 40th anniversary in 2024, Hospice of the EUP is proud to be supporting the state and the nation in advancing our mission,” said Tracey Holt, Hospice of the EUP Director and Michigan State Ambassador for NVCN. “With more people turning 65 every day, volunteer caregiving is critical to the future success of our most vulnerable aging communities.”

NVCN inherited a 38-year-old nationwide network of approximately 1,000 volunteer caregiving programs that currently engage 350,000 volunteers in serving 500,000 people each year. As the national movement approaches the 40th anniversary of Volunteer Caregiving, Michigan received one of the first grants from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, leading the way in committing to a bold new national goal: To triple the number of volunteers serving vulnerable people and their caregivers to more than 1,000,000 and the number of people served to more than 1,500,000 over the next five years.

This project is made possible in part thanks to a grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund which works to improve the health and wellness of Michigan residents and reduce the cost of healthcare, with a special focus on children and seniors. You can find more information about the Health Fund at mihealthfund.org.

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