



EASTSIDE SENIOR SERVICES

serving seniors since 1974

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2025

Helping adults aged 60 and older live independently and stay connected to their community on Milwaukee's eastside, Riverwest and Shorewood.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

TANGIBLE CARE. SHARED EXPERIENCE. MEANINGFUL LIFE.

For many people, aging in place represents the ideal way to grow older. In fact, studies show that 90–95% of older adults in the United States live independently rather than in assisted living or nursing homes. We value autonomy — the freedom to make our own decisions and remain in the homes and neighborhoods we love.

Yet aging in place is not without its challenges. One of the most significant risks is social isolation and loneliness. According to the CDC, one in four adults lacks adequate social and emotional support, and one in three reports feeling lonely. Research shows that prolonged isolation can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, dementia, and even premature death.

At the same time, loneliness is not always visible. We cannot assume that someone who lives alone is necessarily lonely; many are content and socially fulfilled. Conversely, a person who lives with others or interacts with people regularly may still feel deeply isolated. Loss of transportation can also become a major barrier. When it is no longer safe to drive or when navigating public transportation becomes too difficult, everyday activities and social connections can quickly shrink.

More than half of adults age 75 and older live alone, often due to the death of a spouse, divorce, or lifelong singleness. Approximately 16% of older adults are childless, a percentage that has doubled among baby boomers and is expected to grow. Even for those with children, about 20% have adult children living two or more hours away. Add in family estrangement or the demands of careers and caregiving, and it becomes clear how challenging it can be to age in place without additional support.

That is where Eastside Senior Services steps in. Our community comes together to ensure that older adults can remain independent while receiving the extra help they may need. Our generous, kind-hearted volunteers provide free services including rides to appointments, grocery shopping, errands, minor home repairs and chores, companionship, and respite.



Melissa Meier, Executive Director

“I feel relieved in knowing there are people who care and will help in so many ways.”

-Eastside Senior Services Client



Kelly Glostott,
Service Coordinator



Bill Florescu,
Ride Coordinator

We regularly hear how meaningful this support is. In our most recent survey, one client shared, “I feel relieved in knowing there are people who care and will help in so many ways.” Another wrote, “Your services have been invaluable to the wellbeing in our household.”

What we provide is more than a service. It is a tangible expression of care; a shared experience that makes life more meaningful and less lonely for both the client and the volunteer.

Thank you to everyone who makes this possible: those who volunteer their time, those who trust us as clients, those who spread the word, and those who give generously to support our mission. Your investment strengthens our community and enriches the lives of older adults throughout the Eastside of Milwaukee, Riverwest, and Shorewood.

Sincerely,
Melissa Meier, Executive Director

Our mission is to “help adults aged 60 and older live independently and stay connected to their community on Milwaukee’s eastside, Riverwest and Shorewood.”



We’ve served 314 clients with three part-time staff and 173 volunteers in 2025. All services are FREE, but donations are always welcome. We operate on 100% donations, with 12 primary supporters listed at the end of this newsletter. The majority of tasks are provided by our volunteers. Staff help with advocacy, information/referral, and coordination of services.

173
VOLUNTEERS

314
CLIENTS

3,109
RIDES

486
ERRANDS,
CHORES,
REPAIRS
AND TECH
ASSISTANCE



265
VISITS AND
CALLS

23,803
MILES DRIVEN



That’s 96% of the way
around the Earth!

INFORMATION
& ADVOCACY
SERVICES

100+

BIRTHDAY
GREETINGS
500+

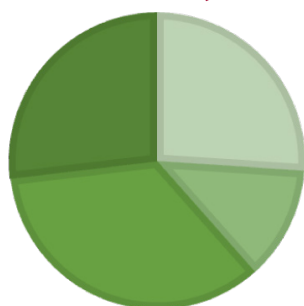


6,000
+
HOURS

250+
MEDICAL
EQUIPMENT
TRANSACTIONS

Our loan closet offers gently used medical equipment such as wheelchairs, shower chairs, and walkers for FREE to those who need it, either temporary or permanent. We are always looking for selected donated items that you may have around your home that you no longer use.

IN 2025, WE RECEIVED \$161,339.47



- Primary Supporters: \$43,100 (26%)
- Personal Donations: \$20,496.33 (13%)
- Grants: \$57,392.25 (34%)
- Fundraising: \$44,456.54 (27%)



MEET HELGA

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS



Helga, a vibrant 98-year-old Shorewood resident, recently shared how Eastside Senior Services has made a meaningful difference in her life. "Every volunteer I encountered is so nice," she began.

For a time, a friend drove her around town, but when that friend's responsibilities changed, Helga found herself unsure of what to do next. "I wasn't sure what I was going to do. Someone suggested Eastside Senior Services to me, and it was wonderful from the beginning."

Volunteers began providing rides to doctor's appointments, helping her get to her hearing aid specialist, and even ensuring she could visit her tax professional. Beyond transportation, the connections she formed meant just as much. "One volunteer is my neighbor and would visit me with his two dogs," she happily recalled.

Most recently, Helga has been matched with a volunteer who visits about once a month to lend a hand around the house. "She's helped me with sweeping, cleaning the attic, and with my linens. While she's here, we chat about all sorts of things."

Like many older adults we serve, Helga treasures her independence. She admits it isn't always easy to accept help, but she recognizes that it has become a necessity. Though accepting support can be challenging, our community is filled with kind-hearted neighbors eager to give back.

Because of these meaningful connections, Helga's life, and the lives of the volunteers who serve her, are richer. This is the heart of Eastside Senior Services: neighbors helping neighbors live independently and stay connected.



THANK YOU, CYNTHIA

A RIDE GOES A LONG WAY

Cynthia has been a volunteer driver with Eastside Senior Services for more than 20 years, a remarkable commitment to serving her neighbors.

"I enjoy meeting new people," she shared. "They are always so grateful, and I have wonderful conversations with them."

Through two decades of volunteering, Cynthia has seen firsthand how essential transportation is for older adults. Many no longer drive or do not have access to a car, and the loss of independence can be frustrating. "Rides are important for their health and quality of life so they can remain active," she explained. "It's the basic things in life that we sometimes take for granted, like going to the doctor or going grocery shopping."

Over the years, Cynthia has formed many meaningful connections. She recalls one client whose goal was to stay as healthy as possible so she could attend her daughter's wedding. "That was very important to her," Cynthia said. Another rider she remembers fondly was a nun who crafted handmade puppets to give away. "She was very interesting!" Cynthia added.

For Cynthia, volunteering is about more than transportation. "I meet nice, ordinary people who just want to live life, it's important," she reflected.

Her dedication reminds us that something as simple as a ride can help someone maintain independence, pursue meaningful goals, and stay connected to the life they cherish.



SUSAN'S JOURNEY

“POSITIVITY. SINCERITY. CAPABILITY.”

These are the three words Susan used to describe the volunteers who supported her following a recent hip surgery.

After a short rehabilitation stay at St. Camillus, Susan returned home eager to heal, but recovery did bring some challenges. “These volunteers helped me conquer the pain and anxiety I was feeling. They helped me get out of my head,” she shared.

Susan leads an active life with her husband and son, but during her recovery she needed additional support. “My family has their hands full, but Eastside Senior Services was there to provide the opportunity for a little extra help which I would have likely had to pay a lot for elsewhere.”

One volunteer assisted with grocery shopping. “We had fun talking — it was like we were two old friends. We shared a human commonality. She wanted to know more about who I was.” One day, the volunteer surprised Susan with a bouquet of flowers. “I learned that she had some past health

challenges herself, but then recovered and started volunteering. It made me have more faith in the human race.”

Another volunteer helped with laundry, even taking the extra effort to carry it upstairs to Susan’s room. “Both volunteers were younger and so energetic in what they did,” Susan said. “They always did a great job asking for direction.”

In addition to volunteer support, Susan temporarily borrowed medical equipment through Eastside Senior Services’ loan closet, including a walker and shower bench. She was grateful to have the equipment for as long as she needed it and appreciated being able to return it once she recovered.

Looking back, Susan is deeply thankful for the support she received. “I would have been lost without you,” she concluded.

Her story is a powerful reminder that sometimes healing requires more than medical care; it requires community, compassion, and connection.

VOLUNTEER

For as little as two hours a month, spend time with an older adult in our community. Volunteers needed for rides, companionship, shopping, light chores and errands. Hours are very flexible.



**EASTSIDE
SENIOR
SERVICES**

serving seniors since 1974

www.essmilw.org

414-210-5881





FREE SPRING YARD CLEANUP

MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY

FOR AGES 60 +

IN COLLABORATION WITH UW-MILWAUKEE, STUDENT VOLUNTEERS HELP NEIGHBORS BY PICKING UP DEBRIS, OLD LEAVES, AND PREPPING GARDEN AREAS. LET US KNOW YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND PHONE NUMBER; WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, APPROXIMATE LOT SIZE, AND IF YOU HAVE TOOLS FOR THE STUDENTS TO USE.

SATURDAY APRIL 18, 2026

9 AM – 1 PM

RSVP BY APRIL 3

CONTACT US

ESSMILW@GMAIL.COM

414-210-5881

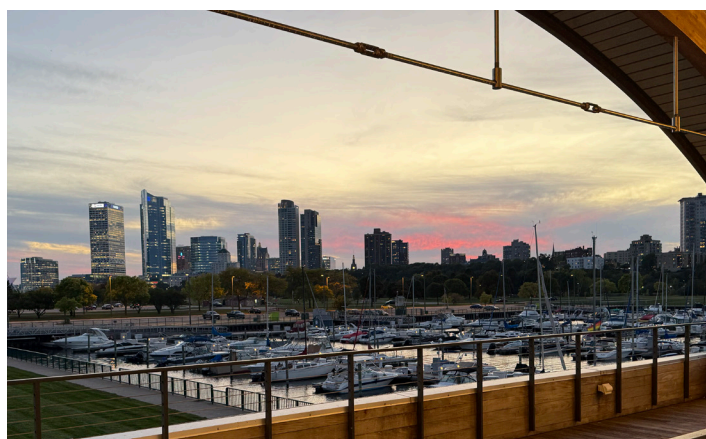


VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

SPECIAL EVENING TO HONOR OUR HELPERS



Thanks to the generosity of Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, we held our first major Volunteer Appreciation event on October 1, 2025 at the Milwaukee Community Sailing Center. Managed by Man on the Moon Events and Catered by Tall Guy and a Grill, our volunteers enjoyed an evening of celebration and community.



ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS

DIFFERENT WAY TO GIVE

Since 1995, Immanuel Presbyterian Church (1100 N. Astor Street, Milwaukee) has hosted a meaningful holiday tradition known as Alternative Christmas. Rooted in the idea of shifting the season's focus away from material gifts and toward service, the event embraces the tagline, "A Different Way to Give."

Each year, approximately 14 nonprofit agencies are invited to host informational tables where they share their mission and impact. Immanuel thoughtfully evaluates each participating organization based on its needs and opportunities for church members to become involved, encouraging the congregation to take ownership not only through financial support, but also through volunteer service.

A curated "shopping list" is created for the event, with five specific giving options for each agency. For example, participants might "purchase" a sink for Habitat for Humanity or provide birthday cards for clients of Eastside Senior Services. General donations are also welcomed. In place of traditional gifts, a congregation member creates handcrafted artwork on a card that reads, "This gift has been given in your name to help support this agency and help spread the gospel to the world." Each card also includes a brief description of the selected nonprofit, allowing the recipient to understand the impact made in their honor.



In recent years, Immanuel has expanded the event to include its Sunday School youth. Each child receives a \$50 voucher to "shop" the agency tables, learning about community needs and thoughtfully choosing where to direct their gift. This hands-on experience helps cultivate generosity and service in the next generation.

Alternative Christmas typically raises between \$30,000 and \$80,000 annually for participating nonprofits. Eastside Senior Services has been proud to take part in this inspiring event for many years.

Alternative Christmas is held on the first Sunday in December following worship, during coffee hour. Community members are warmly invited to attend and participate. For those unable to join in person, donations are accepted throughout the month of December. To learn more, visit

<https://www.immanuelwi.org/>.

DID YOU KNOW?



Annual WIFIAN conference, October 2025

There are many programs around the nation like Eastside Senior Services? You can learn more by checking any state's Area Agency on Aging!

We are proud members of Wisconsin Faith In Action Network (WIFIAN). Wisconsin InterFaith in Action is a statewide membership program supporting interfaith volunteer caregiver programs throughout Wisconsin. We provide support to local programs throughout Wisconsin to help elderly and disabled neighbors in need. To learn more about WIFIAN, visit <https://www.wifian.org/>



SPREADING HOLIDAY JOY

GIFTS FROM YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY



This year, we were able to provide over 180 gifts to older adults in our community!

Thank you to our volunteers who helped assemble and deliver the gifts. Thank you to all the generous donors who purchased items in general or from Amazon. Special thanks to Old St. Mary Catholic Church Milwaukee, Three Holy Women Catholic Parish, Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Our Lady of Divine Providence Parish, Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, Mars Family Foundation, and Girl Scout Troop 20010 from Whitefish Bay!



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!



THANK YOU!

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

We are so incredibly thankful for the ongoing, long-term and faithful support of our local congregations. Being a small agency, every dollar counts. Not only do these supporters help us monetarily, they are champions for our agency, helping us find volunteers and board members, providing space in church communications and buildings for our events, and extending our services out to their congregants. Congregations were how we started as an agency! Without their vision and momentum, we would not be here.

We SO appreciate our other community partners, including Shorewood Senior Resource Center, Saint John's On The Lake, and Suminski Family.

We extend a very special thanks to Saint John's On The Lake for the free office space along with being an amazing host for our annual holiday party.

Thank you to our personal donors! Every donation matters: from \$5 to \$5000, it adds up in a major way, allowing us to continue serving the best way we can in our community. We are thankful for you!

THE FOLLOWING ARE OUR 2025 PRIMARY SUPPORTERS:

Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

Immanuel Presbyterian Church

Lake Park Lutheran Church

Old St. Mary Catholic Church

Our Lady of Divine Providence Catholic Parish

Plymouth United Church of Christ

Saint John's On The Lake

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

SS Peter and Paul Catholic Church

Shorewood Senior Resource Center

Suminski Family

Three Holy Women Catholic Parish

Thank you Shorewood Foundation in providing funding to support our programming

Thank you Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield for your great generosity in helping us expand services and appreciate our volunteers

Thank you to Wispact Foundation for funding Uber Health rides when we run short on volunteers and for funding to allow us to purchase new medical equipment when needed

Thank you Potawatomi Foundation in providing us funding for Uber Health rides when we run short on volunteers

Thank you Nonprofit Management Fund in supporting our partnership with fundraising consultant Loving Venti

Thank you Mars Family Foundation for helping provide holiday gifts to clients we served in 2025

Thank you to Nicole Powley for helping with the design of this year's newsletter

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers for their ongoing commitment supporting our clients

Thank you community members, for spreading the word on our needs, supporting our fundraisers, and being an avenue for us to share the good work with others who may be unaware of us

COULD YOU DONATE TODAY?

As a friend of Eastside Senior Services, we hope you will consider becoming a recurring donor, make a one-time gift, or even consider a legacy gift by adding Eastside Senior Services as a beneficiary in your estate plan.

We operate entirely on donations and the generosity of people like you - people who value independence, compassion, and connection for our senior community.



Mail your donation to:

Eastside Senior Services
1840 N Prospect Avenue, Box 216
Milwaukee, WI
53202

Or Donate Online



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STAFF

Melissa Meier
Executive Director

Kelly Glostott
Program Coordinator

Bill Florescu
Ride Coordinator





**EASTSIDE
SENIOR SERVICES**
serving seniors since 1974

SAVE THE DATE

Cultivating a Community That Cares

An Eastside Senior Services Fundraiser

Thursday, April 23, 2026
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Best Place at the Historic
Pabst Brewery
917 W Juneau Avenue
Milwaukee

<https://essmilw.org/events/>