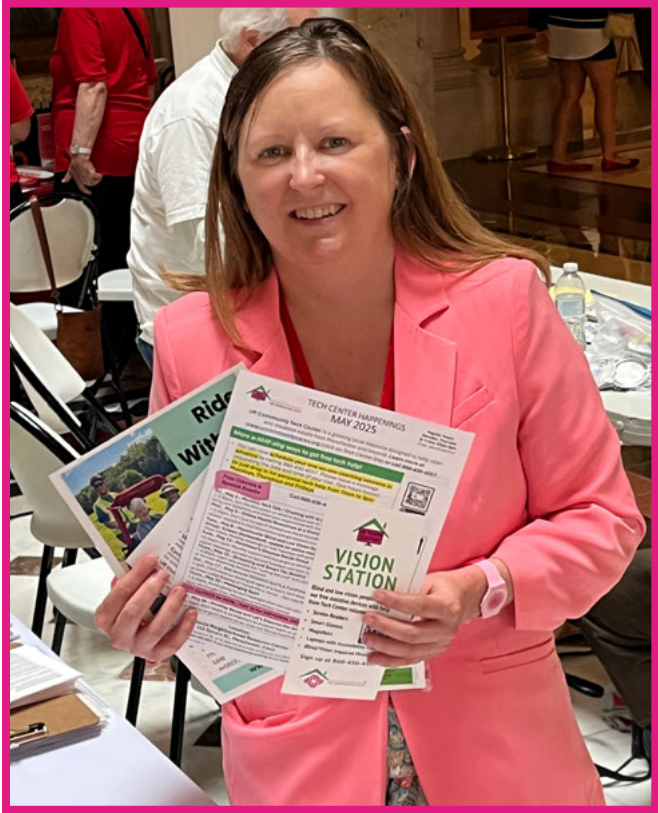


BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THOSE IN NEED AND THOSE WHO CARE





LETTER FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on 2025, I am filled with gratitude for everyone who makes the work of UR Community Cares possible. To our volunteers, donors, community partners, board members, and participants, thank you for believing in our mission and for helping us build a stronger, more caring community.

This year, we continued to see just how important connection and support are for older adults and individuals living with disabilities. Every act of kindness, every hour volunteered, and every partnership formed has helped someone remain safe, independent, and connected. That is the heart of our work, and it is only possible because of people like you.

The need in our community continues to grow, and so does our commitment to meeting it with compassion, dignity, and innovation. We are proud of what we have accomplished together, and we remain hopeful about what lies ahead.

Thank you for being part of UR Community Cares and for helping neighbors support neighbors in meaningful ways every day.

With gratitude,

Michelle Puzzo

Executive Director
UR Community Cares



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Hope Rises With Every Donation

Please help older and disabled people of Connecticut.

urcommunitycares.org



1. Opening & Mission Foundation

Manchester Tech Support Impact
350+ attendees
175+ drop-in visits
35+ free classes

**BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN
THOSE IN NEED AND THOSE
WHO CARE**

Every community has people who need a helping hand and people who genuinely want to give one. Too often, however, these two groups never connect. UR Community Cares was created to bridge that gap.

Our mission is simple yet powerful: to connect volunteers with older adults and individuals with disabilities who need assistance with everyday tasks so they can remain independent, connected, and safe in their own homes. What began as a vision to strengthen communities through compassion has grown into a network of neighbors supporting one another in meaningful ways.

Through our easy-to-use digital platform, Community Members can submit requests for help with things like rides to medical appointments, grocery shopping, yard work, technology support, or simply a friendly visit. Once a request is posted, local volunteers are notified and can choose opportunities that match their schedule and interests. This flexible approach allows volunteers to give back in ways that work for them, while creating life-changing moments for the individuals they serve.

But the impact of UR Community Cares extends far beyond completing tasks. At its heart, the program is about restoring connection and strengthening the bonds between neighbors. A ride to a doctor's appointment becomes a conversation that brightens someone's day. A quick visit to help with technology becomes a friendship. Small acts of kindness ripple outward, building a stronger and more compassionate community.

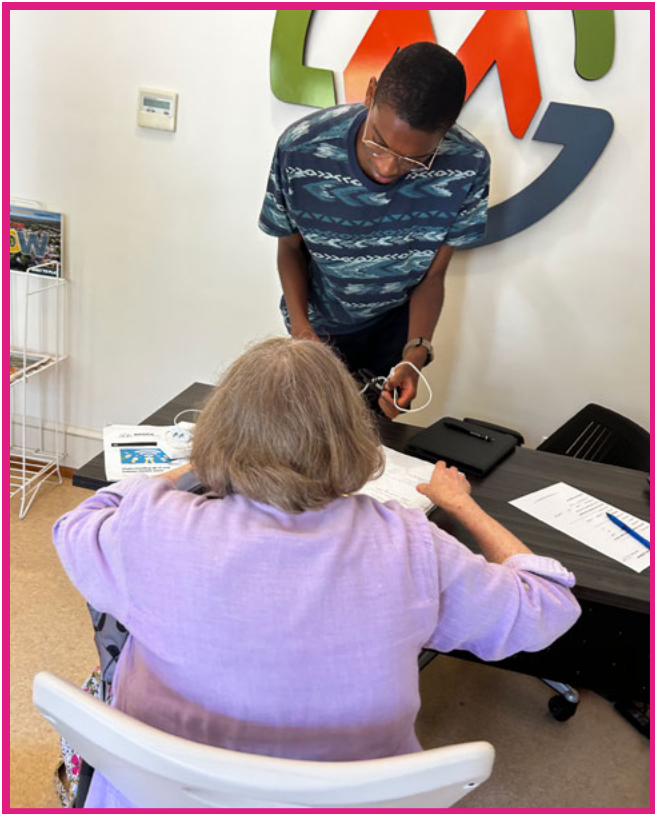


Our work is amplified through partnerships with local organizations, helping us reach more people in need. Community partners play a vital role by sharing information about our services, encouraging volunteerism, and connecting residents to the support available to them. Their collaboration helps ensure that individuals who might otherwise slip through the cracks are able to find assistance, companionship, and a renewed sense of belonging.

UR Community Cares also works closely with municipalities that want to bring this neighbor-helping-neighbor model to their own communities. Our team guides on building sustainable programs, including volunteer recruitment, member enrollment, fundraising strategies, and community outreach. By working alongside local leaders and organizations, we help towns create lasting systems of support that keep residents connected and engaged.

The result is more than a service; it is a movement built on compassion, generosity, and shared responsibility. Every ride given, every request fulfilled, and every conversation shared represents the power of community in action.

At UR Community Cares, we believe that when neighbors come together to support one another, everyone benefits. Independence is preserved, loneliness is reduced, and communities become stronger, kinder places to live.



**FILLING THE GAPS:
GROWING PROGRAMS,
STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

Across our communities, thousands of older adults and individuals living with disabilities face daily challenges that can make it difficult to remain independent at home. Simple tasks, getting to a doctor's appointment, maintaining a yard, learning how to use new technology, or simply having someone to talk to, can become overwhelming without support.

UR Community Cares was created to help fill these gaps. Through a growing network of dedicated volunteers and innovative community programs, we are ensuring that individuals have access to the support, resources, and human connections they need to live safely and independently.

Today, UR Community Cares operates four comprehensive programs designed to address the evolving needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities. Each program plays a unique role in strengthening independence, reducing isolation, and improving overall well-being.

Our flagship initiative, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, connects volunteers with community members who need assistance through our custom online platform. This

program makes it easy for individuals to request help and for volunteers to choose opportunities that match their time and interests. Support provided through this program includes transportation to medical appointments or grocery stores, assistance with household tasks and yard work, technology help, and friendly visits that foster meaningful companionship. For many participants, these connections become lasting friendships that extend far beyond a single act of service.

Beyond practical assistance, UR Community Cares provides community support and access to vital resources that help residents navigate aging and disability. Through educational programming, outreach events, and partnerships with local organizations, we help individuals learn about services available in their communities and how to access them. These resources empower people to make informed decisions and remain active participants in their own care and well-being.

Technology has also become an essential part of maintaining independence. Through our technology support programs, including the UR Community Tech Center and digital literacy classes, we help older adults gain confidence using devices, online tools, and assistive technologies. These programs allow participants to stay connected with family, access telehealth services, and navigate the digital world with greater ease.

We also believe that recreation and community engagement are essential for a healthy life. Programs such as Cycling Without Age and community social gatherings provide opportunities for residents to spend time outdoors, connect with others, and experience the joy of shared activities. These experiences help reduce loneliness and remind participants that they are an important part of the community around them.



At the heart of every UR Community Cares program is our extraordinary volunteer network. Volunteers donate their time, skills, and compassion to support neighbors who might otherwise struggle to manage daily tasks alone. In return, they gain something equally valuable: meaningful relationships, a sense of purpose, and the knowledge that they are making a tangible difference in someone's life.

Our platform is designed to be accessible to everyone, including individuals who may not have reliable internet access or the ability to navigate digital tools. By offering phone-based support and partnerships with community organizations, we ensure that people are not excluded from receiving help simply because of technological barriers.

For Community Members, these programs do more than provide assistance; they also help reduce the financial burden of services that many people struggle to afford. By connecting individuals with volunteers willing to give their time freely, UR Community Cares helps participants save money while improving their mental, physical, and social well-being.

The demand for these services continues to grow. Since our launch, UR Community Cares has expanded its reach to more than 150 towns across Connecticut and into neighboring states, including New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. This growth reflects both the rising need for community-based support and the recognition that our neighbor-helping-neighbor model is a powerful solution to the challenges many communities face today.

As more towns, volunteers, and community members join our network, the impact of UR Community Cares continues to grow. Together, we are building stronger, more compassionate communities where people can remain independent, connected, and supported throughout their lives.

We invite you to be part of this movement. With your support, we can continue expanding our programs, strengthening our volunteer network, and ensuring that no one in our communities faces life's challenges alone.



Cycling Without Age Manchester
10+ Community Events
100+ Passengers
20+ Pilots

ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

At UR Community Cares (UCC), we believe that access to support should never depend on someone's ability to use technology. While our online platform connects volunteers with community members who need help, we recognize that not everyone has reliable internet access, a smartphone, or a family member who can assist them with navigating digital tools. To remove these barriers, individuals can simply call our office. Our staff provides personalized assistance by helping community members create and manage their profiles, submit service requests, and stay connected with volunteers. This approach ensures that people who are less familiar with technology—or who do not have access to it—can still receive the help they need and remain connected to their community.

Community organizations also play an important role in expanding access. Through Partner Profiles, organizations can oversee and manage accounts for multiple members at once, making it easier to coordinate support for the people they serve. Municipalities across Connecticut can also establish accounts for social workers, senior centers, and other local agencies. These accounts allow professionals to submit requests, schedule services, and connect residents

with volunteers on their behalf, ensuring that individuals who cannot access the platform independently are never excluded from receiving help.

Recognizing the growing impact of loneliness and social isolation, UCC also offers programs that connect individuals with volunteers through regular phone calls. For many community members who may not use the internet or own a computer, these calls provide a vital link to conversation and companionship. Volunteers and participants often talk about daily life, current events, family memories, or simply enjoy a friendly chat. These small but meaningful interactions foster connection and remind people that someone cares.

Virtual volunteering also creates opportunities for individuals who want to help but may face barriers to volunteering in person due to health concerns, mobility limitations, or busy schedules. From the comfort of their homes, volunteers can offer encouragement, companionship, and a listening ear through scheduled calls. By nurturing these connections, UR Community Cares helps strengthen emotional well-being and reduce feelings of isolation.

Sometimes, the most powerful act of kindness is simply taking the time to talk. A short, friendly conversation can brighten someone's day, restore a sense of belonging, and remind us all that strong communities are built through compassion, connection, and care.

Our volunteer pilots are on the move



We go to nursing homes, assisted living facilities and events to improve accessiblity.





NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS: PAUL AND FRANK'S STORY

UR Community Cares was founded on a simple but powerful idea – neighbors helping neighbors. Through our platform, local volunteers connect with older adults and individuals with physical disabilities who need a helping hand at home. Whether it's a ride to a doctor's appointment, help with gardening, technology support, or simply a friendly visit, these small acts of kindness create powerful connections that help people remain independent and reduce social isolation.

One of the most meaningful examples of this mission in action is the relationship between Paul and Frank. Frank is a veteran who lives alone and has no close family nearby to rely on for support. Like many older adults, he has frequent medical appointments, many of which take place at the VA hospital – a considerable distance from his home. For someone without reliable transportation or nearby family, those appointments could easily become overwhelming or even missed. That's where Paul stepped in.

Paul volunteers through UR Community Cares and has become a consistent presence in Frank's life. Week after week, he helps drive Frank to his VA appointments, ensuring he receives the care he needs. But their connection has grown far beyond transportation. Paul also spends time socializing with Frank, checking in to make sure he's doing well and making sure he doesn't feel isolated or alone. What started as a volunteer ride request has become a meaningful friendship – the kind that reminds us how powerful simple human connection can be. For Frank, Paul's presence provides reassurance, companionship, and the ability to maintain his health and independence. For Paul, volunteering has offered the opportunity to give back to someone who served our country while building a genuine relationship along the way. Stories like Paul and Frank's are the heart of UR Community Cares. They show that community isn't just about programs or services – it's about people looking out for one another. By connecting neighbors who want to help with neighbors who need support, UR Community Cares continues to strengthen communities town by town. Because sometimes the most powerful support system is simply knowing someone nearby cares enough to show up.

CYCLING WITHOUT AGE MANCHESTER: BRINGING JOY BACK TO THE JOURNEY

In 2025, Cycling Without Age Manchester continued to create moments of joy, connection, and freedom for older adults throughout the community. As part of the global Cycling Without Age movement, the program focuses on improving mental health and reducing social isolation by offering free rickshaw bike rides that reconnect older adults with the outdoors and the people around them.

Based at Charter Oak Park, the program operates from April through November, offering scenic e-bike rides along the park's trails. Volunteer pilots guide specially designed rickshaw bikes, allowing older adults and individuals with mobility limitations to comfortably enjoy fresh air, conversation, and the beauty of their community. For many participants, these rides are more than just an outing – they are a chance to feel the wind, share stories, and reconnect with life beyond four walls. Throughout the year, the program brought these experiences directly to local care communities and public events. During Nurses Week, rides were provided for residents and staff at Touchpoints at Manchester Rehabilitation, creating a joyful outdoor break that brought smiles to caregivers and residents alike. At the summer carnival hosted by Manchester Manor, the rickshaw rides became a highlight of the celebration, bringing residents outside to enjoy music, sunshine, and time together beyond the building. Volunteer pilots also donated their time at the summer concert series hosted by MARC Inc., providing rides for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and staff. At Silk City Fest, the rickshaw bikes helped make the event more accessible by offering rides around the festival grounds or safely escorting guests back



to their cars. These efforts allowed individuals who might otherwise struggle to navigate large events to participate and enjoy the experience fully. At the heart of the program are the dedicated volunteer pilots who generously give their time and energy. Their presence fosters meaningful intergenerational connections and helps participants experience the physical, emotional, and social benefits of being outdoors. Laughter, storytelling, and simple shared moments often become the most meaningful parts of each ride. The program has been made possible through generous grants, donations, and the ongoing partnership with the Manchester Recreation Department. It continues to grow through community engagement and inclusive initiatives, including the installation of the Able Table at Charter Oak Park, which helps make the park even more welcoming and accessible for people of all abilities. Each ride reminds us that sometimes the simplest experiences – fresh air, movement, and conversation – can bring the greatest sense of freedom. Through Cycling Without Age Manchester, older adults are not just passengers; they are storytellers, neighbors, and valued members of a community that continues to ride forward together.



MANCHESTER LOW VISION & BLIND SUPPORT GROUP: BUILDING INDEPENDENCE, CONNECTION, AND CONFIDENCE

This year, the Manchester Low Vision and Blind Support Group continued to be a vital source of education, empowerment, and peer connection for 22 individuals living with vision loss. Through meaningful dialogue, trusted resources, and inspiring guest speakers, the group strengthened independence and reduced isolation for residents navigating complex visual conditions.

Among this year's featured speakers was Vicki Preddy, who shared valuable education about Non-24 Sleep-Wake Disorder and the importance of proper diagnosis and support. We were also honored to welcome Melissa Thompson, Advocate with Independence Unlimited, whose personal story deeply resonated with attendees.

Melissa spoke candidly about her journey of vision loss and the challenges she faced as a teenager in accepting her blindness. Reluctant to use a white cane at first, she experienced preventable accidents, including falling down stairs and walking into glass doors. Over time, acceptance became empowerment. For the past 20 years, she has lived without vision and has undergone multiple surgeries, lives with a fused wrist, manages severe glaucoma-related headaches, and has a right eye prosthetic replaced every seven years.

Despite these challenges, Melissa built a full and meaningful life. Married for five years, a mother of two and grandmother of eight, she emphasized that independence is not defined by driving a car — something she once hoped to do — but by building systems of support and self-reliance. She shared practical tools that have strengthened her independence, including apps like GoodMaps, Be My Eyes, and AiRA; screen readers such as JAWS and NVDA; ZoomText for magnification; and VoiceOver on Apple devices. She also highlighted mobility and technology training through BESB and discussed transportation options such as Paratransit and the Greater Hartford Transit District. Her core message centered on resilience, adaptation, and building a personal “toolbox” for independence.

We also welcomed Renee Labonte, Executive Director of the Center for the Blind, who reinforced the importance of connection and access to services. With a background in social work, she regularly links individuals to critical supports, facilitates multiple peer groups, and hosts “Lunch and Learn” sessions to increase awareness of available resources. She promotes wellness and community engagement through accessible activities such as chair yoga, the Abalona walking group, and movie matinees with audio description and closed captions. She also introduced tools like the WayAround app to help individuals maintain greater independence. Her work reflects a commitment to accessibility, education, and building inclusive community spaces.

The support group serves individuals experiencing a wide range of vision-related conditions, including legal blindness, macular degeneration (including dry macular degeneration), Leber Congenital Amaurosis, loss of central vision, cataract implants, retinal tears and detachments, glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, double vision, floaters, eye infections, dry eye, and rheumatoid arthritis. The diversity of conditions represented underscores the importance of shared experience, trusted information, and compassionate peer support.

Through education, lived experience, and community collaboration, the Manchester Low Vision and Blind Support Group continues to foster confidence, strengthen independence, and remind members that they are not alone on their journey.



LISTENING BEYOND SOUND: THE LAUNCH OF UR HEARING RESOURCES

Millions of people around the world live with hearing loss, yet the everyday challenges they face are often invisible. Simple interactions, speaking with a healthcare provider, ordering a meal at a restaurant, or having a conversation with a family member, can become frustrating, stressful, and isolating when communication breaks down. For both the person experiencing hearing loss and the person trying to communicate with them, these moments can lead to misunderstandings, anxiety, and a sense of disconnection.

At UR Community Cares, we believe that access to clear communication is essential to independence, dignity, and quality of life. That belief led to the launch of UR Hearing Resources, a new program designed to connect individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing with the tools, education, and community support they need to feel more confident, included, and empowered in their daily lives.

The inspiration for UR Hearing Resources began with a meaningful connection. After being featured in UConn Magazine (“The Good Neighbor,” Summer 2025), Michelle Puzzo, Executive Director of UR Community Cares, was contacted by Dr. Suzanne Ondrus. As highlighted in the Spring 2026 edition, Ondrus, based in Bogotá, Colombia, partnered with Puzzo to deliver a remote training on effective communication strategies for individuals with hearing loss. What started as a single collaboration quickly revealed a significant community need and sparked the vision for a broader initiative.

Since then, UR Community Cares has been building momentum. In just a few months, the organization has hosted a series of impactful events:

October 1, 2025 – Human Guide Training presented by the Helen Keller National Center - [Click here to watch the YouTube video.](#)

November 18, 2025 – Community Discussion for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals - [Click here to watch the YouTube video.](#)

December 5, 2025 – Multiple guest speakers, with ASL interpreters, presenting to high school students to increase awareness and understanding

February 20, 2026 – Technology Support session for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community.

And the work is just getting started, with additional programs planned for April and May 2026.

UR Hearing Resources focuses on practical solutions that make everyday life easier, communication strategies, assistive technology, community education, and opportunities for connection. The program also raises awareness among the broader community, helping healthcare providers, businesses, students, and families learn how to communicate more effectively and respectfully.

Hearing loss should never be a barrier to receiving care, participating in conversations, or feeling included in the community. By bringing people together, sharing knowledge, and expanding access to resources, UR Hearing Resources is helping to create a more accessible and understanding world, one conversation at a time.

Because everyone deserves to be heard.



Ride With Us



**Charter Oak Park
50 Charter Oak Street
Manchester, CT**

Feel the Wind in Your Hair

20-30 MINUTE RIDE AROUND CHARTER OAK PARK AND THE EAST COAST GREENWAY

- explore the unknown
- meet new friends
- see the dogs, kids, bikes
- watch the seasons change

**SCHEDULE A RIDE:
860-430-4557**

www.urcommunitycares.org



3.

Signature Events & Community Engagement



2025 GRAFFITI BATTLE: A CANVAS OF COURAGE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The 2025 UR Community Cares Graffiti Battle was more than an art event, it was a powerful celebration of creativity, resilience, and connection. Thanks to the incredible support of our community, artists, volunteers, and sponsors, the day was a resounding success, transforming artistic expression into meaningful impact for older adults and individuals with disabilities across Connecticut.

Centered around the theme “Canvas of Courage: Graffiti Battle for All Abilities,” this year’s event highlighted the strength, stories, and lived experiences behind each piece of art. Attendees had the opportunity to witness artists creating live, each canvas telling a unique and deeply personal story. One artist honored a friend battling Sickle Cell Disease, capturing her strength and perseverance, while another shared his own journey with fibromyalgia, expressing gratitude for the ability to create despite physical challenges. These moments reminded all in attendance of the courage it takes to keep going—and the healing power of art.

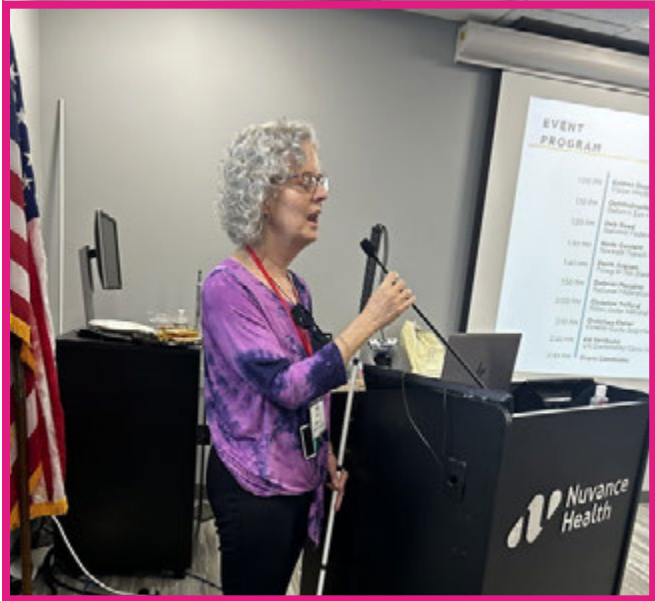
We were proud to recognize this year’s winners:
 Most Creative: Brian Wentworth
 Best Theme: Lauren Clayton
 People’s Choice Award: Brian Wentworth

The event also celebrated messages of unity and shared humanity. One artist’s work, inspired by the idea that “Life is about One Love,” reflected inclusion, compassion, and the belief that we are all connected.

This event would not have been possible without the dedication of our volunteers, the generosity of our sponsors, and the support of Urban Lodge Brewing, who provided a welcoming space for the community to gather. We are also grateful to RiseUP for Arts and Jerry’s Artarama for supplying canvases, easels, and artist materials.

Because of this collective effort, funds raised from the Graffiti Battle directly support UR Community Cares’ programs, providing companionship, technology education, and essential resources that help individuals live independently and stay connected.

The 2025 Graffiti Battle was a true reflection of what is possible when art and purpose come together. Through every brushstroke and every act of generosity, our community continues to build a more compassionate, inclusive future.



KRISTEN DOCKENDORFF’S 4 C’S: “CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY, COURAGE AND CONNECTIONS”

Kristen Dockendorff’s speech discussed her 4 C’s: “Curiosity, Creativity, Courage and Connections.” It was a very powerful introduction that encouraged people to find a way to do what they love.

The vendor’s presence, services, and dedication played a vital role in making the event a meaningful and successful experience for the Norwalk community. To all the vendors, thank you for your efforts, which enabled attendees to access valuable information, educational resources, and direct connections to services that promote better vision and overall well-being.



We are truly grateful for your collaboration and commitment to public health. Events like this would not be possible without the generosity and involvement of partners like you.

The 2025 Mini-Grant, awarded by the City of Norwalk, will enable us to expand UR Vision Resources to individuals with visual impairments who require greater awareness and understanding of the tools and technologies that support independent living.

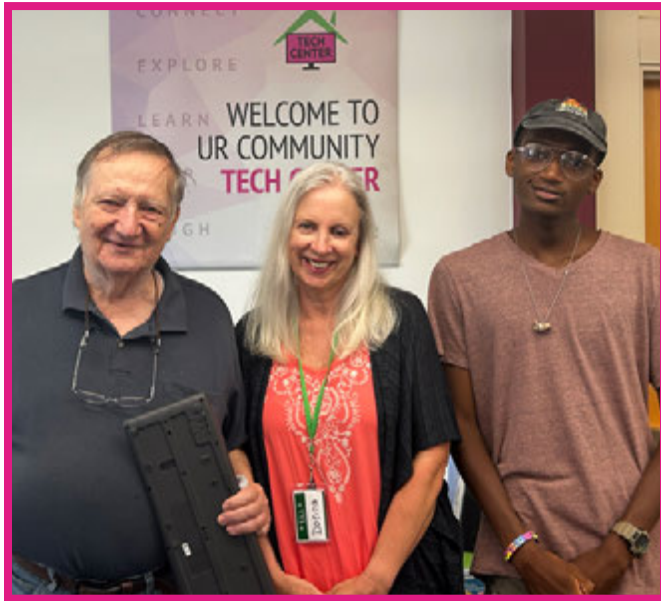
We are grateful to the Family & Children’s Agency for their ongoing commitment to the Norwalk community; through our partnership, we will empower residents with the knowledge and skills needed to enhance their quality of life.



UR COMMUNITY TECH CENTER IS HELPING TO
BOOST YOUR CAREER
www.urcommunitycares.org
 860-430-4557



4.
 People Who Power
 The Mission



DONNA POWELL: THE HEART BEHIND UR COMMUNITY CARES

Some volunteers give their time. Others give their talent. Donna Powell gives both – and she gives them generously, week after week, year after year.

For the past seven years, Donna has been a cornerstone of the UR Community Tech Center, dedicating more than 15 hours each week to strengthening our mission and uplifting the older adults we serve. Her presence is steady, her commitment unwavering, and her impact immeasurable.

At the Tech Center, Donna works one-on-one with community members, patiently guiding older adults through technology challenges that can often feel overwhelming. Whether she is helping someone send their first email, navigate a new device, or access critical online resources, she does so with compassion and clarity – restoring not just skills, but confidence.

Behind the scenes, Donna’s marketing expertise shines just as brightly. With a professional background in marketing, her skills are beyond gold. Each month, she thoughtfully designs our marketing calendar – a clear, welcoming roadmap of classes, social mixers, and special events. Understanding the importance of accessibility and inclusion, she partners with her daughter to translate the calendar into Spanish, ensuring even more community members feel seen, informed, and invited.

Donna also plays a pivotal role in shaping our monthly social mixers. She helps identify and coordinate guest speakers who spark meaningful conversations, giving older



adults opportunities to connect, learn, and build friendships. These gatherings are more than events – they are lifelines against isolation, and Donna helps make them possible.

Her dedication doesn’t stop there. Donna mentors and trains new volunteers, generously sharing her knowledge and modeling what service truly looks like. Each month, she personally helps distribute our printed calendars to more than 30 locations throughout town, ensuring that our programs reach those who need them most and helping us fill every seat with someone seeking connection.

Donna Powell is more than a volunteer – she is a pillar of our growth, a champion of accessibility, and a quiet force behind countless moments of empowerment. Because of her, our programs run smoother, our outreach reaches further, and our community feels stronger.

Her service reminds us that real impact is built not only through big ideas, but through consistent, heartfelt commitment. And for that, we are endlessly grateful.

The Good Neighbor

BY JULIE (STAGIS) BARTUCCA '10 (BUS, CLAS), '19 MBA
ILLUSTRATIONS BY KAILEY WHITMAN

“We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It’s easy to say, ‘It’s not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.’ Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.”

—Fred Rogers

In Mister Rogers’ view, Michelle (Bussiere) Puzzo ’98 (SAH) is a hero.

UR COMMUNITY CARES FEATURED IN UCONN MAGAZINE

We are honored and deeply grateful to UConn Magazine for shining a spotlight on the mission, heart, and real-world impact of UR Community Cares in their powerful feature on our founder and executive director, Michelle (Bussiere) Puzzo ’98 (SAH).

The story, grounded in the words of the late Fred Rogers – *“Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.”* – beautifully captures Michelle’s journey from physical therapist to full-time nonprofit leader, and her relentless drive to serve those who are so often overlooked: older adults and people with disabilities.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

1000+ Volunteers
1000+ Community Members
150+ Towns

From helping her grandmother age with dignity to launching a statewide platform powered by thousands of volunteers, Michelle’s work is about more than filling gaps in the system – it’s about creating community where it’s been lost, and ensuring that aging, disability, or limited income are not barriers to connection, safety, and purpose.

The article showcases the real people who make this mission matter:

- Frank, a veteran who found connection and care after a house fire through UR Community Cares
- Kristen, a legally blind former art teacher who now helps lead our low vision support group
- The 950+ volunteers who have given their time and hearts to help neighbors across 150 towns
- And Michelle herself – a mother, advocate, and relentless force for good To have our story told by UConn – Michelle’s alma mater – makes this even more meaningful. This is the same institution that helped shape her commitment to health and service, and we’re so proud to see her work recognized among fellow Huskies making a difference in the world.

To the UConn Magazine team: thank you for believing that this story matters. Thank you for helping us amplify the message that aging is not a problem – isolation is. And thank you for reminding us that sometimes, all it takes to create lasting change is one person who sees the need and chooses to respond.

If you haven’t read the article yet, we encourage you to check it out and share it with someone who believes in building stronger, more compassionate communities.

UConn Alumni will see it in their mailbox and you can also read the full article:

<https://magazine.uconn.edu/2025/06/05/the-good-neighbor/>





PREPARING COMMUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE: WHY TOWNS ARE PARTNERING WITH UR COMMUNITY CARES

Across the country, communities are facing a major demographic shift. The Baby Boomer generation is aging rapidly, and more residents than ever want to remain in their homes as they grow older. At the same time, the cost of in-home care, transportation, and daily assistance continues to rise, placing increasing pressure on families, social service systems, and municipal budgets.

UR Community Cares offers towns a proven, scalable solution to meet this growing demand. Our platform and community-based programs help municipalities strengthen their local support systems by mobilizing volunteers to assist older adults and individuals with disabilities with everyday needs. By partnering with UR Community Cares, towns can expand the reach of their services in a way that is cost-effective, sustainable, and deeply rooted in community engagement.

When a town integrates the UR Community Cares model into its local infrastructure, the results are powerful. Volunteers help provide rides to appointments, assist with small household tasks, offer technology support, and provide friendly visits that reduce loneliness. These simple acts of service help residents remain independent longer, while also easing the demand on municipal social service departments and healthcare systems.

Communities that adopt the UR Community Cares model experience multiple benefits. They are able to reduce strain on local social services, strengthen volunteerism and civic engagement, and create meaningful intergenerational connections between residents. Most importantly, they improve the overall well-being of older adults and individuals who might otherwise face isolation or barriers to essential services.



HOW TOWNS CAN PARTNER WITH UR COMMUNITY CARES

We have developed a clear and supportive process that allows municipalities to launch and sustain a local UR Community Cares initiative.

Create a Local UCC Chapter

Town leaders can partner with UR Community Cares to establish a local chapter designed specifically for their community. Our team provides guidance on program structure, volunteer engagement, and how to integrate our digital platform into existing town services to efficiently manage requests for help.

Engage Local Volunteers

Every community has residents who want to give back. By working with senior centers, schools, faith communities, civic organizations, and local businesses, towns can activate a network of volunteers ready to support their neighbors. Our flexible system allows volunteers to choose opportunities that fit their schedules and interests, making participation easy and rewarding.

Promote Community Awareness

Successful programs depend on strong local awareness. UR Community Cares works with municipalities to develop outreach strategies that inform residents about available services. Community events, local partnerships, and municipal communication channels help ensure that both volunteers and those in need know how to get involved.

Provide Inclusive Access for All Residents

While our platform is digital, we recognize that not every resident has access to technology. Towns can designate coordinators, social workers, or partner organizations to assist residents by phone, ensuring that everyone, regardless of technology access, can request help and connect with volunteers.

Secure Funding and Community Support

UR Community Cares also helps municipalities identify funding opportunities through grants, sponsorships, and community partnerships. Our team provides guidance and tools that allow towns to build sustainable programs that grow over time and continue serving residents for years to come.

Investing in Community Today for the Needs of Tomorrow

As the population ages and the cost of care continues to climb, communities must find new ways to support residents who want to remain in their homes. By partnering with UR Community Cares, municipalities can proactively prepare for this future, creating stronger networks of support that improve quality of life while managing costs.

At its heart, the UR Community Cares model is built on a powerful idea: neighbors helping neighbors. When towns invest in that spirit of community, they create places where residents feel connected, supported, and proud to call home.



VISIT US

Office and UR Community Tech Center,

Physical Address:

153 Spruce Street

Manchester, CT 06040

(Eastside Neighborhood Resource Center). Parking is available on the street or behind the building.

Email us:

info@urcommunitycares.org

Call us:

860-430-4557