

# Chores Service Programs in Rhode Island

## 2019 Analysis and Case Studies

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**In collaboration with:** Age-Friendly Rhode Island, Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging, and United Way of Rhode Island.

**Project Goals:** (1) To identify programs throughout Rhode Island that provide older adults living in their own homes with home chore services. (2) To identify best practices, needs and gaps in home chore services through interviews with service providers and older adults. (3) To compile research in a print and digital format to disseminate to service providers with the goal of sharing best practices.

**Definition of Chores Service Programs:** Chores service programs provide older adults help with both indoor and outdoor home maintenance such as: light housework, general repairs, accessibility and safety upgrades, painting, yardwork, snow removal, decluttering and help with technology.

Note on Programs and Services *Not* Included in this Survey:

*For-Profit Home Care Agencies:* This report does not include the private, for-profit home care agencies in Rhode Island that, in addition to personal care, may provide selected home chore services to older adults for a fee.

*Home Modification Programs* - Those programs funded through the federal government to provide older adults with home modification and repairs to improve safety and access are not included.

*Personal Care and Senior Companion Services* -- This report does not include programs sponsored by the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging to provide home and personal care or senior companions to eligible older adults.

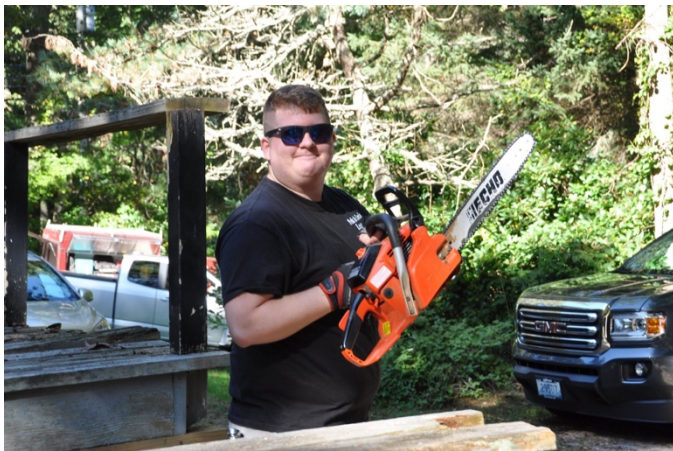
**Please Note:** This report was developed to distribute to providers of social and community services. It is intended to be used by organizations for sharing best practices and program development. It *was not developed as a referral source for individual* older Rhode Islanders requesting help with home chores and maintenance.

**Background:** In 2015, focus groups were conducted statewide to inform the development of the 2016 Aging in Community Report: <https://agefriendlyri.org/about/research-reports/>

Among the key findings of those interviews and conversations with older adults across Rhode Island was the need for **support services that would allow them to remain in their own homes**. Those supports include affordable help with homemaker and home repair/maintenance chores for older adults in owner-occupied homes.

Subsequent to the release of that report, Age-Friendly Rhode Island’s “Supports to Remain at Home” working group recognized a gap in the intersection between two of its nine focus areas: Communication/Information and Supports to Remain at Home -- there was *no central resource for service providers when searching for home chores help for older adults living at home*. Work group members felt the first step in addressing the situation was to create a resource analysis that identifies the location of existing home chore programs and summarizes how they serve older adults. The resource would be the foundation for fostering collaborations, sharing best practices and developing new programs. The report would be produced in printed and digital format to enable updating as programs are identified, expanded and created.

**Methodology:** A digital survey was developed and sent to those organizations and individuals known to provide services to older adults or who may have knowledge of local programs for older adults. Outreach also included contact by email, telephone, presentations and interviews with community-based providers of services to older adults. Social media outreach was supported by the Age-Friendly RI website, Facebook and twitter media presences. A primary source of initial information was contact with the thirty Senior Centers serving Rhode Island. Individuals and groups of older adults were interviewed to gather information on their needs for help maintaining their home.



**I. Survey:** The survey was designed to fulfill the following goals:

1. Locate existing home chore programs and summarize their structure and services
2. Identify needs and gaps in home chore services to older adults

Approximately 250 surveys were distributed, 66 were completed. (Response rate of 26.4%)

**Survey Questionnaire** — available by request from [agefriendlyri.org](http://agefriendlyri.org)

**II. Interviews:** Interviews with service providers and older adults were conducted by phone, in-person or in group settings.

## Summary of Findings

The majority of survey respondents felt home chore services for older adults were needed, but most were not aware of any programs in their geographic area. The four populations most underserved are: those who live alone, have limited transportation, a physical disability, or are low income. The top four needs not being met are: snow removal, housekeeping, home maintenance and yardwork. Those who live alone are the biggest consumers of home chores services, followed equally by those aged 80 plus, or have a disability/chronic disease.

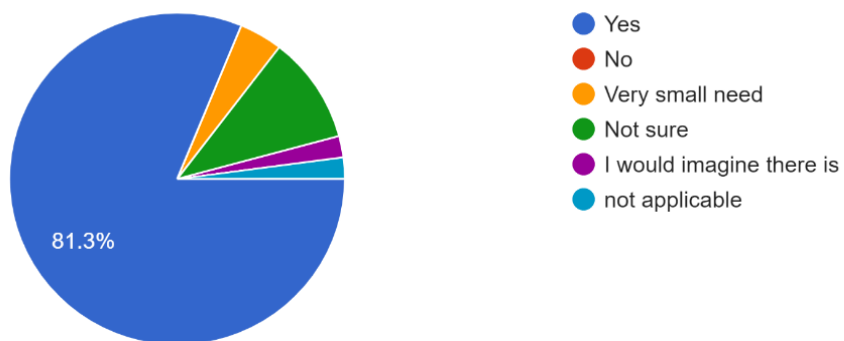
There were 11 programs identified, a few providing only one service such as yardwork or snow removal. Most home chore programs were managed by a non-profit organization using volunteers from within the organization to provide services. Most programs offer free services. Over half serve less than 50 older adults annually and about a third have administrative budgets over \$10,000. The biggest challenges to managing a program were: informing older adults of the service, funding, and finding volunteers to provide the services.

## Statistics and Graphic Results

Over 80% **Yes, there is a need** for a program.

Do you feel there is a need for a home chore program in your area?

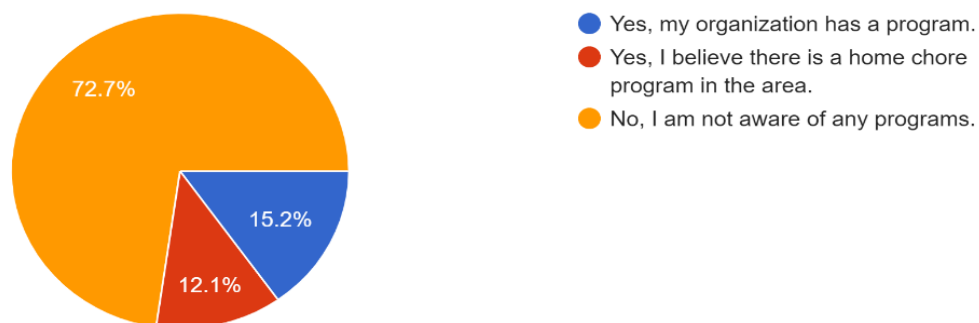
48 responses



Nearly 75% **Not aware** of a Home Chore Program.

Are you aware of a Home Chore program in your area to help seniors?

66 responses



# Gaps in Service

## Top 4 Unmet Needs:

1. Snow removal
2. Light housekeeping
3. Yardwork
4. Large home repairs

Needs respondents felt were not being met to help seniors age at home.

- Snow removal (71%)
- Light housekeeping (69%)
- Yardwork (67%)
- Large Home Repairs( 63%)
- Accessibility and safety upgrades (50%)
- Help with technology (46%)
- Trash removal (42%)
- Unsure (2%)

*Note:* Respondents were asked to *choose all needs* not being met from list.

## Top 4 Underserved Populations:

1. Live alone
2. Limited transportation
3. Physical disability
4. Low income

Populations whose needs to age at home were not being met.

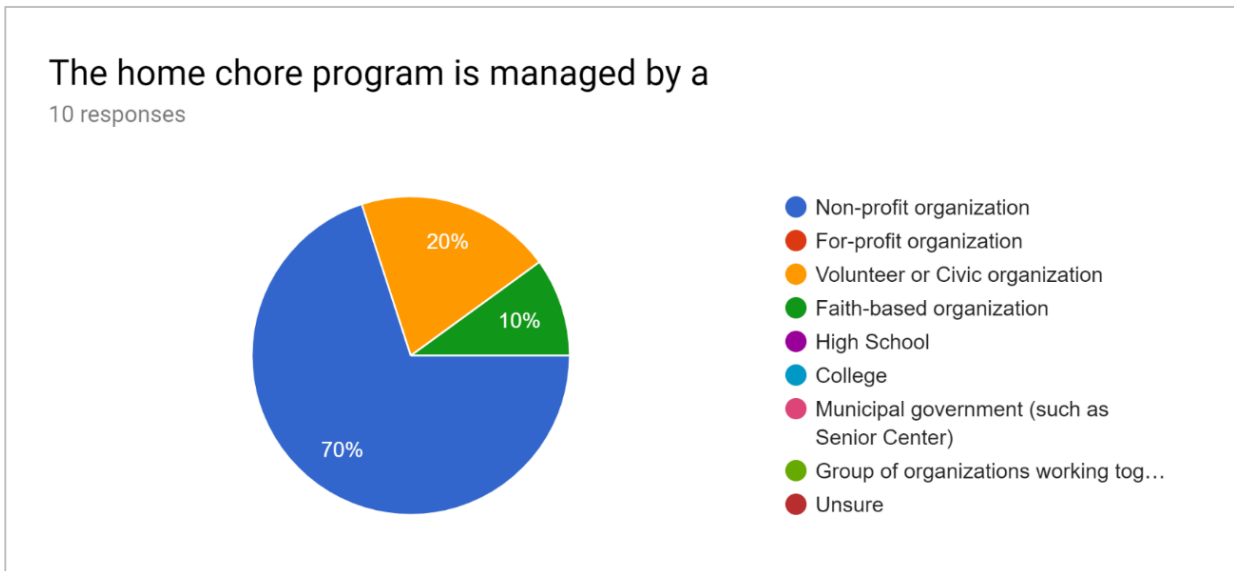
- Live alone (73%)
- Limited transportation (69%)
- Have a physical disability (56%)
- Low income (54%)
- Isolated due to a chronic disease or depression (48%)
- Speakers of other languages (42%)
- Neighborhoods deemed unsafe(19%)
- Live in rural areas (13%)
- Unsure (2%)

*Note:* Respondents were asked to *choose top four whose needs* not being met from list.

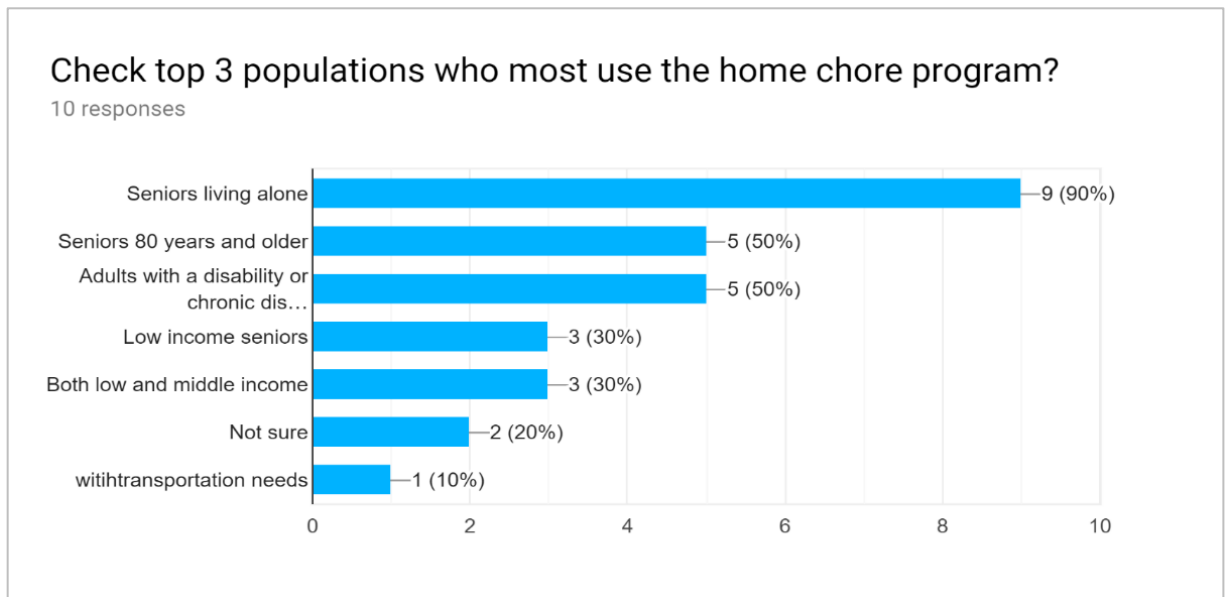
## Managing a Home Chore Program

*Note:* Since the following results are based on a sample size of 10, they should be viewed as a foundation for discussion and future research.

- Most programs are managed by a non-profit organization.



- Older adults living alone most frequent users of a home chore program



### **Three biggest difficulties in managing a program:**

1. Letting older adults know a program is available
2. Funding
3. Finding people to provide the service

What are TOP 3 difficulties in managing a home chore service?

- Letting seniors know the service exists -70%
- Funding - 60%
- Finding people to provide chore services – 60%
- Finding people to manage the program – 30%
- Matching seniors with a chore provider – 20%
- Staffing – 10%
- Reluctance of seniors to ask for help – 10%

### **Most programs serve less than 100 older adults annually.**

- 60% serve under 50 older adults annually.
- 20% serve over 50 to 100 older adults annually.

### **Annual Cost of Running the Home Chore Program:**

- 30% \$5,000 – \$10,000
- 30% \$10,000 and over

### **Most programs are free for older adults (70%).**

Other choices selected: qualify as low income, sliding scale, free to members

### **Most programs have existed five years or less.**

- 40% 2-5 years
- 20% Under a year

### **Most help to older adults is provided by volunteers from the sponsoring organizations.**

- 60% from sponsoring organization
- 30% from faith-based organization
- 20% students
- 20% adults paid a fee by sponsoring organization

**Nearly all volunteers are recruited from within the sponsoring organization.**

Volunteers recruited via:

- 90% within the organization
- 50% local newspapers
- 50% internet, websites, email, social media
- 40% flyers

**Most find out about the home chore program by participation in the sponsoring organization.**

Seniors find out about the program by –

- 80% participation in sponsoring organization
- 60% email, internet
- 50% flyers at public places (senior centers, stores, library)
- 50% local newspaper

**Most older adults apply for the program by telephone.**

- 70% by phone
- 50% by Email
- 50% complete and mail a paper application

**Most organizations vet volunteers with an interview.**

- 80% sponsoring organizations interview and approve volunteers
- 40% require a criminal background check

**Most home chore programs operate year-round.**

- 70% year-round
- 10% each: winter, fall, spring and fall only



## Survey Chart: Home Chore Programs Identified by Town

<b>Town</b>	<b>Chore Service</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>	<b>Provider - Non-Profit</b>
Barrington	Yes	Light Housework/Yardwork	CommuniCare of L.I.F.E. Inc.
Bristol	Yes	Light Housework/Yardwork	CommuniCare of L.I.F.E. Inc.
Burrillville	Yes	Snow removal	Burrillville Police Department
Central Falls	Yes	Yardwork and Snow Removal	Groundwork RI
Charlestown	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Elks HoMRAP, SRIV
Coventry			
Cranston			
Cumberland			
East Greenwich			
East Providence	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	CommuniCare of L.I.F.E. Inc.; The Providence Village; Groundwork RI
Exeter	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Elks HoMRAP, SRIV
Foster			
Glocester			
Hopkinton	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Elks HoMRAP, SRIV
Jamestown			
Johnston			
Lincoln			
Little Compton			
Middletown	Yes	Yardwork	Middletown Senior Center
Narragansett	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Elks HoMRAP, SRIV
Newport			
New Shoreham (Block Island)	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	F.I.S.H.

<b>Town</b>	<b>Chore Service</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>	<b>Provider - Non-Profit</b>
North Kingstown	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Elks HoMRAP, SRIV
North Providence	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	The Providence Village; Groundwork RI
North Smithfield			
Pawtucket	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	City of Pawtucket; The Providence Village; Groundwork RI
Portsmouth			
Providence	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	The Providence Village; Groundwork RI, Central Providence Healthy Aging Network
Richmond	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Elks HoMRAP, SRIV
Scituate			
Smithfield			
South Kingstown	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Elks HoMRAP, SRIV
Tiverton	Yes	Light Housework/Yardwork	CommuniCare of L.I.F.E. Inc.
Warren	Yes	Light Housework/Yardwork	CommuniCare of L.I.F.E. Inc.
Warwick			
Westerly	Yes	Home Maintenance - in and outside	Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Elks HoMRAP, SRIV
West Greenwich			
West Warwick			
Woonsocket			

**This chart will be updated as more programs are identified and developed. (12-2019)**

# Home Chore Services Program Descriptions

(Service Areas, Contacts and Program Summaries)

## 1. Burrillville Snow Shoveling

**Sponsor:** Burrillville Police Department

**Serves:** Burrillville Seniors

**Contact:** Lt. Albert Carlow, [acarlow@burrillville.org](mailto:acarlow@burrillville.org) 401-568-9494 x3

**Website:** [www.burrillville.org/police](http://www.burrillville.org/police)

This program matches high school student volunteers with older adults needing help after snowstorms. Students respond to the older adults' snow removal needs *after* storms are over and it is safe to travel on the roads. Students will shovel paths to the door or oil tank fill, or whatever is needed. Large driveways are not done as the teens are working with a shovel, not plows and snowblowers.

## 2. Block Island F.I.S.H.

**Sponsor:** Block Island Senior Advisory Committee

**Serves:** Residents of Block Island

**Contact:** Gloria Redlich, F.I.S.H. Senior Coordinator  
[seniorcoordinator@new-shoreham.com](mailto:seniorcoordinator@new-shoreham.com) or Town Clerk 401-466-3200

**Website:** <http://www.new-shoreham.com/>

F.I.S.H.(Friends In Service Helping) is a small volunteer group that provides assistance with a variety of tasks and transportation to older, year-round residents of Block Island. It is always in need of volunteers, staff and funding. Block Island older adults face the same variety of needs as older adults elsewhere in the state. Transportation to and from the island are the biggest barrier to services.

## 3. L.I.F.E. Inc.'s CommuniCare Program

**Sponsor:** L.I.F.E. Inc. (Living in Fulfilling Environments, Inc)

**Serves:** Bristol, Warren, Barrington, Tiverton and East Providence

**Contact:** Liz Wiedenhofer, Administrator, L.I.F.E. Inc.  
[lizw@lifeinc.org](mailto:lizw@lifeinc.org) (401) 396 - 8010

**Website:** <http://www.lifeinc.org/>

L.I.F.E. Inc. is an agency dedicated to promoting the goals, strengths and abilities of adults with developmental disabilities. CommuniCare is L.I.F.E. Inc.'s community service program. It facilitates participants' desire to serve their community through volunteering. Participants expressed the specific desire to serve their elderly neighbors, so a volunteer network was established that is ready and willing to provide light housework and landscaping. (See full description in Case Study II)

#### **4. Elks Home Maintenance and Repair Assistance Program (HoMRAP)**

Sponsor: South Kingstown Elks Lodge #1899, Wakefield, RI

**Serves:** South Kingstown and surrounding area

**Contact:** Call 401-789-5400, Ext. 805

**Website:** No website. Mail - 60 Belmont Ave., Wakefield, RI 02879

Elks Home Maintenance and Repair Assistance Program (HoMRAP) is a free community service program of the South Kingstown Elks Lodge #1899, Wakefield, RI. All home maintenance work is completed by volunteers recruited by the Elks to complete a job. Elks membership is not required to volunteer. (See full description in Case Study I)

#### **5. Groundwork Rhode Island**

**Sponsor:** Groundwork Rhode Island

**Serves:** Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls

**Contact:** Amelia Rose, Executive Director  
[arose@groundworkri.org](mailto:arose@groundworkri.org) 401-305-7174

**Website:** <http://groundworkri.org/>

Groundwork Rhode Island is a non-profit, community-based environmental organization dedicated to creating healthier and more resilient urban communities in Rhode Island. One of many programs they offer is a fee-for-service landscaping service called GroundCorp which offers landscape maintenance, snow removal, and other services. It also has a youth summer Green Team that can provide free yardwork and gardening to older adults.

#### **6. Middletown Senior Center**

Sponsor: Middletown

**Serves:** Middletown

**Contact:** Arlene Kaull, Executive Director

[akaull@middletownri.com](mailto:akaull@middletownri.com) 401-849-8823

**Website:** <https://senior-center.middletownri.com/>

The Middletown Senior Center works with students from Salve Regina College interested in volunteering. The Center matches the students with older adults who have requested help; jobs typically involve yardwork.

## 7. Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI

**Sponsor:** Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI

**Serves:** South County and surrounding area

**Contact:** Email from website or call 401-601-5621

**Website:** <http://neighborshelpingneighborsri.org/>

Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI is a non-profit organization that provides a variety of free home maintenance chores and repairs for low-income home owners. It was founded in 2011 by members of St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Charlestown as Work Weekends and became a nonprofit organization as needs expanded. (See full description in Best Practices - Case Study IV.)

## 8. Central Providence Healthy Aging Network (CP-HAN)

**Sponsor:** ONE Neighborhood Builders and Federal Hill House

**Serves:** Central Providence

**Contact:** Laurie Moise, Director of Community Health Integration  
[Moise@onenb.org](mailto:Moise@onenb.org) 401-351-8719

**Website:** <https://oneneighborhoodbuilders.org/>

ONE Neighborhood Builders is a nonprofit community development organization dedicated to revitalizing Providence neighborhoods. It was formerly known as Olneyville Housing Corporation but changed its name to ONE Neighborhood Builders when it merged with Community Works Rhode Island in 2015. ONE Neighborhood Builders along with Federal Hill House provide a membership program (\$5 a year) for older adults called The Central Providence Healthy Aging Network (CP-HAN). This is a new program that provides minor home repair such as: changing light bulbs, moving furniture and unclogging drains.

## 9. The Providence Village

**Sponsor:** The Providence Village

**Serves:** Providence and Pawtucket

**Contact:** Email from website or call 401-441-5240

**Website:** <https://www.providencevillageri.org/>

The Providence Village is a membership organization that provides older adults with a single source of access to many programs and services, including help with home chores and maintenance. Members pay monthly dues, which varies based on the level of membership. Reduced dues are available for those with a financial need. Members of the Providence Village contact the office volunteer coordinators and request help with a home task or chore. This request is circulated by phone or email to volunteers of the Home Help or Tech Support Teams. The volunteer then contacts the member, discusses the task, visits the home if needed, and provides the work. If the task is beyond the capability of the volunteer, they contact the Team Leader or Village Coordinator to find another volunteer, or refer to the Contracting Concierge, who helps the member secure a private contractor from a list recommended by other members. (See full description in Case Study III.)

## 10. Southern Rhode Island Volunteers (SRIV)

**Sponsor:** Southern Rhode Island Volunteers (SRIV)

**Serves:** Southern Rhode Island

**Contact:** Debra Tanner, Executive Director  
[dtanner@southernrivol.org](mailto:dtanner@southernrivol.org) 401-552-7661

**Website:** <https://www.southernrivol.org/>

Southern Rhode Island Volunteers offers a wide variety of services and programs to the community. One of the services it provides to older adults is help with home maintenance such as minor window repairs, changing light bulbs, hanging curtains, fixing leaky faucets, light trash removal, and for the very frail elderly, yardwork and snow removal.

## 11. Youth to Senior Snow Shoveling, Pawtucket

**Sponsor:** City of Pawtucket

**Serves:** Pawtucket

**Contact:** Tom Hodge [thodge@pawtucketri.com](mailto:thodge@pawtucketri.com) 401-728-0500 Ext. 357

**Website:** <http://www.pawtucketri.com/>

The Youth to Senior Snow Shoveling program is a collaboration between the City of Pawtucket and the Pawtucket Public Schools. Youth volunteers donate their time to help the city's elderly residents. Older adults must make a formal request to the city for help from a student. Students interested in volunteering are matched with a senior. Students complete an informal contract agreeing to shovel snow whenever it is deep enough to cover their feet. They must contact the program liaison if they are unable to shovel on a given day. Students are also given a sample script to use when calling the senior to introduce themselves as their snow removal volunteer. Parents of student volunteers also complete a form acknowledging their child's participation and commitment to the program. At the end of the season, there is a celebration honoring the students.

## **12. A General Resource: United Way 2-1-1 in RI**

**Sponsor:** United Way of Rhode Island

**Serves:** Statewide

Contact: 211

Website: <http://www.uwri.org/get-help-2-1-1/>

United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island is a free, confidential service that provides information, referrals, and is available in multiple languages. It connects callers with agencies and trained specialists who offer support and will answer questions on a wide variety of topics. It can connect older adults with volunteers and organizations to help with home maintenance tasks.



# For-Profit Home Maintenance Organizations:

(A listing only, not an endorsement of the organizations.)

## 1. HandyMan MATTERS

A handyman service specializing in small and medium-sized home improvement tasks anywhere from changing a lightbulb, painting, to a bathroom renovation.

**Serves:** All of Rhode Island and surrounding areas.

**Contact:** [Handymanmatters.ri@gmail.com](mailto:Handymanmatters.ri@gmail.com) 401-946-1800

**website:** <https://www.handymanmatters.com/offices/rhode-island/>

## 2. RentSons

Offers a wide variety of tasks including household chores, yardwork, repairs and much more. This Rhode Island based business uses local people to perform chores. Fees based on each job, starting at \$30 an hour per son.

**Best contact is via website:** <https://rentsons.com/>

[rentsons@gmail.com](mailto:rentsons@gmail.com) 844-1937-7667



# Case Studies: Three Different Models of Home Chore Service Programs and Best Practices

I. South Kingstown Elks HoMRAP

II. L.I.F.E. Inc.'s CommuniCare Program

III. The Providence Village

IV. Best Practices — Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI

(Names in case studies changed for confidentiality.)

## Case Study I:

### South Kingstown Elks HoMRAP helps Eloise, age 85

An example of an Elks project to help a senior safely remain in her own home is Eloise, an 85 year old widow living alone in her small cape-cod style house. Due to an undiagnosed neck injury, she spent years with neck pain and an inability to grip objects and raise her arms above her waist. Over time, her house became unkempt and filled with clutter.

Eloise is an independent, college-educated woman. She said she had spent her life solving problems and helping others, but for a long time, she was unable to help herself. After her husband died, she woke up and said, "Who am I? I've been half of somebody for so long, I don't know who I am anymore." She described a feeling of shame for outliving her husband and friends, and wondered, "How do you start talking about shame before it's too late?"

As she was adapting to living alone, she accepted that her fate was to live with the pain and manage the best she could. Since she could not lift anything higher than her waistline, she began placing everything she needed in neat piles throughout the house where she could easily reach them.

Slowly, after years of accumulating "stuff," Eloise realized things were getting beyond her control. At first, she hardly noticed how the stacks had multiplied, forming pathways through her house. The yard was overgrown. The garage was so full she had to park her car in the driveway. She became overwhelmed with shame at the stacks of clutter and could not bring herself to ask for help. She did not want to risk exposing her state of affairs to others. Remembering the feeling of being completely overwhelmed, she said, "I used to dream about it being empty."

A concerned neighbor gave her an application for free help with home maintenance from the South Kingstown Elks club. In addition to Eloise's fear of being exposed, she also couldn't afford the cost of hiring people to bring order to her home and yard. She knew this free help was her opportunity to rectify years of accumulation and get a fresh start. She filled out the short application describing her

needs, annual income and agreeing to let the Elks HoMRAP representatives come assess her property and make necessary repairs.

“I didn’t know angels came in all ages and sizes,” Eloise says when she remembers the day that the manager of the HoMRAP program came to assess her house. “He looked at the house, and I knew he could see it was a fire trap, but he didn’t judge me.” The volunteer team brought in dumpsters and started throwing things out. “Nobody saw how ashamed I was, and how hard it was to see my stuff getting thrown into dumpsters. But lucky for me, the wife of one of the Elks noticed and helped me with the emotional part. She understood how hard it was for me to let go of all the things I’d saved for so long.” Eloise described the volunteers as a cheerful and non-judgmental team who cleaned and organized the house, garage, and yard.

Currently, Eloise spends her days at the South Kingstown Senior Center where she particularly enjoys her poetry class. She has regained the use of her hands and arms after surgery corrected her long-undiagnosed neck injury. After the Elks cleaned and organized her house, she has been determined to keep it tidy. She prioritized her budget and now pays for weekly trash pick-up. Today Eloise says, “Since the Elks put me back together, I’m happy as a clam at high tide!”



## Full Description of Elks HoMRAP Program

Home Maintenance and Repair Assistance Program (HoMRAP) is a free community service program of the South Kingstown Elks Lodge #1899, Wakefield, RI. All work is completed by volunteers through the Elks. The HoMRAP program was started in 2015 with a grant from the Elks National Foundation. The South Kingstown Elks is one of only two lodges nationwide to provide this type of assistance. Its mission is to identify those property owners in need and provide routine maintenance and repair assistance at no cost to the property owner. Assistance includes installing accessibility/safety devices such as wheel chair ramps, minor painting and household repairs, yard work and clean-up. Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI, an experienced Charlestown, RI organization with a similar mission, assisted the Elks with the early stages of organizational development. They meet twice a year to continue their collaboration and share best practices.

As of 2019, the Elks have completed 103 projects, with 43 applications in 2019. Requests from those needing help increase every year. HoMRAP serves North and South Kingstown, Narragansett and Richmond. Funding comes from the Elks National Foundation, private donations and the generosity of local businesses. The Elks meet once a month to review applications for home maintenance. Typically, there are about 20 people ready to volunteer, 10 of whom have specific skills. The bulk of the work is completed between May and October. Volunteers do not need to be a member of the Elks to work on a project. Managing the program requires on-going, almost daily attention to project applications; recruiting, managing and recognizing volunteers; finding funding and donations for specific jobs; and coordinating the project with the home owner and volunteers.

## Case Study II:

### **L.I.F.E. Inc.'s CommuniCare helps Sally, late 60s**

Sally is a widow in her late 60's who lives in a ranch-style house with her golden retriever. She is recuperating from surgery, and although she can walk a little, her general mobility is very limited. She expects a full recovery, but until then, she has not been able to manage her household chores. She needed help keeping the house clean, doing yardwork and walking her dog. She also said it gets lonely now that she can't drive or chat with neighbors while she walks her dog.

Sally found out about L.I.F.E. Inc.'s CommuniCare program through a friend. It connects volunteers with a developmental disability with older adults needing home chore services. Once she applied for help, L.I.F.E. Inc.'s CommuniCare program sent two female volunteers, and their job coach, to meet Sally and describe the program. She appreciated her time spent getting to know the volunteers, "It's a big change having new people in the house, especially when you're unsure of their abilities." On the volunteers' first visit, Sally showed them around the house and described the tasks she needed help with. It gave the volunteers and their job coach an opportunity to get to know Sally, see how the house is organized, and choose which jobs matched each of their skills.

The volunteers help Sally with the jobs she can't do, such as vacuuming the rugs, mopping the floors, and scrubbing the hard-to-reach places in the bathroom. In addition to cleaning, the volunteers give Sally a helping hand so she can safely go outside for some fresh air, which she said has been, "a huge mood elevator" as she was used to spending time in the garden and walking her dog. When asked about her experience with the volunteers, Sally says, "Both of them seem happy to be here and happy to be helping me. They take pride in their work and joke and laugh while they do it." To ensure that each job is done to the standards in which the volunteers were trained, their job coach quietly assesses each task to ensure quality. Besides helping with the housework, Sally says she looks forward to having the volunteers arrive because, "they give me some company and cheer me up."

Sally is one of the first to use the new home chore service provided by CommuniCare. Initially, she was hesitant since she didn't have much experience working with people with a developmental

disability. But once Sally met the volunteers, she no longer had any concerns regarding their ability to provide help and communicate: “They both listen to me carefully and if they don’t understand, they each have their own way of getting their point across.” Besides the help with her household chores, Sally says there has been a completely unexpected benefit to having the volunteers help her, “It’s rewarding, I feel good knowing I am helping somebody who is helping me.”



### **Full Description of L.I.F.E. Inc.’s CommuniCare Home Chore Program**

L.I.F.E. Inc. has created a home chore volunteer program, CommuniCare, with the dual goals of helping older adults in need of assistance with home chores and to provide meaningful work for people with developmental disabilities. The service provides trained volunteers to do light housework and yard maintenance at no cost to the older adult in need. It is a program that serves two underserved populations in the community. Volunteers help with housekeeping chores, trash removal, light pet care and dog walking, watering houseplants, washing windows, yardwork, grocery shopping and errands.

Each volunteer is trained and assessed by a job coach before being sent out on a job. In most cases, and always initially, volunteers will complete their tasks accompanied by the on-site supervision of an experienced job coach employed by the agency. Volunteers and coaches work in two-hour sessions. This is a new program, with a new model of providing services, that has the potential to be replicated by many organizations serving people with a variety of disabilities.

## Case Study III:

### The Providence Village helps Thomas, age 76

Thomas is a 76 year old writer who lives alone and has become increasingly disabled due to diabetes. But it is not in his nature to characterize himself as disabled. He identifies first as a writer, and the fact that he's legally blind and dependent on a walker for mobility are simply conditions he must work around. A snapshot of his life is one of academic success and youthful adventure – a PhD, lectureships at colleges across the country (his last at Brown University), and an impressive list of rock stars he's seen live from coast to coast. So, although Thomas doesn't feel disabled, he is quick to say that without the help of many volunteers from the Providence Village, he would not be thriving, as he describes himself today: "The variety of support they give me is breathtaking."

For example, units in his apartment building were being renovated and Thomas needed to temporarily relocate to a different unit. Without vision and mobility, it was impossible for him to pack and move on his own. The Providence Village volunteers helped him sort and pack all his belongings, move to the temporary apartment, and then unpack and get resettled once he could move back home. Thomas says, "The Providence Village was enormously helpful. When I was able to move back home, they went through every item and piece of paper to help me re-organize my belongings and files. They cleaned and restored order to my life."

Thomas's lifeline is writing, it's what keeps him happy and healthy. To write, he needs a computer designed for people with low vision – a specialized model he could not afford on a fixed income. Living with a chronic disease has strained his finances, but the Providence Village has been there for him. Although the Village is a fee-for-membership organization, they also subsidize membership to those who can't afford a monthly fee. This subsidy has enabled Thomas to reap the benefits of Village membership, which in turn enables him to continue to write. Village volunteers located the type of computer that meets his low-vision needs. Moreover, they set it up for him and a volunteer he calls a "techno-wizard" checks in weekly to be sure the system is working properly. The volunteer set up a system to ensure all files are saved and backed up just in case there's a glitch Thomas can't see to fix. He says, "I don't know how I'd survive if I could not express myself as a writer. It's what keeps me mentally healthy."

The Providence Village volunteers also help Thomas keep his living space orderly by becoming a second pair of eyes for him. They help him sort mail, organize any clutter, and find things he loses. He counts on them to see what he can't see. Thomas says the volunteers keep him organized, connected and writing. In return, it's gratifying for Thomas to know he can help the Village tell its story to the larger community. It's a two-way street of help and support, and Thomas says, "I'm blessed to have them."



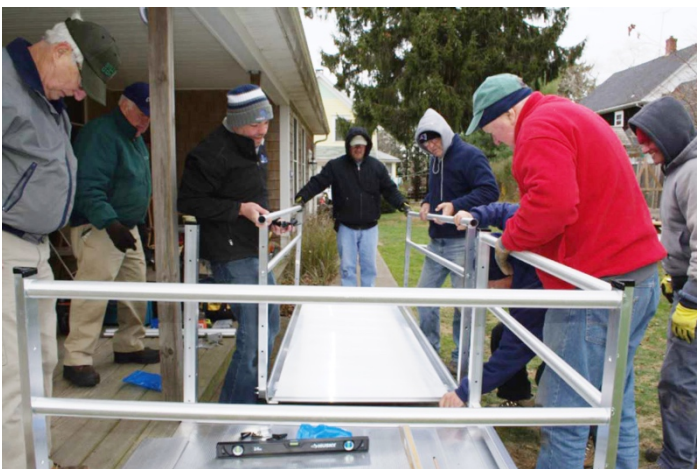
## Full Description of The Providence Village Services

The Providence Village began operations in December 2015, formed by a group of older adults living on the East Side of Providence and neighboring Pawtucket. It is based on the Village Movement, with the first being Beacon Hill Village in Boston. The mission of the Village model is to create ways older adults can age in their community and remain independent for as long as possible.

The Providence Village has a paid Executive Director who coordinates the recruiting, training and support of volunteers as well as the delivery of services and activities for members. When a member's request can't be filled by a volunteer, a volunteer "concierge" arranges for a vetted commercial provider. Management includes a Board of Directors, Advisory Council and collaborations with both local and national community partners. The success of the Village Model is based on volunteers, collaboration and community partnerships. Many members are also volunteers, but about one-third of the volunteers are not members. It is through the skill and generosity of volunteers that the Village can grow and provide the full range of services it offers members.

In addition to help with home chores and maintenance, the Providence Village also provides members with: free transportation provided by volunteer drivers; referrals to vetted help such as contractors and housekeepers; healthcare support, counseling; education; regular calls and visits from neighbors; and a wide and diverse variety of social and educational events.

The Providence Village recently received a grant to expand their model across the state. They are in the process of restructuring as "The Village Common." The Village Common is an umbrella organization which will allow multiple villages within RI to form and thrive. The Providence Village will continue to serve its current area and will continue as a local village within the Village Common. Membership dues are being restructured to make The Village Common affordable to everyone.



## Case Study IV: Best Practices

### Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI

Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI (NHNRI) is the result of a Faith-in-Action program that began in 2011 at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Charlestown, Rhode Island. Two weekends a year, one in spring and one in fall, volunteers from the church repaired homes at no cost to needy homeowners. It soon became apparent that the need in the community was too great for a small number of volunteers to address two weekends a year. It was also apparent that this need was widely unmet. Members of the church and others in the greater community worked together to apply for 501(c)(3) status. Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI received its name and 501(c)(3) status as a non-profit organization in July 2012 to serve low income home owners in South County RI year-round. (St. Andrew still conducts Faith-in-Action Work Weekends twice a year, partnering with NHNRI).

**Culture of Collaboration:** The success of NHNRI is based on their board of directors' culture of collaboration, partnering, sharing and ensuring everyone who contributes is acknowledged and recognized for their work. NHNRI considers St. Andrew Lutheran Church a founding partner. The church donates space for storage of tools, etc. and use of the facility for meetings as NHNRI continues to be a very low-overhead organization without paying any salaries or having its own physical office. It is through the collaboration of generous volunteers, donors and partnerships with community organizations that has enabled NHNRI to remain an all-volunteer organization.

**Partnerships:** NHNRI staff leadership could not accomplish their work without the support of: local businesses that provide donated or reduced-rate supplies to make repairs; contractors and professionals who volunteer or give their skills at reduced-rates; and financial support from towns and businesses. Over the years many individuals and businesses have occasionally partnered with NHNRI. The following are core partners: St. Andrew Lutheran Church, the Washington County Community Development Corporation, South County Habitat for Humanity, Charlestown Chamber of Commerce, WARM Center of Westerly, Thrivent Financial Foundation, Charlestown Community Center, Washington Trust Foundation, Mumford Services and DiRoma Roofing.

**Sharing:** When the Elks Lodge in Wakefield, RI wanted to develop a program to serve their community, NHNRI suggested they apply for a national grant to establish a home repair program and offered to help them write the grant and shared materials they had already developed. It was a way of multiplying themselves. The Elks were successful at obtaining a grant and NHNRI officers worked with the Elks for about a year sharing their journey of organizational development -- process, pitfalls and successes. They shared basic administrative tools such as sample application forms for home repair and how they assessed and selected candidates. They described the importance of: written contracts, legal assistance, donations of materials and skills, and on-going volunteer recruitment. NHNRI enabled the Elks to avoid many of the "learn by doing" mistakes and served as an experienced mentor to the Elks as they faced new challenges. NHNRI and the Elks are both keenly aware that

organizational growth is an on going process so they continue to meet twice a year to share their experiences, discuss how they can meet expanding community needs and support one another's goals.

In their spirit of sharing, NHNRI is currently meeting with an organization in Connecticut to help them develop a home repair program.

**Volunteers:** Since NHNRI is an all-volunteer organization the need for skilled and reliable volunteers is imperative. They are structured as any organization with an Executive Director and Board of Directors with 4 officers to manage the organization. There is no staff. The workload of the leaders is expanding as community needs increase. What could once be accomplished as a part-time volunteer executive director position, now requires a full time level of support. NHNRI also needs volunteers with the time, skills and commitment to serve as project managers to execute projects in the field. Contractors who would be willing to donate even one project year are always needed. The NHNRI Board of Directors is cognizant of overburdening any one volunteer with too much work. To help ease the increasing demands on the current executive director to manage in-coming applications, identify materials and suppliers, and schedule jobs and volunteers, the Board is testing a new system of dividing tasks and restructuring the work flow among several volunteers. Remaining a successful, all-volunteer organization requires vigilance and action from the leaders to prevent the organization from falling into the insidious trap of burning out the most devoted volunteers.

NHNRI has written, clearly defined job descriptions on its website for each volunteer position. It has on-going volunteer recruitment via its website, by word of mouth, and publicizing its work and success. It invites prospective volunteers to one-on-one meetings to determine a mutually beneficial volunteer placement. Volunteers are always needed at all levels. Of particular current need are people skilled in project management who are looking for a leadership position where they can use and build their skills to accomplish meaningful work for individuals in need and the community.

**Recognition:** NHNRI recognizes local businesses and partners by prominently listing them on their website. The volunteer crafts persons and businesses contributing to a project are recognized in NHNRI's marketing and public relations materials whenever possible as way to thank them and to encourage the community to send business their way. Personal thank you letters are also sent to all contributors. Individual NHNRI volunteers are recognized by thank you notes, T-shirts, and volunteer appreciation events.



## More Best Practices:

### Recruiting Volunteers

- **Early recruitment** - The South Kingstown Elks HoMRAP program leaders recruit volunteers at each new member initiation. Early recruitment establishes volunteering as an essential and valued contribution of all Elks members. The Elks also welcome volunteers from outside Elks membership.
- **Show success** - All the organizations in the case studies have different methods of telling their unique and inspiring stories of volunteering and accomplishments. These stories give prospective volunteers a snapshot of how the organization operates and what they can expect from volunteering. Creating these stories can be as inexpensive as creating an album of newspaper stories and project photos, to posting volunteer-made videos from a project on social media, or by adding professionally made clips from local news coverage to a website.
- **Written job descriptions** - Recruit volunteers with written, clearly defined volunteer job descriptions. A job description sets the tone for the expectations and value the organization places on volunteers. It enables a volunteer to make choices based on facts rather than a general need for help. Written job descriptions and agreements to serve are especially important with younger volunteers and their parents. For example, the Pawtucket snow shoveling program has each student sign an agreement to perform a specific service, and each parent gives written permission for the student to perform that service as a volunteer.
- **Volunteer management and recognition** - Provide volunteers with a leader, someone they can contact for schedule changes, problems and to share successes. Recognizing individual volunteers with thank you notes, a phone call, publicly at meetings, and at all volunteer events is important for volunteer satisfaction and retention.
- **Local Businesses** - The importance of giving public recognition to the contributions of local businesses and skilled professionals can't be overstated. Promoting local partners and contributors is an important way non-profit organizations can "give back" to their donors.

### Systems

- **Clear protocols** - An example of a system of service with clear protocols is the one developed by the Providence Village. They have a clearly delineated system of how a member makes a request for help, followed by the precise flow from request to the specific volunteer staff members who will fulfill that request. The system uses a combination of telephone, email, internet and personal interview to complete the job.
- **Flexibility** - Neighbors Helping Neighbors RI is witnessing the need to keep an organizational system flexible as needs change. As their program has expanded, the workload on volunteers has expanded. They are addressing this problem by experimenting with a restructuring of volunteer jobs to ease the load on any one volunteer.

## Needs/gaps based on interviews with service providers and older adults

**Increasing needs** - Requests for wheelchair ramps are increasing – The Elks HoMRAP program is having difficulty keeping up with requests for ramps. For example, it takes about four hours and five volunteers to install a wheelchair ramp. Without community donations of reduced-cost ramps and volunteer labor, the cost to an older adult would be about \$3,500 for each ramp.

**Fixed income** - Many widows on social security are requesting help with home chores – especially wheelchair ramps.

**Succession planning** - As experienced volunteers age, several organizations are having difficulty finding new volunteers to take on the time-consuming jobs of managing volunteer projects. There is a growing need for volunteers with project management and organizational development skills to take on leadership positions within the organization.

**Liability and reliability of students** – A school volunteer leader said a program for students to help older adults with home chores was derailed in her town by fears of legal issues. A senior center leader said it's difficult for older adults to rely on student volunteers because their availability frequently changes and is limited to week-ends and after school.

**Reluctance to ask for help** – Several organizations describe the reluctance of many older adults to ask for help. They've lived a life with pride in their independence, so they avoid asking for help until an accident occurs.

**Pet care** – Several older adults mentioned a need to have help with pet care – feeding, cleaning up, and walking dogs.

**Sorting mail and paying bills** – Older adults had concerns about sorting important vs junk mail and paying bills on time. They worried about future confusion regarding understanding business mail and paying their bills.

**Decluttering** – Many older adults expressed a need for help in sorting through their things, deciding what to keep or throw out, and how to dispose of large items.

**Widowers needs** - Male older adults living alone expressed a lack of knowledge regarding household chores such as cleaning, cooking and home safety. Specifically: slippery floors in kitchen and bathroom, stove fires and burns, if food spoiled or safe to eat, shopping, and preparing meals. Several men said lunch at the senior center was their main source of nutritious food and social interaction. They described a loss of interest in doing anything since their wives passed away.

**Senior Centers as Sources of Prevention:** Many older adults felt that their senior center played an essential role in helping them to age in their own homes. Nearly all expressed fears of isolation and depression they were able to overcome because their senior center provided them with

transportation, friendship, exercise, food, resources, help with social services, mental stimulation and emotional support. One woman said the senior center was “her lifeline” and another said her center was “just like gold.” As senior center staff have more access to home chore programs, they can help older adults address home maintenance issues before they become costly or an accident occurs requiring hospitalization.

## Conclusion

### Age-Friendly Communities Need Age-Friendly Homes

This study provides a snapshot of the home chore services available to older adults in Rhode Island. Key findings of the research are: Rhode Island needs more home chore service programs, awareness of existing programs is low, and some of the most vulnerable populations have the most unmet needs.

As the aging population increases, more people are growing old in their homes. In the past, aging residents often had family, friends and neighbors who kept a watchful eye on them. But a variety of social changes have resulted in many older adults aging without the benefit of regular visits from a caring individual. Based on findings of this research, the role of a “watchful eye” on an aging population may need to come from community-based organizations. A few volunteer programs are fulfilling this role with a combination of funding coming from local town budgets, grants and donations. But funding and volunteer labor have not been able to keep up with the ever-increasing needs of older adults on fixed incomes attempting to maintain their homes – often alone and with a disability.

This research can be useful as a starting point for communities to assess the home maintenance needs of their aging residents and develop a plan to identify and support those who may be living in deteriorating and unsafe conditions. A local analysis of establishing and funding home chore and maintenance programs vs the costs of emergency services, medical care, and lower real estate values may provide justification for adding home chore service programs to a town’s budget.

As we embrace the concept of creating age-friendly communities, we need to remember it’s a two-sided equation: individual homes need to be age-friendly to genuinely create an age-friendly community. The programs described in this report can serve as a springboard for creating, improving and expanding home chore programs in Rhode Island.



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