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25

VOLUNTEER IMPACT
REPORT

Year in Review



Through our programs administered across the state, we have been able to help:

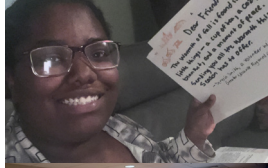
90,237 people receive free, non-biased counseling to help navigate their Medicare health insurance benefits.



56,076 people participate in a variety of health, social, nutritional, recreational and educational programs at their local senior center.



31,618 people receive a free, nutritious meal delivered to their home or served at a local congregational meal site.



2,073 people benefit from a ride to essential appointments in their local community.



Our regional partners have expanded the ability to provide programs and services through special projects in their areas. They have been able to help:

3,941 people reduce their risk of falls through an evidence-based strength, balance, and fitness program.



1,837 people in long-term care and assisted living facilities receive handwritten letters and cards that lifted spirits and brought smiles to faces.



1,617 people unwrap a gift around the holidays to help combat loneliness and isolation.



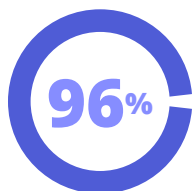
Volunteers are the key to our success!

Volunteers are the driving force behind our programs. Without the commitment and devotion of our volunteers to their local communities, we would not be able to serve nearly as many people. We are extremely blessed and grateful that every year new volunteers join our programs to continue to make a positive impact on the lives of older adults across Tennessee.

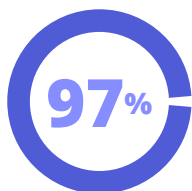
Year	Older adults served	Volunteers	Meals provided	Trips provided	Medicare Assistance Applications
2024	219,877	13,100	3.5 million	35,156	5,567
2023	207,528	11,989	3.5 million	35,576	5,327
2022	207,247	10,070	3.4 million	23,904	4,635
2021	228,305	9,183	3.7 million	22,567	4,107
2020	204,626	7,423	3.3 million	19,413	1,565

This year, volunteers from across the state participated in a new initiative to gather feedback on their experience. We distributed a volunteer satisfaction survey to our six statewide programs and received valuable input on the strengths of our programs and areas we can work to improve on.

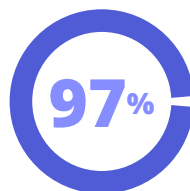
Overall, volunteers are satisfied with their service, feel that they are making a positive impact and plan to continue their service in 2025.



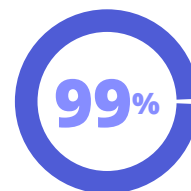
feel like a valued member of the volunteer team.



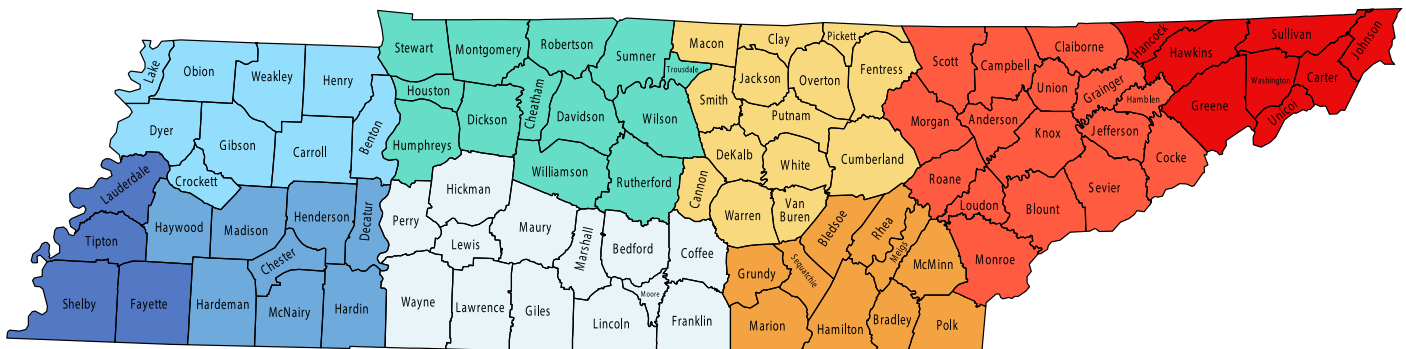
are satisfied with their volunteer experience.



feel they are making a positive impact on the people they serve.



will continue volunteer service in 2025.



ACMS AAAD

160 N. Main 3rd Floor
Memphis, TN 38103
901-222-4150



First Tennessee AAAD

3211 North Roan Street
Johnson City, TN 37601-1213
423-928-3258



Southwest Tennessee AAAD

102 East College Street
Jackson, TN 38301-6202
731-668-6413



East Tennessee AAAD

9111 Cross Park Drive, Suite D100
Knoxville, TN 37923-4517
865-251-4897



Northwest Tennessee AAAD

124 Weldon Drive
Martin, TN 38237-1308
731-587-4213



Southeast Tennessee AAAD

1000 Riverfront Parkway
Chattanooga, TN 37402-2103
423-266-5781



Greater Nashville AAAD

44 Vantage Way, Suite 450
Nashville, TN 37228
615-862-8828



Upper Cumberland AAAD

1104 England Drive
Cookeville, TN 38501
931-432-4111



South Central Tennessee AAAD

101 Sam Watkins Boulevard
Mount Pleasant, TN 38474-4024
931-379-2929



Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for your selfless commitment to serving your community. The Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging does incredibly important work to ensure every Tennessean can thrive in each season of their life. Their mission is possible thanks to those who selflessly give of themselves to benefit their neighbors.

My initiative, Tennessee Serves, was founded on the belief that we can serve our state by serving our community, by serving just one person at a time. This report exemplifies how each small act of service can lead to huge results.

Over the last six years, Tennessee Serves has been proud to partner with DDA to care for older adults and individuals with disabilities across our state. We were grateful to partner with DDA in 2024 through hosting service projects for young students at senior centers across the state, honoring a group of disabled Tennesseans at Christmas at the Capitol, welcoming Tennessee seniors into the Tennessee Residence for a Christmas celebration, and more.

Through this report, we see the tremendous growth of not only volunteerism, but the impact DDA's programs are having on the Tennesseans they serve. I hope this reminder of the power of serving others will be an encouragement to you, as it has been to me.

You have made a tremendous difference in the lives of those around you. Because of your efforts, thousands of Tennesseans have felt seen and not forgotten.

Thank you for choosing to serve your community in 2024. I am confident that your generosity will have a ripple effect and create a long-lasting impact on our state.

Bill and I are honored to serve Tennessee alongside each of you, and we look forward to watching the continued growth of our state's volunteer spirit in the year ahead of us.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a thin horizontal line.

First Lady Maria Lee



Dear Volunteer,

Since its inception, Tennessee and its residents have embodied a spirit of service, earning the well-deserved title of the Volunteer State. Each April, as we recognize National Volunteer Month, I am reminded of the incredible impact that our volunteers have on our communities, especially among our older adult population.

This is my first year as Commissioner of our Aging Division, and I've eagerly anticipated the release of this year's Volunteer Impact Report. This report showcases the immense impact volunteers have on the lives of older Tennesseans. I have the honor of sharing this report with stakeholders, lawmakers, and community leaders, all of which are consistently inspired by the dedication and achievements of our volunteers.

Whether you are delivering meals, providing transportation to daily activities such as medical appointments or grocery stores, or offering guidance to help older Tennesseans navigate Medicare, your contributions make a meaningful impact.

Thank you for being an exemplary citizen and volunteer for Tennessee. You embody the very best of our state and way of life. I sincerely appreciate all that you do for the populations we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Turner".

Brad Turner
Executive Director

Senior Volunteer Transportation Network (SVTN) Volunteer Impact

Program Background

Senior Volunteer Transportation Network (SVTN) is a network of volunteer-assisted transportation programs across Tennessee. These programs provide safe, reliable, affordable, door-through-door transportation for older adults to essential appointments. Programs are membership based, and there is a minimal fee per ride. Prices vary by region.

Program Successes

While a small number of programs have stopped service due to funding this year, the programs that have continued providing this vital service are thriving. The rides are provided by staff and well-screened, trusted volunteers who give a sense of freedom and dignity back to people over 60 who cannot drive. Strong relationships are built between riders and drivers with the result that many volunteers will go above and beyond to help riders with needs outside of providing transportation. The volunteer driver may be the only person the rider sees or has communication with and is a great source of social engagement. This program provides more than just a ride to the doctor, grocery store, salon, or pharmacy, it is a lifeline to keep older adults independent and active in their community.

How to Volunteer

Our volunteer drivers do more than just drive, they are a listening ear, a hand to hold, a smile when someone is down, and a friendly face. Volunteers are literally the driving force behind SVTN. Without our volunteers, we would not have been able to assist as many older adults. Volunteers are screened, background checked and trained prior to taking their first trip. A volunteer driver must meet the following requirements:

- have a working vehicle
- be at least 21 years old (some programs allow 18+)
- be able to pass a background check
- have a valid driver license and insurance

For more information please visit:

<https://www.tn.gov/disability-and-aging>.

Program Statistics

Number of older adults served

2,073

Number of trips provided

35,156

Number of miles driven

593,630

Number of programs reporting

15

Number of volunteers

617

Number of volunteer hours

33,944

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Volunteer Impact

Program Background

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program provides Tennesseans an opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people living in over 700 long-term care facilities statewide. Volunteer Ombudsman Representatives (VORs) are an essential part of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman team, working closely with district ombudsman staff to advocate for long-term care residents' rights. One of the primary ways VORs serve residents is by establishing a regular ombudsman presence in their homes, getting to know them and their individual preferences, and modeling good person-centered practices. They also support district ombudsman staff by resolving resident complaints and helping residents to expect excellence in their care.

Program Successes

Long-term care ombudsmen know that having a regular facility presence means residents have better access to desperately needed advocacy services, and VORs play a large role in increasing the number of visits made and lives touched. As the program rebounds from the significant challenges faced over the last few years by long-term care residents, dedicated VORs maintain their passion for advocacy and recognize the difference they make:

"The residents feel more confident in their state of being when they know someone is advocating for them." - Volunteer

"I see the changes we have made over time still being implemented in our facilities." - Volunteer

"It's important to let residents know that someone cares about their well-being" - Volunteer

How to Volunteer

We encourage potential volunteers to read the VOR job description that is available for review on the DDA website at <https://www.tn.gov/disability-and-aging>. Initial VOR certification training is 36 hours and includes a mix of classroom, self-study, and field training. Trainings are conducted on an as-needed basis at the district level. All prospective volunteers are subject to a background check and screening for conflicts of interest.

To learn more about, and start, the process of becoming a VOR, please contact the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman at ombudsman.notification@tn.gov.

Program Statistics

Number of volunteers

62

Number of volunteer hours

1,708

Number of facility
visits by volunteers

1,153

Number of resident council
participation activities

26

Nutrition Program Volunteer Impact

Program Background

The DDA Nutrition program provides meals, socialization, nutrition education, and nutrition counseling to Tennesseans age 60 and over. The intent of the senior nutrition program is to reduce food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition; enhance socialization; and promote the health and well-being of older Tennesseans.

These services are provided in over 150 congregate settings (such as senior centers, community centers, or senior housing), as well as home-delivered meals to older adults in all 95 Tennessee counties. Good nutrition is critical to supporting independent and healthy aging. Many barriers can keep older adults from maintaining good nutrition, including lack of financial resources, no transportation or poor transportation options, limited mobility, declining physical and mental health, and social isolation.

Program Successes

The DDA Nutrition program continues to serve over 3 million meals annually. This is thanks to the amazing network of volunteers, their continued support of the program, and the older adults in their communities. Without the support of the community volunteers, programs like this would not have the impact that it does on older Tennesseans.

In 2024, the DDA Nutrition program partnered with local farmers in Tennessee to pilot the Senior Community Food Pilot (SCFP). This initiative has made a great impact on older adults by providing them with fresh produce they may not otherwise have. The collaboration with local farmers and senior centers is invaluable to the success of this pilot program, and we hope to see this relationship continue in the future.

"Makes me feel like I am contributing something to help people. I had family members that had received home-delivered meals, and it meant a lot to them." – East TN Volunteer

"All of the clients I've met are so appreciative. They also enjoyed chatting for a minute. The interaction is positive for me and for them." – Middle TN Volunteer

"It is so much more than just the food. Checking in on our senior citizens for health checks and keeping the morale up is just as important." – West TN Volunteer

How to Volunteer

Many volunteer opportunities are available to work with both congregate meal sites and our home delivered meal programs in every county statewide.

- 97% of volunteers feel their volunteer service is making a positive impact on the people they serve.
- 97% of volunteers feel valued as a member of the volunteer team.
- 99% of volunteers intend to continue their volunteer service throughout 2025.

For more information, please visit <https://www.tn.gov/disability-and-aging>.

Program Statistics

Number of older adults served

31,618

Number of meals served

3.5M

Number of volunteers

5,895

Number of volunteer hours

247,413

Tennessee Public Guardianship for the Elderly Volunteer Impact

Program Background

The Tennessee Public Guardianship for the Elderly Program ensures the health and welfare of some of the state's most vulnerable residents by serving as the court-appointed guardian for individuals age 60 and over who, due to physical or mental limitations, are unable to make personal decisions regarding their health and financial resources.

Program Successes

- While the number of volunteers decreased by a small margin, the number of visits remained the same in 2024.
- The number of volunteer hours increased by 38% in 2024.
- 100% of volunteers feel their volunteer service is making a positive impact on the people they serve.
- 100% of volunteers feel valued as a member of the volunteer team.
- 100% of volunteers intend to continue volunteer service throughout 2025.

What do our volunteers in the Tennessee Public Guardianship for the Elderly Program say?

"Everyone needs someone to care about and listen to them. It has been so rewarding to be able to visit my client and see how much our time together means to her and how it has benefited her."

- Karen Hubbard, Volunteer UCDD

"The program allows me to visit some lovely ladies and listen to their stories and reminisce with them. I enjoy being able to check in on them and visit with them. They are happy to see me even if they are having a bad day. I hope they enjoy it as much as I do."

- Ginger Clouse, Volunteer UCDD

Volunteer training at GNRC



How to volunteer

A volunteer with the Public Guardian Program must be 18 years or older, have a valid driver license, pass a background screening, and demonstrate honesty, integrity, compassion, and caring for the elderly.

For more information, please visit our website <https://www.tn.gov/disability-and-aging>.

Program Statistics

Number of older adults served

189

Number of visits conducted

777

Number of volunteers

73

Number of volunteer hours

1,537

Tennessee State Health Insurance Assistance Program (TN SHIP) Volunteer Impact

Program Background

The Tennessee State Health Insurance Assistance Program (TN SHIP) is a federally funded program that provides free and unbiased counseling and assistance to Tennessee's Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers. TN SHIP does not promote any insurance agency, and it maintains confidentiality with all clients. Whether you are new to Medicare or a seasoned beneficiary, trained SHIP counselors can assist you with any and all of your Medicare needs.

Program Successes

This year, TN SHIP volunteers provided services to Medicare beneficiaries through virtual and in-person counseling, application assistance, and at outreach events across the state. Even though our program lost volunteers this year, we saw an increase of 7% in total beneficiary contacts made by volunteers with a total of 25,488 contact hours spent assisting Medicare beneficiaries. We saw a 4.21% increase in the number of Medicare beneficiaries that received assistance with the costs associated to their health care. Here are some quotes from our active volunteers:

"Information is power. The better-informed people are the more empowered they are to make the best choices for themselves and loved ones."

"Many people rely on those that are well-versed in this field. Without guidance, many people would be overwhelmed while trying to navigate the Medicare world."

"In my line of work, I have seen firsthand how not knowing how to navigate Medicare makes receiving care more difficult. SHIP helps beneficiaries really think through what the options are so they can make an informed decision on what will work best for them."

How to Volunteer

To become a TN SHIP Volunteer, you must:

- complete the TN SHIP volunteer application.
- attend training with your regional SHIP staff.
- contribute a minimum of 8 hours monthly to the program.

For more information, please contact dda.ship@tn.gov or [1-877-801-0044](tel:1-877-801-0044) or visit our website <https://www.tn.gov/disability-and-aging>.

Program Statistics

Number of Medicare beneficiaries served

90,237

Number of Medicare low income assistance applications submitted:

5,567

Number of Medicare beneficiaries assisted with enrollment into health insurance coverage

88,767

Number of volunteers

351

Number of volunteer hours

32,963

Senior Center Volunteer Impact

Program Background

Tennessee has 197 senior centers that offer a variety of programs for adults 60 and older. Senior centers are a central location in all 95 counties that focus on providing programs and services for older individuals in five main categories: health (including mental health, social, nutritional, educational, and recreational). Staff and volunteers work extremely hard to make the center a welcoming place for everyone and assist with unmet needs as best they can.

Program Successes

Through partnership with First Lady Maria Lee's office, three senior centers hosted kick-off events for her Kid's Serve Summer Challenge! Older adults and youth joined together in gardening, arts and crafts, exercise, and more for incredible intergenerational events.

After the devastating flooding from Hurricane Helene in Northeast Tennessee, centers from all over the state sent food, water, clothing and other essentials to help not only their fellow senior center directors and members but the community as a whole.

How to Volunteer

There are countless ways senior centers can utilize volunteers, ranging from helping at the front desk, becoming a board member, leading classes/activities, assisting with fundraising and special events, to meal preparation and much more. With at least one location in all 95 counties, you would not have to travel far to give back to your community and serve older adults.

"This is my home away from home and I want seniors who come into the center to feel welcomed and valued."

"It gives me the opportunity to be with every member! I want them to have fun, feel loved, make new friends, and feel special!"

"The center is a happy and healthy hub of activity for people. It provides a terrific environment for making friends and orientating to a new community for recent residents."

Each center has its own volunteer needs, so we encourage you to reach out to the senior center in your area. For more information on finding your local senior center please visit our website:

<https://www.tn.gov/disability-and-aging>.

Program Statistics

Number of older adult participants at senior centers

56,076

Number of older adults who participated in health screening

2,925

Number of older adults who attended educational events

6,146

Number of older adults who participated in evidence-based exercise programs

4,237

Number of older adults who participated in recreation activities

18,032

Number of older adults who were reached through telephone reassurance and visits

4,626

Number of older adults reached through physical fitness and exercise

4,123

Number of volunteers

3,229

Number of volunteer hours

134,301

Special Projects

GNRC Letter Writing Campaign Impact

Program Background

The GNRC Letter Writing Campaign started in April 2020 to increase social connectedness to older adults in the Middle Tennessee area. Since the program's inception, 107,284 letters have been sent to older adults and people with disabilities in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Countless messages have been received about how this small token has made someone's day and the kindness shown has put smiles on everyone's faces.

Program Successes

This campaign has been able to utilize individuals, groups, and corporate teams to continue to expand its impact, and we continue to get feedback of appreciation from residents and service coordinators at nursing homes, as well as volunteers who enjoy the experience to do good in a very simple way.

"Words can never express how much hope the letters have provided to our residents. The residents are really inspired when they receive cards from the volunteers!" – Ava

"We all love to get the wonderful notes of kindness and thinking of you. And we really, really do appreciate the effort that was put into providing these cards to our residents!" – Donna

"I enjoy expressing my creativity through drawing, coloring, and writing letters. I enjoy being able to bring a bit of joy to individuals, while it also benefits me by helping me de-stress. I love that this opportunity brings both of us positivity." – Jaquelin (volunteer)

How to Volunteer

The GNRC Letter Writing Campaign is done year-round, and letters are sent monthly. Individuals, civic groups, schools, and corporates are all welcome to be a part of this impactful regionwide program.

For more information, please contact Rebecca Nofi at rnofi@gnrc.org or **615-891-5876** or visit www.gnrc.org/volunteer.

Program Statistics

Number of older adults served

1,837

Number of letters sent

19,016

Number of letters sent since the
start of the campaign in April 2020

107,284

Number of volunteers

1,921

Number of volunteer hours

7,545

Santas for Seniors Impact

Program Background

Santas for Seniors is an initiative designed to bring holiday cheer to homebound seniors who may otherwise experience isolation during the festive season. The program began in 2016 with the goal of providing seniors, particularly those who are unable to leave their homes, with thoughtful gifts and a sense of connection to their community.

Each year volunteers from the community donate a variety of gifts, ranging from personal items to practical necessities. These gifts are then organized and distributed by dedicated volunteers and staff members. Volunteers hand-deliver these gifts directly to the seniors' homes, ensuring that the recipients not only receive presents but also can engage with someone in person.

Over the years, Santas for Seniors has grown, building a network of compassionate volunteers and donors who continue to support the program's growth and impact. The success of this program directly contributed to the strong volunteer and community support.

Program Successes

Since its inception in 2016, Santas for Seniors has experienced remarkable success in making a positive impact on the lives of homebound seniors. Feedback from seniors and their families reflects the profound emotional impact of the program. Volunteers have also shared their experiences of the joy they feel in bringing smiles to the faces of those they serve, reinforcing the human connection at the heart of the program.

The program has cultivated a spirit of giving within the community, not only through individual volunteers but also through partnerships with local businesses, schools, and organizations. These partnerships help ensure the program's sustainability and growth, creating a ripple effect of goodwill.

How to Volunteer

To volunteer, please contact the Southeast Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability at **1-866-836-6678** or visit their website at **www.setaad.org**.

Program Statistics

Number of older adults served

1,469

Number of Santa Bags donated

1,469

Number of volunteers

1,000

Number of volunteer hours

2,203.5

Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) Volunteer Impact

Program Background

Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) is an evidence-based fall prevention program that focuses on strength, balance, and fitness with a goal of reducing falls for class participants.

Program Successes

Despite the conclusion of funding, we have continued to see growth in the program due to sustainability measures put in place and new leadership joining the SAIL team. The University of Tennessee Medical Center has joined the program as the new statewide coordinating agency. Vanderbilt Medical Center has also become a valuable partner for collecting and analyzing program data. These two new partners, combined with the foundation set up through the Knox County Health Department and the East Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability, will allow SAIL to continue its mission to prevent falls in older adults for many years to come.

How to volunteer

Volunteers in Tennessee must meet three requirements to become a Certified SAIL Leader:

- be CPR certified.
- have a current fitness certification or equivalent degree.
- agree to teach class 2-3 days a week (which can be year-round or in 12-week sessions or substitute as needed for an already established SAIL class).

For more information, please contact Debi Tuggle at Dtuggle@utmck.edu or **865-300-3672**.

Program Statistics

Number of older adults served

3,941

Number of classes conducted

2,680

Locations hosting classes

31

Number of volunteers

50

Number of volunteer hours

5,454



Volunteer Impact

Year	Older Adults Served	Volunteers	Volunteer Hours
2024	219,877	13,198	467,069
2023	207,528	11,989	532,505
2022	207,247	10,070	452,899
2021	228,305	9,183	372,733
2020	204,626	7,423	269,435

