

2023 Annual Report



North Fork Senior Connections

Finding Solutions to Help Seniors Age in Place

P.O. Box 1738 Paonia, CO 81428



To the North Fork Senior Connections community —



A recent documentary titled “Live To 100” explores five small communities scattered across the globe, each with an unusually high concentration of people who live long and productive lives, sometimes surpassing the one-hundred-year mark while remaining in remarkably good health. Many of the factors contributing to this longevity involve community and social connection, emphasizing the idea that a network of mutual support, within and across generations, is a key component to happiness, gratitude, and living with a sense of purpose.

North Fork Senior Connections is entering its fifth year of operations as an independent non-profit, organizing volunteers to support older adults throughout the North Fork Valley. In this Annual Report, you will read about everything we have accomplished this past year. It’s worth taking the opportunity to step back and ask: “Are we fulfilling our mission?” We hope this report will answer that question in the affirmative.

As 2023 began, Director Medeina Ryan suggested we tackle the problem of transportation in the Valley, since the absence of a dedicated bus or taxi service made rides to doctor’s appointments or shopping trips an obstacle. Board Vice-Chair, Bonnie Eisenberg, located an automated system that allows us to schedule “Neighborly Rides” for our members as well as tracking volunteer hours. On another front, with donor funding, local community sponsorship, and weekly volunteer-managed deliveries, we were able to expand our mini-CSA from twenty to thirty households throughout the growing season, delivering local farm-fresh food to seniors in need for thirty weeks, addressing the problems of food insecurity and social isolation.

Add to these initiatives a regular schedule of classes, presentations, book clubs, sewing circles, friendly visits, and potluck lunches, among other activities, and it becomes apparent that North Fork Senior Connections is making a difference and needs to continue — but we cannot succeed without your help. We need to extend our mission more fully to the aging adults of our Valley. Like the proverbial journey of a thousand miles, it is good to remember that, whatever path we are on, the journey begins with a single step. We are better off taking that step together than doing it alone. The “connections” we reference in our name reach not just between seniors, but across all North Fork Valley communities.

Best wishes for even better connections,

Bruce Woodside,
NFSC Chairman of the Board

2023 Volunteer Activities and Events

Our accomplishments this year reflect our goal to expand our outreach to the entire North Fork Valley and the leadership of our dedicated staff, Medina Ryan and Laura Lee Yates. Although NFSC began in Paonia, we have successfully expanded into Crawford and Hotchkiss

NFSC helped host the first **Valley Volunteer Resource** event at **Crawford Town Hall** in September of 2022. The event was piloted by Medina Ryan in partnership with Region10 and Crawford leaders Mayor Wanda Gofforth and Town Clerk Cally Gallegos and is set to recur in the fall of 2024.

“The event was wonderful. As a newcomer to the area, I was amazed by all the resources we have available to us and the incredible network of agencies.”

Holly Rainier, Crawford Volunteer Leader and President of the Crawford Friends of the Library

Service Saturday, our keynote activity, has provided crews of volunteers who, every spring and autumn, help elder households prepare their homes for the upcoming season. It has now grown into **“Days of Service,”** with the amazing kids from **Paonia Experiential Leadership Academy (PELA)** providing youthful enthusiasm and young muscles. This past spring the children of volunteer leaders raked leaves, making it a multi-generational endeavor to help older adults remain in their homes as long as possible.



Amazing volunteer leader John Valentine, Master Gardener and tech whiz, provided wonderful gardening seminars and a series of classes on digital image, as well as formatting our monthly newsletters.

Gifted facilitator Yuri Chicovsky continues to lead a memoir group each Wednesday at the Paonia Senior Center. **“Write Your Life—Memoir for Seniors”** inspires elders from all three communities to recall the events and feelings that make their journeys unique, preserving the experiences for future generations.

A very successful **“Lavender & Lasagna” Kids Pasta Project** fundraising dinner at Lamborn Mountain Farmstead was held on July 10, 2023. A record crowd enjoyed scrumptious food served by adorable youngsters in a glorious setting, with entertainment by Free Range Comedy.

Volunteer presenter Todd Weber shared his deep knowledge, vintage photos, and action videos on June 12, transporting his audience at the Paonia Senior Center to the Grand Canyon throughout recorded history.



Thirty senior households-in-need throughout the North Fork Valley looked forward to weekly visits from six regular drivers spelled by willing substitutes. This vital project, implemented by volunteer leaders, brings delicious produce from the Living Farm each Friday for thirty weeks. The volunteers gain nearly as much satisfaction from the project as the recipient. One driver said: *“We get to have conversations with the people we deliver to ... Many of these recipients have lived their entire lives in this area and are happy to talk about past times and how things have changed and how that has affected them... It is not an experience I would want to give up!”*

“It makes me cry—I feel like I won the lottery! Bless you all and thank you so much.”

-CSA for Seniors recipient



Volunteer Activities and Events continued

Our **Snow Buddies** initiative helped eight elders through the efforts of six volunteers who responded to each significant snowstorm, shoveling to ensure the seniors' properties were safer and easier to traverse.

Professional fabric artist Lynn Mattingly provided all the materials needed for fellow elders to craft garden flags in celebration of spring.

A dedicated group of walkers, led by Laura Lee, continues to meet every Wednesday morning on the newly-improved trail at the Paonia River Park.

NFEMS and NFSC partnered in April to host the first annual **Health and Wellness Fair**. Drawing over 200 Valley residents, the event provided valuable sessions, training and networking, with over 30 local organizations in attendance and regional and local sponsors including NFEMS, Delta Health/West Elk Clinic, Region 10, NFSC, the Ambulance Auxiliary, and All Points Transit. The event is set to recur in April of 2024.

"I found out about things going on I wouldn't have known about. There was a community cohesiveness and investment in our mutual outcomes and well-being. I was happy to be a part of it and am already looking forward to the next one."

Ronna Webb, NFSC volunteer

Elders on snowshoes? Director Medeira Ryan spearheaded an adventure in the mountains outside Crawford, leading both beginning and experienced seniors on an invigorating trek through the winter landscape.

Here & Now Meditation is gently led by Meg O'Shaughnessy on Thursday mornings at the Paonia Senior Center.

Skilled volunteer leader Carolyn Ringo facilitated a well-attended workshop for "**Women of a Certain Age**," last spring, exploring female sexuality in later life, reminding participants that sexuality doesn't come with an expiration date.

The Senior Book Club has continued, but in June it transformed into a four-month exploration of Mary Pipher's seminal work, "Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents & Flourishing as We Age." Groups in Paonia and Hotchkiss meet monthly to discuss sections of the book and its relevance in their own lives, co-facilitated by Laura Lee Yates and Carolyn Ringo.

Monthly potlucks bring community members together for social engagement and uplifting time spent together, whether they feature fabulous pies donated by our generous sponsors at Mountain Oven, or home-raised beef cooked up by Jim & Loretta Small.



The new **Silver Threads Sewing Circle**, held twice a month and facilitated by quilter Connie Hodges, turns the Paonia Senior Center into a busy and productive space, providing a popular mending/alteration service for older adults, as well as a nurturing space for the design and execution of fabric creations, with an eye toward fundraising.

Partnering with **The Creamery** in Hotchkiss, professional ceramicist David Strong and our director Medeira Ryan lead local seniors as they learn pottery skills.

Joining forces with **HopeWest**, elders have gathered to work through their losses during Mending Hearts, a series of powerful grief support sessions in our North Fork communities.

Volunteers truly are love in motion.

Collaboration

North Fork Senior Connections continues to work with many wonderful local organizations, enabling all of us to achieve things we couldn't accomplish individually. From **Jodi Simpson's endearing kindergartners at Paonia Elementary School**, who annually hand-craft scores of holiday cards for local elders, to **UpRoot Colorado**, whose volunteers deliver freshly-gleaned organic produce for dispersal to hungry seniors, we work together to make the North Fork Valley a great area to age in place.

Once again we joined with the wonderful students and supervising adults of the **Kids Pasta Project**, holding a record fundraising dinner in July beside the blooming lavender fields of James and Carol Schott. **Delicious Orchards** also featured us as one of the non-profits to benefit from their Friday night concerts, assigning us the tribute band "Church of Cash."



In our newsletter, we always advertise the monthly vintage film generously offered free to seniors by the **Paradise Theater**, as well as no-cost programs presented by the **Blue Sage Center for the Arts** through their "Engage" initiative funded by NextFifty. The community-minded folks at **Mountain Oven** supply us with their superb surplus bread and pastries, while **Rubicon Coffee** provides their Lamborn blend for all our activities at the Paonia Senior Center.



Food insecurity continues to be an important concern despite our location in a region of abundance, since food prices skyrocketed even as the pandemic waned, impacting most those on a fixed income. This past year we worked with **The Living Farm**, a grant from the Topper Foundation, and generous local donors and volunteers to deliver 30 weeks of fresh organic produce to 30 elders throughout the North Fork Valley.

Exercise improves health for all ages, and our collaboration with the **North Fork EMS** helps provide the SAIL (Stay Active & Independent for Life) classes free to local seniors, focusing on cardio, balance, strength and stretching in all of our communities. **HopeWest of Delta County** has become an important ally, leading grief support groups and free seminars throughout the North Fork Valley. The great team at the **Paonia Experiential Leadership Academy (PELA)** continue to support our volunteer efforts in spring and fall to prepare local senior for the upcoming seasons. We've also crafted a new collaboration with **RSVP**, the **Retired Senior Volunteer Program of Region10**, allowing our volunteer drivers to be reimbursed for the miles they travel in service of others.

Partnering with **The Creamery** in Hotchkiss, we're able to offer pottery instruction for local seniors, while the **Paonia Senior Center** generously provides office and programming space for endeavors like the Silver Threads Sewing Circle, offering a creative outlet, a fundraising stream, and a popular mending & alteration service for community elders. **Crawford Town Hall** has also become a great place for programming in that part of the Valley, hosting elder-specific events including regular SAIL exercise classes, HopeWest seminars, and community outreach forums. Both the **Paonia and the Hotchkiss-Crawford Historical Societies** hosted special docent-led tours for our members.

We're all better together!

Grants and Donations

NFSC deeply appreciates this year's foundation partners for their generosity from August 2022 through July 2023. **Anschutz Family Foundation**, \$6,000; **Community Foundation of Utah/Topper Family Fund**, \$3,600; **El Pomar Foundation**, \$2,500; **North Fork Ambulance Auxiliary**, \$5,000; **Rocky Mountain Health Foundation**, \$5,000; **Rose Community Foundation/Janine Vanderburg/Changing the Narrative**, \$500; **West Elk Community Foundation**, \$2,500.

We are especially grateful to be starting our new fiscal year with a generous \$23,000 grant from the **NextFifty Initiative**. These grants total \$48,100. We can't accomplish all we do without your continued support!

And we thank each of our individual donors—too many to list—whose financial support continues to be essential to our mission.



Membership

“If we are lucky, we will all encounter the inevitability of growing older. May we do so gracefully and in the company of those we cherish.” –Director Medeina Ryan

Many organizations have members, but North Fork Senior Connections also has generous volunteer leaders, who offer their vast knowledge, wealth of compassion, and depth of experience. Whether they lead seminars, host groups, facilitate fundraisers or receive services, North Fork Senior Connections succeeds in its mission for two reasons: We stay in the WE and WE Pay it Forward.

Our ongoing expansion into Hotchkiss and Crawford has reached new seniors, easing isolation and promoting healthy aging. Long years can bring wisdom but also physical restrictions, yet many of our dedicated senior volunteers still deliver CSA produce or transport members to appointments and events through our new Neighborly Rides initiative. Other volunteers, including students, help prepare our newsletters for mailing or spearhead our twice-yearly “Days of Service,” when we aid senior homeowners in preparing for the upcoming season, whether it means cleaning gutters, washing windows, or cleaning out flowerbeds.

At this time, there are over 400 people who receive our monthly newsletter and over 150 active volunteers and program attendees. While membership has its rewards, such as being a part of the Neighborly Rides program, you do not need to be a member to participate in any of our other programs, or to volunteer to help others. Our programs are inclusive and open to all older adults. To get involved, please reach out to us at 970.527.3482, or by email at nfseniorconnections@gmail.com. Membership information and forms can be found on our website at: www.nfseniorconnections.org

North Fork Senior Connections
Profit & Loss
August 2022 through July 2023

| | Aug '22 - Jul 23 |
|--|------------------|
| Ordinary Income/Expense | |
| Income | |
| INCOME | |
| Donations | |
| CSA Donations | 2,800.00 |
| Donations - Other | 13,888.80 |
| Total Donations | 16,688.80 |
| Foundation Grants | 43,100.00 |
| Fund Raisers | 1,648.00 |
| Government Grants | 5,000.00 |
| Total INCOME | 66,436.80 |
| Other Types of Income | 3.81 |
| Total Income | 66,440.61 |
| Expense | |
| General Operating Expense | |
| Accounting/Payroll Service | 971.75 |
| Ins. Liability, D&O, Work Comp | 1,992.00 |
| Memberships & Fees | 78.00 |
| Travel and Meetings | |
| Registration Conferences Events | 150.00 |
| Total Travel and Meetings | 150.00 |
| Total General Operating Expense | 3,191.75 |
| Program Expenses | |
| Contracted Services | 9,700.00 |
| Event Expenses | |
| Food and Catering | 203.40 |
| Event Expenses - Other | 665.42 |
| Total Event Expenses | 868.82 |
| Mgmt Platform, Database, Web | 792.10 |
| Mileage | 180.63 |
| Office & Program Supplies | 175.99 |
| Payroll Expense | |
| FAMLI | 89.84 |
| Taxes-Payroll | 2,602.15 |
| Wages | 34,015.00 |
| Total Payroll Expense | 36,706.99 |
| Phone, Internet | 442.00 |
| Postage, Printing & Advertising | 3,385.08 |
| Program Supplies | 78.24 |
| Program Expenses - Other | 178.72 |
| Total Program Expenses | 52,508.57 |
| Total Expense | 55,700.32 |
| Net Ordinary Income | 10,740.29 |
| Net Income | 10,740.29 |



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Laura Lee Yates,
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NFSC Board of Directors

This past year, the NFSC Board of Directors has taken major steps to make our organization more efficient, better organized and financially sustainable. We formed several committees, headed by various board members with expertise in that area, to analyze and manage internal operations, identify and secure our digital assets, and make thoughtful decisions about our financial resources. Vice Chair, Bonnie Eisenberg, has taken on the daunting task of organizing our mailing lists, and operating procedures. And, our newest board members Faye Sullivan, has brought fresh perspective and years of non-profit experience to the board, replacing the retiring Betsy Topper as board secretary.

Neighborly Rides

For those without a car, or with limited ability to drive, transportation for medical appointments, shopping, and other errands can be a major obstacle to living independently. Now NFSC offers free rides for seniors within Delta County through our Neighborly Rides Program. If you need transportation assistance or would like to volunteer as a driver for Neighborly Rides, please call the hotline at 970.527.1735.