***Program Narrative:***

A growing share of the Livingston County population is over the age of 65, with a significant amount living with Alzheimer’s disease or a related condition. Many individuals serve as informal caregivers for their loved ones; a task that can be mentally, financially, and physically draining. In 2015, a need was identified for increased respite care in Livingston County, particularly out-of-home respite care. The community was challenged with assembling a cost effective, sustainable, and efficient program. Thus, the Home Away from Home Respite Center was formulated in cooperation with Livingston County Office for the Aging, Livingston County Coalition of Churches, SUNY Geneseo, and AmeriCorps VISTA. A successful pilot program ran in Spring 2016 and the program has been running smoothly ever since.

Home Away from Home serves individuals with Alzheimer’s, dementia, and memory-related diseases in Livingston County. The program focuses on three components: relieving caregiver stress, enhancing the lives of individuals living with memory-related diseases, and promoting intergenerational contact between local older adults and college-aged students to enhance the lives of both generations. During the academic year, we provide respite to local families on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00am – 2:00pm. In June 2017, we were thrilled to be able to hold our first series of summer respite sessions. From October 2016 to April 2017, the program has held 40 respite sessions providing 160 hours of respite care for local families. Comparatively, it would cost between $19,200 – 24,000 for an in-home respite aide to provide equal hours to each family we serve, making this a cost-effective option.

Our program is unique in two regards. First, we are primarily staffed by student interns and volunteers, providing an avenue for intergenerational community contact and positive student engagement. In the spring semester alone, 11 students dedicated 650 hours of service to our program. Second, we run on suggested contributions and donations, meaning that if individuals cannot afford to pay, they will not be denied the service.

The program has proven to be sustainable on several levels. SUNY Geneseo provides a continuous source of volunteer support through its sizable student population. Other aspects of the program such as rent and program materials are sustained by suggested donations. The continuance of this program is important, not only for the clients and caregivers we currently serve, but for the millions who will be aging in the coming decades. We strongly believe that this respite model could easily extend to other counties. While it may seem small, this time to take care of work or personal needs is so important. It prevents caregiver burnout and allows caregivers to more effectively care for themselves so they can care for their loved ones. Furthermore, Home Away from Home fosters intergenerational contact and strengthens ties between the community and SUNY Geneseo.

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