

Volunteers Make Music Videos, Share Hobbies and Stories, to Help Dementia Patients and Older Adults Isolated by COVID-19



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BOSTON, July 16, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- More than 2 million older Americans reside in nursing homes and assisted-living facilities in America, and for many of them, particularly those in memory care units, the loss of outside visits due to COVID-19 has led to worsening mental and physical health.

Massachusetts-based Generus saw the need and began an initiative allowing volunteers to create pre-recorded "Video Visits" to let seniors know they are not forgotten, ignored or alone.

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Toby Stigdon, Certified Dementia Practitioner, shares Video Visits with residents at Columbus Transitional Care

Video Visits are created by regular people, and a few celebrities, including hundreds of high school students across the country who care about the welfare of older adults being impacted by the pandemic. They create 1-3 minute videos sharing music, a talent, story, hobby or "how-to." The large number of student volunteers has allowed the program to grow nationwide and is even attracting international student volunteers.

"Because of the limited opportunities for students to volunteer currently, and because we are dealing in a medium that students know well, they think of us as 'TikTok' for volunteering," said Jamie Larsen, CEO of Generus. "My favorite day of the week is our Zoom call with student volunteers from the U.S., Mexico, Argentina, Nigeria and Ethiopia. We discuss a cause we all care about and the ways different cultures and countries are dealing with this pandemic and aging."

"The videos have helped bring joy back into our memory care community and residents' faces really light up," notes Toby Stigdon, Certified Dementia Practitioner at Columbus Transitional Care in Indiana. "The loss of visitors has been extremely hard on our residents. They need regular stimuli-triggering memories to help them make sense of the world and not feel confused and agitated."

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) and Meals on Wheels America are both helping to distribute information on Video Visits nationwide. The videos are also reaching seniors through a telemedicine software designed specifically for seniors. In June, NCOA shared this video of the initiative at its 2020 conference: <https://bit.ly/3enxkLC>

Generus seeks more volunteers from across the country to create short videos. A form and a link for uploading are available at <https://www.generus.net/coronavirus-volunteering>.

Generus helps companies build a healthy work culture through both virtual and in-person employee volunteerism. Visit [Generus.net](https://www.generus.net).

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