

2017-18 NBA Ministry and Mission Grantees
Impact Report:
A Partnership of Caring
Catonsville, Maryland

Christian Temple and National Alliance on Mental Illness, Metropolitan Baltimore (NAMI Metro) partnered with two assisted living facilities in the Catonsville, Maryland community to provide one-to-one mentoring and support to seniors living with a mental health condition. The project was designed to reduce isolation and to encourage residents to participate in a peer group at the end of the mentoring period.

Mission Area: Older Adults

Catalyst Grant: US \$15,000

Goals, Outcomes, and Learnings:

- The grant allowed us to take the seed of an idea and turn it into a project that was extremely beneficial to Christian Temple, NAMI Metro, and the assisted living facilities. We strengthened our organizational partnerships while providing direct service to others. It was a blessing.
- We hired consultants to develop a training curriculum, provided materials to mentors, offered information and materials to the larger community, and paid staff to manage the project
- We sought to strengthen the relationships between Christian Temple members and the Glynn Taff and Ridgeway residents, and we got to see this happen. The Partnership of Caring project had visibility and popularity with residents, and church members learned more about seniors living with mental health condition and the aging process. We were delighted with the strong mentor/resident relationships that developed over the months. The assisted

living management reported that residents were more cheerful, communicative, and responsive when visiting with their mentors, and that the improved sense of well-being was clearly visible.

- The program was a blessing to the residents and our congregation. Regular visits and personal attention brought about improvement for residents, and the Christian Temple congregation has a new awareness of some of the issues surrounding aging and will incorporate this awareness into its program planning process.
- One key learning was the lack of awareness by the general public on the mental health issues that seniors face. We believe this project and the training curricula we developed can be very helpful in raising awareness. We were also fortunate to have a sensitive and skilled spiritual coordinator from the assisted living facilities make the pairings; her insight was invaluable in putting together the right mentor with the right resident.
- Currently, all of our mentors are willing to remain active

Challenges:

There were three primary challenges:

- One was the lack of engagement from the families of the residents. Unfortunately, that is one of the reasons that these individuals feel isolated and alone. Not all family responded the same, but none felt the need to learn more about senior mental health or to communicate with mentors.
- The second was the inability to create a peer-to-peer group. As the project progressed, we realized that the physical condition of several of our residents would preclude them from participating. One woman was bedridden, another gentleman had a stroke and could not communicate well, and others had conditions that kept them from participating in a group setting without their mentors. (The NAMI peer-to-peer program is a set curriculum designed only for those living with a mental health condition; it would not be appropriate for mentors to participate.)

- Lastly, because the assisted living facilities could only accommodate mentors during the weekday, our pool of available volunteers was lessened.

Future:

- We want to expand the number of trained mentors in order to serve more residents.
- Also, knowing that a peer-to-peer experience is not practical, we want to develop a minimum of six activities over the calendar year that would bring all of the mentors/residents together around an activity or learning experience. We believe that group experience will lend itself to the reduction of isolation, and that a strong cohort group within the living facilities will be of benefit.
- We also want to continue our community-wide forums on mental health and aging.



As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacaes.org.