

Title: Supporting our Caregivers: Evaluating the Impact of Samaritan’s Social Connections Programs

Author: Erika Thomas, Director of Social Connections, Samaritan

Aims: The demands of managing appointments, caregiving tasks, and health-related logistics frequently consume caregivers’ schedules, leaving minimal time for self-care or meaningful personal connections. As a result, caregivers are at heightened risk for chronic stress, feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

This study examines the effectiveness of the Friendly Caller and Robotic Pet programs offered by Samaritan’s Social Connections Department as an innovative method of providing support to caregivers.

The Friendly Caller program provides a trained Samaritan volunteer to offer a listening ear and compassionate voice. This program uses a phoning system that ensures privacy and calls are made weekly at a convenient time for both parties.

The second program initiated by Samaritan in the hopes of impacting the lives of caregivers and others is the Robotic Pet Companion program. These battery-operated Joy for All Pets by Ageless Innovation LLC intend to offer comfort, companionship, and joy and aim to alleviate caregiver burden and provide short term respite.

Method: Using the UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale, data is collected at intake and at the 1- or 3-month mark post-intervention to assess the impact of these services on caregiver feelings of social isolation, loneliness, and well-being.

Results: Data collected from five caregivers participating in the Social Connections programs indicate consistent reduction in loneliness scores for most program participants. Program results indicate consistent reduction in loneliness scores after 3 months.

Average Initial Score: 6 Average Post Score: 4.8 Average Reduction: 1.2

Changes in UCLA Loneliness Scores for Each Individual:

	INITIAL ASSESSMENT	POST ASSESSMENT
A	6	5
B	8	5
C	4	4
D	5	4
E	7	6

Conclusion: The findings suggest that the Social Connections department's interventions are effective in reducing loneliness and improving the overall well-being of caregivers. This study highlights the importance of innovative, multi-faceted support systems for caregivers and provides a model for other organizations aiming to enhance caregiver support.