A JAR FULL OF PENNIES...

You’ll be inspired by this participant’s gift!

At Iona, John “Johnnie” Schofield is known for his generous spirit. A participant in Iona’s Wellness & Arts Center and a resident at a residential home for adults with developmental/intellectual disabilities, Johnnie has been collecting pennies to give to Iona.

He tells us, “My sister said to me [before I came to Iona], ‘You are bored where you are because you are not doing anything all day.’ Now, I come to be with people who say to me, ‘Johnnie, I miss you [when I am not there].’

Iona is a place that helps a lot of people. I don’t want Iona to go under. We can get plenty of pennies to help Iona a little.”

Fortunately, because of donors like you, Iona is in no danger of “going under.” But, Johnnie’s words tell us how much Iona means to him. He is grateful to you and Iona for always being there for him, and anyone else who needs the special services and loving care that only Iona can provide.

Johnnie has now been collecting pennies for more than a year—and those pennies have been adding up! This summer he generously donated $30 worth of coins to Iona. After making the gift, he said, “It was a pleasure giving to Iona.” We’d like to add this message to Johnnie: It’s a pleasure having you in our community!

Johnnie’s gift, along with your support, helps fund the programming we offer at the Wellness & Arts Center. There, we have art therapy, musical performances, a vegetable garden, exercise classes, cooking events, and so much more for Johnnie and others to enjoy. Thank you for holding them close in your heart.

Like Johnnie, you too can provide enriching programs and respite for older adults and their families. Donate to Iona at www.iona.org/donate-now.

Or, to learn more about specific ways you can have an impact in the Wellness & Arts Center, call Susan Messina at (202) 895-9401.
Painting again, thanks to you

Two years ago, Parivash “Pari” Amirshahi could not have imagined how much better her life could be. But thanks to your generosity, Iona opened her eyes—literally.

When Iona social worker Liza Chapkosvky first met Ms. Pari Amirshahi, she was isolated in her apartment, surviving on little food and company. She had no bed, no way to prepare food, and poor eyesight that made daily operations challenging.

Thankfully, because of your continued support, Iona was able to be her safety net. Thanks to you, Pari now receives nutritious meal deliveries and other public benefits.

She has attended Iona’s Active Wellness Program at St. Alban’s, where she is able to enjoy a free, hot lunch and fun conversation among friends and neighbors. There’s now a microwave and hot plate in her apartment to prepare meals. And she even has a new bedframe and mattress, which your donations helped to secure.

Your generosity has been a part of Pari’s journey since the very beginning, when we first shared her story last winter.

So, we thought you’d like to know about a happy step in her journey. Now, because of you, Pari has rediscovered an old pastime—painting.

In her own words, Pari has been painting since she was “really, very young.” All that changed, however, when her poor eyesight made keeping up with her passion difficult. With Iona’s help, however, Pari received cataract surgery to improve her eyesight. Within weeks, she was holding a paintbrush in her hand.

“I never thought I would paint again,” says Pari, with a smile. “Now, I feel so good! It is possible.”

Since her surgery, Pari has been hard at work, joyously creating portraits, still lives, and more. Just recently, a neighbor even asked if she could paint something for her apartment! “It made me feel so good that somebody wanted to decorate with my painting,” says Pari.

Your generosity has done so much for Pari. Your gift made Iona’s life-saving services possible. And now, you’ve provided life-enhancing joys, too.
Nancy had a history of falls. Her apartment didn’t have an elevator. And she was anxious about taking the stairs. So it seemed like the perfect solution when she asked a neighbor to deliver her rent to the building manager every month. Until the eviction notice came.

“The neighbor was pocketing Nancy’s money,” says Iona social worker Christine Kenny.

Fortunately, Nancy had a safety net. After Nancy was referred to Iona by Adult Protective Services, Christine took action and made a plan. Today, Christine ensures that Nancy’s bills are paid on time and in full through the Citywide Money Management Program, which Iona manages.

The program launched in 2015 and has served 28 older adults across the District. All have some memory loss, live alone, and experience difficulty organizing their finances and paying bills on time—and are at-risk of exploitation.

But with your support, Iona social workers can be attentive watchdogs in our community. They look for warning signs of exploitation and scams, and jump into action if your neighbor is victimized.

Neighbors like Gene, who was scammed out of more than $3,000 in just two months for lawn service. Or Karen, whose home health aide was using her car without permission, and worse yet, racking up unpaid parking violations. “We’ve seen clients get overcharged for simple home repairs,” says Christine. “Financial exploitation is awful. Yet it’s very common, especially for people who live alone or have some cognitive decline.”

Or, imagine this heart-breaking scenario. After months of saying a source of income was missing (and being routinely dismissed by people he told), Gerald had lost hope. Things had gotten so bad that he was relying on friends to bring over food and toiletries. No longer able to pay his utilities and other bills, Gerald was referred to Iona.

His financial records were shocking. They revealed that Gerald had been exploited for months by a close family member, who had racked up nearly $15,000 in fraudulent charges. The Iona team took quick action and stopped the exploitation by closing Gerald’s compromised accounts, opening new accounts, and referring the case to Adult Protective Services.

Today, Gerald has plenty of money to pay his bills and meet all of his financial obligations. And, thanks to your continued generosity, Iona is always there to remind him about upcoming payments and remain attentive to his finances.

You ensure that Iona can do this important work. And, as the aging population continues to grow, your support will be even more critical.

Names were changed to protect their identities
This year, 16 older adults were rescued from financial abuse, thanks to your support.

You ensure Iona can directly help more than 3,000 older adults and their families every year. We do this by meeting basic needs, providing connection and support, and offering fitness and creative engagement opportunities.
Imagine having your trust broken by someone close, like a neighbor or friend. What if you also had no family support or had significant memory loss?

How would you manage? Where would you turn?

*Thanks to you, your most vulnerable neighbors can turn to Iona.*
WHY DO YOU GIVE TO IONA?

Here’s why Fran, Iona’s receptionist and a seven-year donor, added extra change to her donation this year.

If you’ve ever made a phone call to Iona or visited our building, you’ve likely been greeted by Fran Forman. One of Iona’s front desk receptionists, Fran’s known for her giant smile and hearty laugh. And, like you, she’s also a generous donor to Iona.

Everyone has their own reason for supporting Iona’s mission. For Fran, she is moved to give by the needs she’s witnessed. It’s a need that Fran didn’t fully understand until she became an Iona receptionist.

“I get so many phone calls at the front desk,” says Fran. “I was just flabbergasted! The sheer number of people calling, whether it’s food or needing help at home. They’re so anxious and need an answer. It is astounding.”

JOINING IONA’S TEAM

After moving from Bethesda to Tenleytown in 2006, Fran was looking for a way to get involved in the neighborhood. Recently retired, she felt bored at home. An online search led Fran to Iona.

“At first, I didn’t know much about senior services,” says Fran. “But once I started volunteering, I started learning. I really became aware of the growing need.”

After a year volunteering in Iona’s Wellness & Arts Center, Fran joined the staff in 2008 at the front desk. Since then, she’s talked to thousands of concerned older adults and family caregivers. In that time, she’s also committed to giving financially to Iona every year.

A POCKET FULL OF CHANGE

This year, Fran’s gift was a little unconventional. She gave spare quarters, dimes, and nickels.

Inspired by Wellness & Arts Center participant Johnnie Schofield’s penny collection (see story on the front page), Fran donated $166 in change—and then rounded that up substantially with a generous check.

Fran, who sees Johnnie regularly as he is dropped off or picked up at our Center, says, “I was touched by the way Johnnie donated his pennies. So, when I was cleaning out my closet and came across these coins, I thought, ‘that would be a great way to put my change to good use.’”

Good use, indeed. With Fran’s donation, along with your generous contribution, Iona is able to be the safety net that older adults and families rely on when a health crisis occurs.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Have an inspiring story about why you support older adults and caregivers? Please share it with us. You might be featured in our next newsletter! Email Rosie Aquila at raquila@iona.org or call (202) 895-9423.

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