

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Call out for volunteers to visit lonely older South Australians

More than 80 volunteers are needed to visit older South Australians at risk of loneliness and social isolation, as part of the COTA Visitors program run by COTA SA.

The older people needing visitors span inner and outer metropolitan Adelaide, across the northern, southern, eastern and western suburbs, as well as in the Adelaide Hills, mid-North, and parts of the Fleurieu Peninsula.

"The 80 people waiting to be matched recognise that they could do with a regular visitor and it is incredibly brave of them to put their hand up," said COTA SA chief executive Jane Mussared.

"All you need to do is volunteer one hour once a week or fortnight to visit an older person and help make their day.

"Visitors bring friendship, conversation, and companionship to the lives of older people who may be finding it hard to make new friends or stay connected to their community as they age.

"We will try and match volunteer visitors with older people who share common interests or life experiences.

"With loneliness afflicting one in three older South Australians, our COTA Visitors play important roles in helping combat the detrimental effects this has on health and wellbeing.

"Volunteering is a very fulfilling and rewarding experience. Learning about someone else and hearing their experiences while sharing a bit of yourself can be very enriching. We would love people to consider how they can help improve the life of an older person.

"If people are interested in becoming a COTA Visitor, please speak to our team. Let us match you with someone in a suburb close to you."

The experience of loneliness can creep up on people as they age, often prompted by a loss or an event like the death of a partner, friends or family, health or mobility issues, moving house or losing long-term neighbours.

"To date, COTA SA has already matched more than 50 older people living at home or in aged care with a volunteer visitor," Ms Mussared said. "Each match is welcomed, and we would love 80 more older people who have registered with us to experience a regular visitor."

Bill is a Vietnam veteran who lives alone. He was linked with volunteer Andrew. Bill says they “mostly chat about current events, politics, health, our careers and sport” and that it “has been very good and very satisfying having someone to chat with each week”.

Judith found herself isolated after an injury with a long recovery time. She lost her routine and connection with the LGBTI community. COTA Visitors connected her with Cathy, and they now enjoy walks in the Botanic Gardens and visits to the art galleries.

Judith says her catch ups with Cathy are “bringing life and connection back” and that “it has been a great experience with a very pleasant person”.

Mary recently celebrated her 100th birthday with her COTA Visitor Caroline and her two daughters.

Caroline said, “visiting Mary has given us nothing but joy and we all look forward to visiting her, even our moody teenager”.

“Mary loves to hear how my girls have gone at school, what they are up to on the weekend, and what hobbies and sports interest them,” Caroline said.

“Likewise, my girls have shared amazing experiences with Mary, like the time my daughter Sophie was doing a school assignment on what school was like ‘in the olden days’. Mary used to be a schoolteacher and was the perfect subject.”

For more information about COTA Visitors:

<https://cotasa.org.au/programs-and-services/cota-visitors>

Register your interest in volunteering for COTA Visitors by emailing cvs@cotasa.org.au or phoning (08) 8232 0422.

COTA SA is an older people’s movement and the peak body representing the rights, interests, and futures of more than 633,000 older South Australians aged over 50.

For media interviews or more information, please contact:

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