Companions to Elders

Companions to Elders is an intergenerational community service club that matches volunteers with elderly residents in the Waltham community. Our goal is to foster a strong and long-lasting relationship between our volunteers and their companions.

We volunteer weekly at two assisted living homes, Marist hill and Leland Home. Volunteers are matched with an elderly companion at the beginning of the semester and then spend the rest of the semester visiting with their companion for an hour each week. This past Spring semester we provided student companionship to over 50 nursing home residents! Often, students visit their companions for all four years of college and establish bonds that expand post-graduation.

Volunteers also have the option to participate in Memory Cafe, a monthly volunteer opportunity that takes place on the first Friday of every month. Volunteers are connected with individuals diagnosed with a spectrum of cognitive impairments. They always participate in a creative activity together that encourages participants to use areas of the brain that are underused. A Cafe highlight from this year is when Jane Blair of ArtMatters led a group exploration and discussion of the artwork of Mary Cassatt and Edgar Degas. Volunteers and guests shared personal stories and bonded over the emotional connections with the art.

Big Siblings

The Brandeis Big Siblings Program partners with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay to match Brandeis students with elementary school students to form one-on-one mentoring relationships. Matches meet weekly for an hour during lunch/recess to engage in arts and crafts, sports or games while getting to know one another. Many of the matches continue on for the duration of their undergraduate career. We currently have 20 matches and are continually expanding. This past year, we have successful transitioned community partners and are confident that this partnership will improve our program. Looking towards next semester, we hope to expand the communal nature of the program by facilitating activities within the larger Brandeis Big Siblings Community.