

ADOPT-A-SENIOR

LETTER WRITING STARTER KIT

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LETTER WRITING
TIPS, TOOLS, AND
RESOURCES

PRINTABLE
STATIONERY TO HELP
GET YOU STARTED

START YOUR OWN
LETTER WRITING
CAMPAIGN

YOU ARE INVITED...

...to take a few minutes each week to make a HUGE difference in the life of a senior through the simple act of writing a letter.

In our current season, most seniors are unable to leave home or receive visitors, and could use encouragement and be reminded that they are not alone or forgotten.

My personal focus is on assisted living facilities as I know that these residents are even more isolated now that group dining and group activities have been canceled.

OUR STORY

My mom moved into an assisted living facility near me almost a year ago. It's taken longer than expected to find a new rhythm that works for all of us.

We realized pretty quickly that her doggie would not be able to stay with her. He needs entertainment and room to move, and we knew that she would struggle to give him all he needed in her small room, so he came home with me.

Our usual routine is that I go and pick her up to spend Sundays at home with the dogs and me. It gives her a change in scenery, as well as quality time with her puppy, and me of course. Oliver loves to have her here, and rarely leaves her side during her visit.

All that has changed, of course. Her facility went into "lockdown" in early March, which meant no visitors in, and no one able to leave, except for emergency medical situations.



As the risk of the virus increased, group dining and group activities were also canceled to protect all the residents. The wonderful team where my Mom lives have worked harder than ever to keep everyone engaged, entertained, and above all, safe.

But they could use some help.

I've been talking with the Lifestyle Director at my Mom's facility and asking how our family can help. One idea was quite simple! Write a letter.

What few letters have been coming in are posted on the community bulletin board, which is great!

BUT, I THINK WE CAN DO BETTER.

Let's let the residents know they are not alone or forgotten through the simple act of writing a letter.

I'd like to invite you to join in and help our seniors feel connected and loved by Adopting A Senior, and sending them a handwritten letter while the quarantine rules are in effect.

AND... hopefully beyond.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Ask for A Name

Contact a local Senior Residence (Assisted Living, Nursing Home or Veterans Home) OR ME and ask for the name of a resident you can start writing to.

Write a Letter

Pull out your favorite pen and stationery and write a letter! You can include pictures, drawings or art projects from you or your kids, bookmarks, activity pages, and more.

Repeat!

Your letter can make a HUGE impact in the life of someone else.

WHY HANDWRITE LETTERS?

WRITING A LETTER IS A GIFT

It's easy to forget that a simple handwritten letter, sent snail mail, is an easy and affordable gift we can give someone else. We show care and attention when we take the time and effort to write, stamp, and mail a letter.

“Letters are something different from you.
It's a different kind of expectation than writing an email.”
-Keanu Reeves

Taking a few moments to write a message no matter how long or short is a gift of your time, attention, and thought. When we receive a letter, we take the time to read them, and in many cases re-read them.

WRITING A LETTER IS A CREATIVE ACT

It's easy to dismiss this idea but writing in and of itself is a creative act. It is putting together a string of words to convey a message or to bring to life an idea or shared memory.

“A good handwritten letter is a creative act, and not just because it is a visual and tactile pleasure. It is a deliberate act of exposure, a form of vulnerability, because handwriting opens a window on the soul in a way that cyber communication can never do. You savor their arrival and later take care to place them in a box for safe keeping.”

- NewYorkTimes.com Blog 2011

YOU CAN BRIGHTEN SOMEONE'S DAY

Think about this for a moment. Imagine pulling out a stack of mail from your mailbox when you spy a brightly colored envelope, or you notice familiar handwriting. How do you feel? What do you do?

I bet the other pieces of mail are quickly forgotten as you grab the envelope where the pen was put to paper. I also bet that you smile and feel like your day is instantly brighter as you read the words.

WRITING TIPS

KEEP IN MIND:

- Keep your letters legible, printed (if your cursive is hard to read), and large print if possible.
- Feel free to be creative! Decorate the envelope, pretty or fun stationery
- Unless you know the residents faith it is best to keep the letter friendly and engaging and not include religious references.
- Same with politics!!

WRITING PROMPTS:

- Sometimes the simplest things mean the most ...
- Writing you today just because _____
- Just a note to say hello
- Wanted to send you a quick hello
- Just thinking about you and wanted to say hi
- Wishing you a day filled with love and sunshine.
- Sending lots of hugs your way.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU INCLUDE IN A LETTER?

Your words are more than enough! But if you want to get extra creative here are a few flat item ideas you could send along with your letter.

- An inspirational saying - “artified”
- Bookmarks
- Simple coloring pages
- Pictures
- Art your kiddos made
- Nature photos of flowers, sunsets, cute animals

NEED SOME INSPIRATION?

LINKS TO GREAT ARTICLES WITH MORE TIPS AND IDEAS:

- <https://www.pinterest.com/seniorcarehomes/inspirational-seniors-words/>
- <https://caregiversactivitysource.com/family-oriented/card-messages-for-sending-cards-to-seniors/>
- <https://www.griswoldhomecare.com/blog/happy-holidays-send-cards-write-letters-elderly-friends-family/>
- <https://www.today.com/parents/writing-cards-nursing-homes-others-isolation-can-help-t176680>

FAVORITE QUOTE SOURCES:

- <https://www.brainyquote.com/>
- <https://www.azquotes.com/>
- https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Main_Page
- <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/letter-writing>
- [Inspirational Quotes on Pinterest](#)

MAKING YOUR LETTER WRITING PLAN

STEP 1: DECIDE HOW MANY LETTERS YOU WOULD LIKE TO WRITE AND SEND EACH WEEK.

Make it a reasonable and doable goal.

- If your first thought four a week... start with 2.
- If your first thought is 2 a week – start with one.

Why? We almost always overestimate what we can do in a week.

This idea comes from Jon Acuff's book, "Finish." In his book he suggests cutting your goal in half. That way you get some quick wins, gain momentum and get after your goals. Letter writing is no exception, especially if you haven't written more than a text or an email lately.

Write out your weekly letter writing goal:

I will write _____ per week.

STEP 2: DECIDE WHEN YOU WILL WRITE LETTERS.

Speaking from experience here, write it down. "I will write _____ a letter by _____."

Be specific, who are you going to write to and by when.

It's easy to get caught in the, "I'll do it when I have time." A week goes by and you realize you never accomplished your goal. Be specific put it on your calendar and set a reminder on your phone (ask me how I know the phone reminders work!)

Write out your weekly letter writing schedule:

I will my letters on (or no later than) _____.

STEP 3: GATHER YOUR LETTER WRITING SUPPLIES

I've created a small letter writing pouch that has all my essentials. It's in a large pencil bag with a clear front so I don't forget what's in it.



Confession... I have many pencil bags filled with pens, pencils, markers, colored pencils, fine writing tools. I like pens, a lot. So having a pencil bag with a clear front is important for me!

With a bag like this I can throw it in my backpack, keep it in the car or take it to the park. It makes it easy to have with me no matter where I am.

In this pouch I keep the essentials:

- Notecards
- Envelopes
- Envelope Stickers
- Notecard Inserts
- Washi Tape
- Stamps

Every once in a while, a notecard isn't enough space to write all I want to say. So, I've been thinking about adding in some nice paper to have on hand just in case.

You could also include a pen or two, and a small handwritten list of names and addresses.

**Make a list of what to include in your
in your letter writing kit:**

STEP 4: MAKE A LIST OF WHO YOU ARE GOING TO WRITE TOO.

Make a list of 2-3 people you would like to send a letter to below. Also include their address below, in your letter writing pouch, or in your phone in their contact information. Make sure your Adopt-A-Senior is included ;)

Letter #1

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date to Send: _____

Letter #2

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date to Send: _____

Letter #3

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date to Send: _____

NOW YOU ARE ALL SET!

- You have your letter writing supplies
- You have your goals written out
- You have your schedule written out
- And you have your list of who you are going to write ready and waiting.

**NOW, IT'S TIME TO GET TO IT!
GO WRITE THAT FIRST LETTER.**



HOW TO WORK WITH A LOCAL FACILITY

If you have a friend or relative living in an assisted living facility, nursing home, or veterans home. Start there. You already have someone to write too!

HOW CAN I HELP?

This is always a good place to start, ask the question, “how can I help?” Your goal is to help and not add on work for the facility that is already stretched to its limits keeping their residents safe.

Have a plan before you make contact. Here are a few questions to consider first:

- Do you have a network you can connect with and get 10-15 people involved?
- Do you have homeschool contacts or online schools you can connect with and get children involved?
- Do you have a plan on how you will bring more people into such a program to help?

If you do not, that is okay!! Many facilities will accept letters and will distribute them to residents in the most need of cheering up and encouragement. Or they may have a community bulletin board that the residents can enjoy.

If you answered yes then:

1. Call the facility and ask if they have a letter-writing program established and how you can get involved.
2. If they do not have an established program, let them know you would like to start one for their residents and ask if you can speak to the Activity Director. This will most likely become your point of contact
3. Again, keep in mind, “How can I help?”. Activity directors in these facilities are working hard to keep their residents engaged and most likely do not have the time or resources right now to initiate a program like this. Be willing to take initiative and have a plan of action ready to present.

You can use the following sample plan to get you started.

ADOPT A SENIOR PROGRAM OUTLINE

GOAL / MISSION:

- To connect with assisted living residents who are isolated from regular daily activities and regular family visits
- To encourage staff and residents during isolation
- To provide an opportunity for families, friends, and anyone interested a way to contribute and connect

“ADOPTER’S” RESPONSIBILITY:

- Write 1 letter per week for the next while strict quarantine policies are in effect, and hopefully beyond!
- Letters can be: Cards, letters, postcards, stories, drawings, photos, activity books, art projects. Here is a note from the facility I’m working with - from their Facebook Page: *“Looking for a meaningful way to keep your kids busy? Our residents would love to receive their art projects, stories, homemade cards, letters, drawings! These kinds of things bring our residents so much joy!”*
- Also understand that some residents will be able to write back and some will not

IMPORTANT: Virus Protection

- If you or anyone in your family is sick, wait to create anything that you will send until you are sure there is no risk of infection
- Understand the facility will also have a waiting period to make sure any virus bacteria have a chance to die off before being delivered to a resident. (using current best practices)

If possible, from the facility ask for (Note: Unless you have a previous relationship with the facility what they will be willing to share will vary. Below is an ideal list so the letters and cards can be tailored to each recipient.)

- First name and last initial OR full last name of a resident
- Approximate age
- 1-3 things resident is interested in (optional) so letters and encouragement sent can be tailored.

LETTER WRITING PROCESS:

Start small, ask for 5-10 names, make it as easy as possible to start your letter writing campaign. This makes it easy for you and for the activity director.

Adopter will send letter to the facility for distribution and not directly to the resident for privacy and health protection.

Resident's Name
C/O Activity Director
Facility Name
Facility Street Address
City, State Zip

Make sure to include your contact information:

- Name
- Email
- Phone (if needed)

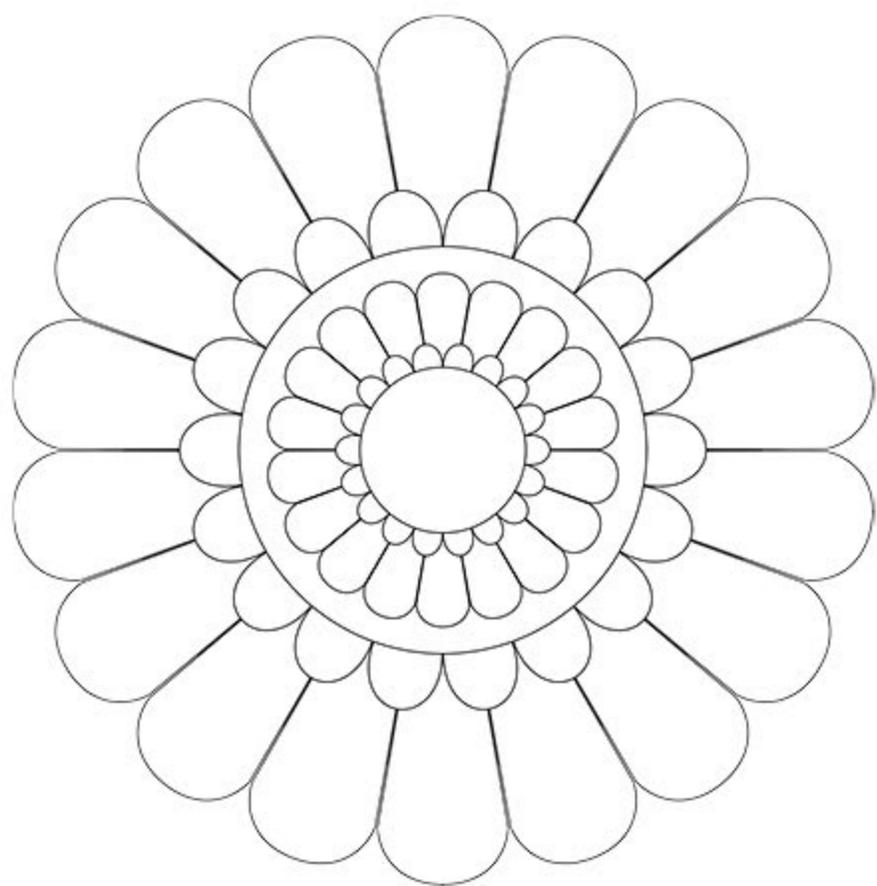
STARTER STATIONERY

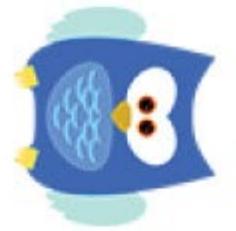
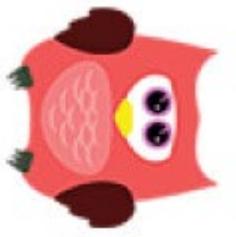
ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES YOU WILL
FIND PRINTABLE LINED STATIONERY AND
NOTECARDS THAT YOU CAN PRINT OUT
AND START USING RIGHT AWAY.



HELLO!







Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 vertical lines.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 vertical lines.

THANK YOU!

Your letters will make a HUGE difference in the life of a resident in an assisted living, nursing home, or veterans home.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

<https://SelahReflections.com/adopt-a-senior>

