

# *Faith in Action for Monroe County*

6724 N. Monroe St., Monroe, MI 48162

## **Common Myths About Caregiving in Congregations**

**MYTH #1:** “*All the people in our congregation work outside their homes, and nobody has time to volunteer anymore.*”

**Reality:** Well over half of the volunteers in congregations affiliated with *FAITH IN ACTION FOR MONROE COUNTY* are employed. Most volunteer caregivers place volunteering as a priority in their lives, alongside the demands of full-time employment, other volunteer jobs, school, and relationships. Because of the benefits of one-to-one matching through *FIAMC*, people are often energized in other areas of their lives.

A clergy person who has consistently said that the people in his congregation were too busy to volunteer recently agreed to make an announcement asking for someone to visit and older woman. Twelve people came up to him after the service to volunteer!

**MYTH #2:** “*Our congregation is already doing outreach and we would be spread too thin if we started a caregiver program.*”

**Reality:** Because of the way *FAITH IN ACTION FOR MONROE COUNTY* guides congregations to shape a caregiver outreach around already existing programs, there is a surprising renewal of energy and enhanced cooperation and support among and between associated committees. In fact, some congregational leaders have found that starting a caregiving team helps other programs in the synagogue/church to more clearly articulate their goals and objectives. In addition, *FIAMC* staff offer training, consultation and support that can be used to strengthen existing outreach programs.

A clergy person said to one of the *FIAMC* staff, “*FAITH IN ACTION FOR MONROE COUNTY* has really helped the entire outreach of my parish, not just the older people, because of the guidance and organizational support of your staff. I thought all of our volunteers were used up because of our many programs, but I guess I was wrong.”

**MYTH #3:** “*We don’t need a caregiving program because there aren’t many older people in our congregation.*”

**Reality:** Along with helping congregations organize to recruit and train volunteers, *FAITH IN ACTION FOR MONROE COUNTY* also helps the congregation to uncover elders who may have fallen through the cracks. *FIAMC* is a method of discovering who the homebound elders are.

A new congregation liaison/coordinator set up an appointment to meet with her priest and see if he had any names of older people who might need a volunteer caregiver. After first saying he didn’t have any names other than the few the had already given her, the coordinator then spent some time with them going over the parish list. After doing this, they discovered 33 older people who were homebound.

**MYTH #4:** “*As the clergy person of this congregation. I already can’t do everything that’s needed. I certainly don’t have time to get a caregiving group organized!*”

**Reality:** *FAITH IN ACTION FOR MONROE COUNTY* does not expect the clergy to be the leaders of the volunteer outreach but to provide support to it. *FIAMC* through our coordinator helps to empower your volunteers to be the ones who provide the outreach to the older members. The truth is that *FIAMC* can be the support and resource to the clergy. So, because *FIAMC* helps the parish to organize, less time is needed of the clergy to spend in these tasks.

After having a caregivers team in his parish for four months, one local priest said that the caregiving team in his church had taught him to really value lay ministry in a new way and that he was learning to let go of some of what he thought were only his responsibilities.

For more information, please contact the *Faith in Action* office at (734) 243 2233