As people live longer, wide-reaching movements and networks across the globe are helping them achieve their aspirations for healthy, active, and engaged living.

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UPLIFT Florida Network’s Docuseries
Scan the QR code to glimpse experiences from UPLIFT’s leadership team and more. Hear them narrate the journey to creating the organization and their aspirations for the future.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As people live longer, wide-reaching movements and networks across the globe are helping them achieve their aspirations for healthy, active, and engaged living.

Capitalizing on its experience and work in healthy aging, in 2020, The Patterson Foundation (TPF) began incubating and providing facilitation, knowledge, and strategic and tactical expertise to develop a Sarasota Village – an idea put forward by TPF consultant Deborah Gauvreau and supported by a group of interested volunteers.

Villages are formalized networks of individuals that form communities supporting individuals in their desire to age in their homes. Villages differ from “The Villages,” a census-designated master-planned age-restricted community in Sumter County, Florida. As community-based organizations, villages are not dependent upon location or physical structures.

With over 44% of Sarasota County’s population being 60 or older, Sarasota was an ideal location to form a village. As that aspiration evolved, the Sarasota Village Exploratory Team identified an overarching need to create a regional hub organization providing administrative and operational functions supporting villages. To capture the findings, learnings, and reflections of the past three years, TPF has invested in creating a 2023 UPLIFT Impact Report. This comprehensive narrative explores the following:

- The aging landscape and ecosystems nationally and in Florida.
- The village model as an approach to support older adults aging in place and community.
- The development and evolution of UPLIFT.
- UPLIFT’s aspirations for the future as it charts a path forward.
THE AGING LANDSCAPE NATIONALLY, REGIONALLY, AND LOCALLY

Our nation’s rapidly growing aging demographic fuels a significant economic and social shift. According to the PRB, a nonpartisan research organization, the 2020 Census Bureau estimates over 55 million Americans are 65 or older, with one-fourth of those older Americans living in California, Florida, and Texas.

According to Florida’s Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) 2021 demographics data, 27% of Florida’s population is 60 and older. Among that same population, 35% of males and 65% of females live alone.

As people try to live independently as they age, they experience various obstacles related to poverty, daily living activities, and social services. COVID has contributed to and revealed the additional challenges of isolation among community members, especially older adults.

Awareness of the challenges older adults face is essential to ensure they receive the support and services they need to thrive. Ongoing conversations exist on effectively preparing for the current and future population of older adults and addressing their challenges. More is required to make progress toward making Florida’s communities age-friendly.

AARP Public Policy Institute’s (PPI) 2020 Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) State Scorecard measuring state LTSS system performance and providing state rankings evaluates Florida’s performance in providing LTSS. Florida ranked 51st out of 51 – a decrease from 46th in 2017. Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky, and Indiana either improved, or Florida stayed the same or declined in its performance.

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Source: Florida: 2020 Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) State Scorecard

With Florida’s larger, rapidly aging population, any trends and needs that emerge in the aging community will happen here first. Now is the time to seize the opportunity to develop forward-thinking models of community care that promote health and well-being and prevent illness and injury.

An example of such an approach is the village model.
In 1999, Susan McWhinney-Morse invited 11 neighbors to her home in Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts, to brainstorm ways to remain rooted and engaged in their local community. In 2002, this group established Beacon Hill Village as a nonprofit organization and enrolled its first members. This grassroots idea led by Susan spurred an international village movement that uses a community-based approach to empower adults to live fulfilling lives.

Villages are a network of members and aligned organizations engaged in supporting people as they age. Most villages are grassroots, self-governing membership organizations, but they all promote healthy living, neighbor-to-neighbor support, and community connectivity. They vary in service area size, membership structure, and business model. Rather than operate conventionally as a brick-and-mortar, or a retirement community, most villages are run by volunteers or paid staff who serve as caring neighbors supporting older adults.

Villages create invaluable opportunities for people to meaningfully volunteer their time in helping older adults. These relationships provide those served with emotional security and comfort and those volunteering with enrichment. This is perfectly demonstrated by Sandra Neidert’s experience, one of Neighbor to Neighbor in the Nenes’ (N3) staunchest volunteers, “Connections, relationships, community, and belonging. As a social worker my entire adult life, I spend a lot of time contemplating and studying these concepts; N3 provides me an opportunity to live them. N3 has also opened my eyes to a new concept – one I had not given much thought previously – that aging in place is a beautiful thing.”

In the United States, over 300 local villages provide recreational, social, educational, and cultural programs and services. The services they provide to older adults across the aging spectrum address the wide range of needs of older adults, support the networks providing long-term care, and fill existing gaps in our complex social services systems.

Recognizing that there are services and assistance existing beyond their scope, villages form partnerships and make referrals to ensure older adults receive services that address their multifaceted needs.
01
Health, Exercise & Wellness Programs:
Walking groups, exercise classes, meal planning, medication reconciliation, etc.

02
Social Engagement:
Friendly visits, reassurance calls, book clubs, excursions to local places and concerts, arts and crafts.

03
Transportation:
Rides to medical appointments, therapy, places of worship, grocery shopping, auto service center, and additional errands.

04
Home Care and Management:
Yard care, organizing closets and garages, changing light bulbs and smoke detector batteries; organizing closets, storage areas, or the garages; caring for pets, gardening chores, seasonal tidying, house sitting, etc.

05
Technology Assistance:
Helping with computers, TV remotes, and cell phones; organizing computer files and email; offering technical support for television, hearing aids, computers, and iPads; and helping with phones, computers, tablets, cable TV remotes, etc.

06
Helpline & Referrals:
Provide patient advocacy; help older adults coordinate services available to them in the community; assist in hurricane emergency preparation. Referrals to fee-for-service providers. General information and referral on topics of concern.
The Challenges Faced by Villages

Awareness and Understanding
Offering a short, concise explanation of a village in terms of its structures and services is challenging. In Florida, the village concept is obscured by “The Villages,” a master-planned community for active adults 55 years old and over in Sumter County. Staff and volunteers engaged in extensive community outreach would benefit from clear, consistent, and overarching media promoting the neighbor-helping-neighbor village model as a viable resource to strengthen communities.

COVID-19
Like many individuals and communities, COVID-19 forced villages nationwide to pivot. For many villages, in-person activities and services were paused as they figured out how to adapt. COVID-19 provided opportunities for villages to evolve and develop new services, such as teaching people how to use Zoom. Given the vulnerability of older adults to COVID-19, some village members and volunteers are still hesitant to engage in social interaction. This continues to impact their ability to foster participation in their services and grow their volunteer base.

Recruiting Members and Participants
As people age, finding new friendships can become complex. Yet, villages are built-in friendship communities offering the connections people may lack as they age. Many older adults would benefit from social activities and help to age in place — but communicating that message involves great finesse. Volunteers and staff devote significant time and energy to supporting older adults as they become accustomed to engaging with villages and receiving services.

Funding
Villages are supported by membership fees, grants, sponsors, and fundraising that influence their budget. For example, 42% of villages have an annual budget of $25,000 or less. Achieving financial sustainability is challenging, especially for those looking to expand services to benefit all socioeconomic levels. To make villages more inclusive and foster widespread participation, many village leaders recognize the importance of identifying, applying, and securing diverse funding to maximize their impact.

The capacity to undergo the rigorous process of applying for grants can be limited. Communicating why a village needs funding and how it can be used to make an impact can sometimes be unclear or lack the data to prove it. Some villages are concerned that they are overlooked if funders believe they have a small service area. Regardless of their service areas, compared to the cost of medical services or 30-day hospital readmission fees, villages are believed to be cost-effective investments. Work is still being done to quantify and document the value of village services to prove their impact.

Only a small number of villages have received government funding. However, there is an ongoing effort to change that through collaboration with government entities such as Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). The Village to Village Network published Leveraging Resources Handbook: Collaborations between Villages and Area Agencies on Aging to foster greater understanding and catalyze collaborative efforts to serve older adults.

Innovative approaches incorporating collaboration and sustainability are needed to strengthen the village movement’s reach and impact.
Volunteer-Powered

The beauty of the village movement is that villages are often volunteer-powered, and those who use its services can also provide resources to others. Due to the flexibility of volunteering with a village, participation varies, making it difficult to always fulfill requests. Some villages want to expand their reach and grow capacity by hiring paid staff to minimize obstacles associated with being all volunteer based.

Retired volunteers are invaluable advocates and supporters of the village movement. At the same time, there's a strong desire to recruit working professionals across the age spectrum who can volunteer their professional skills to further support villages in their work.

Reimagining The Village Model

A contingent of leaders in the village movement engaged in a national conversation on “Reimagining Villages.” In 2020, this pioneering campaign transformed the village model into a more inclusive, sustainable, and impactful part of our country’s community care infrastructure. The vision for this model varies. One model begins at a regional level rather than a local level, using a hub and spoke to ensure villages are professionally driven while increasing capacity and limiting duplication in governance and infrastructure.

Building a network of villages where collaboration is facilitated and partnerships are formed appeals more to funders. A shared revenue model enables long-term sustainability. Various village leaders recommend that these new innovative models and approaches can accomplish the following:

- Reduce the time and resources needed to start a village.
- Extend the scope to reach underserved and diverse population
- Build collaborations and strategic alliances.
- Address the health and well-being of communities as well as individuals.
- Leverage technology.
- Maintain the neighbor-helping-neighbor essence of a village.
In November 2019, Rich Harwood, author of the book *Stepping Forward: A Positive Practical Path to Transform Our Communities and Our Lives* and president of The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, was invited to give a keynote speech. Presented through Aspirations to Actions (A2A), a TPF initiative, Rich focused on how communities can come together to solve problems and inspire hope while creating change.

Following Rich's visit, TPF facilitated book circles to explore *Stepping Forward*’s concepts, like how communities can come together to solve issues. Deborah Gauvreau, a TPF consultant involved in A2A, decided to start a Stepping Forward book circle at her condominium. When the book circle finished, and it was time to step forward and take action, Mary Haber, a member of Dupont Circle Village, suggested forming a village in Sarasota.

Why a village in Sarasota? Sarasota County is home to one of Florida’s largest populations of older adults, with over a third (34%) aged 65 and older. Though Sarasota is rich in cultural activities and community services for all age groups, it would benefit from a village strengthening ties, encouraging healthier lifestyles, and promoting socialization.

Of the eight book circle participants, Deborah Gauvreau and Mary Haber took the lead in exploring the formation of a village in Sarasota.

"The book lays out a new path—where we rediscover what we share in common and actively build upon it. Where we value and draw upon the wisdom we already have to improve our lives and communities. Where we bring a greater sense of purpose and meaning back into our lives.

— Rich Harwood, Stepping Forward"
A Tribute to Mary Haber

Mary Haber had been on a lifelong adventure since leaving a small town in Germany at 16 to be a nanny in London. She came to the United States, settling in Washington, D.C., where she lived and worked for over 40 years. Mary recognized the value of building friendships and connections in the community, and with several residents, laid the groundwork for Dupont Circle Village.

In 2019, she joined the Stepping Forward book circle started by Deborah Gauvreau. Upon finishing the book, Mary proposed creating a village in Sarasota and later joined a small team exploring the concept in 2020, which evolved into UPLIFT Florida Network.

Mary became a resident of Sarasota when she moved into the Renaissance Condominiums. Mary, who passed away on March 27, 2023, did not see the full trajectory of her village vision. She is remembered for her energy, zest for life, and her passion for progress and innovation in Sarasota.

Deborah Gauvreau discussed with Debra Jacobs, President and CEO of TPF, the idea of forming a village becoming part of the work she does with TPF. TPF was honored and delighted to support a group of volunteers in doing so.

With that, she launched a Sarasota Village Exploratory Team with Mary Haber, Brenda MacKay (a good friend of Mary Haber), and Sue Berger, Sarasota County’s Aging System Coordinator. Together, they worked toward realizing the aspiration to create a village entity to enhance a strong community of resources. These early steps included growing the team, assessing the community’s needs and interests, and developing infrastructure. Many individuals played a role in their exploration and discovery throughout the process.

Key contributors to their early findings, research, and development included:

- Carol Paquette, Former President of The Village to Village Network’s Board of Directors
- Barbara Sullivan, National Director of The Village to Village Network
- Erin McLeod, President & CEO of Senior Friendship Centers
- Barbara Shearer, President of Neighbors Network of Lee County’s Board of Directors
- Lyn Trainer, Managing Director of Villages NW’s Board of Directors

As the Exploratory Team held community meetings, people shared their aspirations and interests relative to the village concept. They were enthusiastic about further strengthening services for older adults. Over time, it became clear that rather than creating separate villages, a regional hub organization was needed to create economies of scale, perform administrative functions, and leverage resources. With this understanding, Sarasota Village evolved into Suncoast Villages (SCV), a regional umbrella organization serving Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties.
Suncoast Villages needed a fiscal sponsor to provide financial management and administrative services that it could access as it built its infrastructure and capacity. Senior Friendship Centers (SCF), a nonprofit in the aging space for 50 years, was an ideal organization to serve in this capacity. SFC understood the population Suncoast Villages was trying to serve, worked in the communities where it hoped to build villages, and wanted to help a fellow nonprofit looking to work in the aging network.

The history and experience of the village movement over the past 20 years and the growing interest and community support in the Suncoast Region were strong indicators that it was the right time and place to create Suncoast Villages as a hub organization. Numerous villages currently use a hub business model to support sustainability because it eliminates duplication, accelerates the development of villages, and provides economy-of-scale savings. Spoke villages would handle day-to-day operations, programs and services, and local fundraising, whereas the hub would potentially oversee processing payroll, financial reporting, and background checks.

By spring 2020, the Suncoast Villages leadership team had evolved to include local volunteers such as Rachel Rivlin, Cynthia Kemp, Carol Levy, and Emile Gauvreau. Locally, dozens of meetings with leaders and organizations were held to listen, learn, share, and synthesize. Deborah and Emile Gauvreau also began convening the four villages in Florida and developed the Florida Villages Network to better understand the needs and aspirations of existing villages. These four villages include:

- Lutheran Intentional Village - Upper Pinellas
- Neighbors Network
- Neighbor to Neighbor in the Nenes
- Wellington Cares LLC, A Naturally Occurring Retirement Community

Interest from other areas of Florida emphasized the need for a coordinating organization for Florida’s emerging village movement. As a result, in early September 2021, Suncoast Villages worked to create a more meaningful and reflective name for Suncoast Villages.

UPLIFT Florida Network, Inc. was selected and registered. The mission of UPLIFT remained the same. The only difference was changing the focus from creating a regional hub that supports the formation of villages throughout the region to developing a statewide hub that supports existing villages and the formation of villages throughout the state.
Joining the conversation to “Reimagine Villages,” UPLIFT saw the opportunity to play an important role in the next generation of the village movement. The team pivoted to develop a new entity that would begin in Southwest Florida and eventually serve the state of Florida. The network would fulfill three key functions as the hub organization.

1. **Organizational Capacity** – Characterized by good leadership at all levels within the organization as well as strong infrastructure, systems, and processes.
2. **Performance** – Characterized by the development and growth of villages, collaborations, strategic alliances, innovation, impact, and financial sustainability.
3. **Culture** – Characterized by the values of compassion, collaboration, inclusion, innovation, and excellence.
4. **Funding** – Characterized by achieving financial sustainability through diversified funding sources and effectively deploying necessary resources.

In fall 2021, their path forward focused on addressing those four key areas.

**The Successes**

**Organizational Capacity**

From the beginning, UPLIFT was comprised and powered by a core group of committed and passionate individuals who genuinely see its value and are willing to use their time, talent, and treasures to create a future that will help people age in place. At the forefront was Deborah Gauvreau, described as the organization’s visionary and the lead driver behind the early momentum. She energized the idea of creating a village and could discern and devise strategies to transform concepts and aspirations into actions for people to execute, all while inspiring others to participate. With the opportunity to include UPLIFT as her body of TPF work, she provided strategic (human capital assistance) and tactical (technical assistance) support. Later, Kiarra Louis supported her in developing systems, strategies, and processes to advance UPLIFT while striving for excellence.
In the early stages, a Formation Body Team was formed to prepare the organization’s 501(c)(3) application. These individuals included Brenda Mackay, Carol Levy, Cynthia Kemp, Rachel Rivlin, Sue Berger, Emile Gauvreau, Deborah Gauvreau, and Kiarra Louis. Their work explored how UPLIFT could provide villages with a 501(c)(3), create relationships to strengthen services for older adults, and engage in new strategies, services, and alliances.

Nearly a year later, in March 2022, UPLIFT elected its first Board of Directors: Emile Gauvreau (President), Cynthia Kemp (Vice President), Bill Little (Treasurer), Rachel Rivlin (Secretary), LaVerne Green, Carol Levy, and Pam Mahoney. Sue Berger, Deborah Gauvreau, Brenda MacKay, and Kiarra Louis continued to be key members of the leadership committee as they worked toward creating the entity. With their diverse skills, ranging from corporate insurance to aging to military, each of their perspectives and abilities propels the organization.
Hub Capacity
UPLIFT’s working board plans and implements organizational strategies and objectives. They strive to adopt and follow best practices and make meaningful personal contributions according to their means to attain 100% board giving. With board members Rachel Rivlin and Emile Gauvreau at the helm of creating UPLIFT’s corporate structure, UPLIFT successfully developed its organizational documents and financial management policies.

In April 2023, the board began refining the design of the organization’s structure to form well-defined teams to facilitate its operations and recruit volunteers and board members.
UPLIFT’s 2022 Annual Report shared its key accomplishments for the year. Under Emile Gauvreau’s leadership, the Hub Capacity Team, including Rachel Rivlin and Roger Blanken, qualified UPLIFT as a charitable organization in a local and national nonprofit directory – the Community Foundation of Sarasota County’s Giving Partner and Candid’s GuideStar. They also developed a board best practices program to engage new board members and opened a bank account, laying the groundwork for UPLIFT to end its fiscal sponsor relationship with SFC.

The Marketing and Communications (MarCom) and Technology teams also have noteworthy accomplishments. With support and leadership from Kiarra Louis, the MarCom team, including Brenda MacKay and Emile Gauvreau, achieved record-breaking open rates for its monthly newsletter. Brenda MacKay and Kiarra Louis also worked to further develop UPLIFT’s technology by launching a public-facing website using Helpful Village (HV) software and setting up a suite of applications to support UPLIFT’s mission.

Village Formation and Integration
Since June 2022, Pam Mahoney and Cathy Lieblich, co-leads of the Village Formation Team, have virtually convened representatives from the four existing villages and two developing villages in Florida to create an exchange of learning and sharing. These meetings continue to evolve to offer the villages information and resources.

By using this process for formation and ongoing operations, a village can take advantage of partnerships within the community and enhance services while avoiding duplication. ABCD is not a one-and-done process. Villages should continue to use this process in all stages of their lifecycle to understand their members' changing capabilities and needs and their broader community environment of alliances and partners. By doing so, villages can continue to be relevant to members while sustaining and expanding their membership, services, and internal operations.

— Pam Mahoney
To strengthen relationships with the villages, the board launched a listening tour to better understand how each village meets the needs of its community, their challenges, and their perceptions of how UPLIFT can help them achieve greater impact.

The best way for UPLIFT Florida Network to predict its future is to create it – together with the current and future villages across Florida.

— Cynthia Kemp

In addition to the villages, UPLIFT continues to seek opportunities to form strategic alliances and partnerships with various organizations to support its mission.

Development
Led by Cynthia Kemp, the Development Team’s accomplishments are primarily centered around laying the foundation for long-term success. Investment in UPLIFT begins with the commitment of board members to contribute. The entire UPLIFT board financially supported the organization in 2022. A generous match from TPF leveraged these donations to magnify the impact. Anticipating that philanthropic foundations and mission-minded individuals will be an essential source of financial sustainability, the team created a foundation for future giving. Strategies include developing UPLIFT’s value proposition and creating a database of potential grantors whose giving profile matches UPLIFT’s mission.

Culture
UPLIFT’s ongoing efforts to develop a statewide hub organization that strengthens and reimagines the 20-year national village movement is bold, inspirational, tenacious, and innovative — a true testimony to its values. The Gauvreau’s have been a dynamic duo and a driving force behind the innovation. Recognizing the challenges villages face and understanding the potential impact of new models and approaches, they willingly experimented with a more scalable and sustainable model. This process of constantly reimagining what villages could be is contagious and has spread throughout the organization.

Cynthia Kemp, UPLIFT’s board president, shares the passion and vision for reimagining villages. To her, the effort to reimagine villages confirms the value and potential of UPLIFT as a statewide network, and like many others within the organization, she is excited to see UPLIFT fulfill its potential. With her leadership, UPLIFT is searching for ways to connect and collaborate with others and explore new possibilities that strengthen the capacity, functionality, and impact of current and future villages in Florida.
The Challenges

Building Its Capacity
In June 2022, Deborah Gauvreau unexpectedly needed to take a step back from her role in the organization. With the loss of her direction and momentum, UPLIFT’s work paused as leadership determined the best path forward to achieve the vision. Increasing the people power fueling UPLIFT’s engine was still top of mind, but progress slowed on that front and continues to be challenging. As the saying goes, many hands make light work, and UPLIFT needs many more hands. There is a need to identify volunteer opportunities within the organization, determine the necessary skills and expertise, and fill those positions with the right people.

Optimizing Its Performance
Due to limited capacity, implementing the strategies and tactics in UPLIFT’s strategic plan can be described as slow-moving. The volunteers generously supporting this body of work with their time and energy are doing their best but recognize that paid staff is needed to increase productivity, performance, and execution.

Operating during COVID-19
UPLIFT’s early beginning proved people can accomplish all sorts of things during the pandemic, including starting a new nonprofit. As someone shared, the meat and potatoes of most villages are being out in the community and engaging with others. Although UPLIFT made great strides by operating and engaging virtually, incorporating more in-person connections and engagements is key to finding people with shared aspirations.

Developing a Strong Culture and Identity
Creating a strong culture and identity is essential to recruiting the right people with the right skills for the organization. Since values can lay the groundwork for an organization’s identity, there is a need for UPLIFT’s leadership to define what its values of compassion, collaboration, inclusion, innovation, and excellence mean and identify how they will infuse them in their work.

Finding Investors
Masterfully, leadership leveraged the generosity of its board and TPF’s match to begin funding operations. More philanthropic individuals and organizations interested in investing in UPLIFT’s mission are needed to accelerate the implementation of UPLIFT’s strategic vision to help older adults in Florida age in their place of choice. With each iteration, UPLIFT’s value proposition is further refined, but it still is not quite where it needs to be. Additional strategies are needed to explain its purpose, value, and the impact it can achieve with financial support.

To capitalize on its efforts, UPLIFT must continue to overcome its challenges and seize existing opportunities to propel it toward achieving key priorities.
The Opportunities

Below are four overarching opportunities to propel UPLIFT toward achieving its mission, vision, and desired impact.

Strengthen the Organization’s Governance
To increase the board's productivity, there must be an ongoing exploration and execution of board best practices, such as developing well-defined roles and responsibilities, tracking and evaluating effectiveness, and more. Creating and sending update reports before each board meeting ensures members know the organization's inner workings while focusing on developing strategies, making decisions, and creating actionable steps.

UPLIFT continues to pivot and evolve. Creating a well-established and dynamic orientation program introduces new individuals to the organization, its mission, and its programs as defined by the organization. Walking through UPLIFT’s history builds an understanding of where the organization has been, where it is now, where it wants to go, and what has worked and what hasn’t. An orientation quickens the learning curve of new members, gets them quickly engaged in the board’s activities, and ensures everyone is working within the same framework and with the same blueprint.

Diversify the Wealth of Knowledge and Perspectives
Given this important work, there are opportunities to expand the skills and experiences of UPLIFT’s current people power across age, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Leadership can work toward identifying individuals with expertise in building a statewide organization and those with a statewide perspective. Adding to the team, representatives throughout Florida better inform, support, and strengthen UPLIFT’s efforts to build and structure the hub’s operations.

To grow its volunteer base, UPLIFT can leverage universities and colleges to connect with professors and students involved in aging studies and similar programs and join business networks such as chambers of commerce to further the reach of its recruitment.

Secure the Funding Needed to Implement and Execute
As UPLIFT’s leadership seeks substantial dollars from regional and national funders and investors, they should consider tapping into the robust philanthropic network in the Suncoast region. Although these grants may be relatively smaller and have restrictions (ex. limited to capacity or capital purposes), applying for and receiving one or more local grants is a pathway for UPLIFT to grow its funds, demonstrate impact, build its credibility, and further refine its message and story to provide its value to other potential funders. Reaching out to regional philanthropic leaders is one way to tap into the existing collective resources and gain visibility.

Significant funding is needed for UPLIFT to operate at a high level, hire staff, and transition from being volunteer-powered to professionally driven. However, there are also additional yet smaller costs that grants could help with, such as hiring freelancers or consultants to bridge capacity gaps or purchasing software to help organize, streamline, and prioritize. Identifying how small and large funding can be used in the short- and long-term to grow the organization into the hub it wants to be is invaluable.
Back in 2020, TPF seeded the creation of what a group of committed volunteers had wanted and stayed at the table as UPLIFT found its identity and built its capacity. Three years later, the end of TPF’s engagement with UPLIFT can be described as a sunset.

UPLIFT’s important work continues under the leadership of its board of directors as TPF continues to laud with excitement and pride at the energy and talent around the table. With its efforts to reimagine villages and affirmation from governmental agencies, community and aging-oriented organizations, and philanthropic organizations, UPLIFT’s innovative approach can transform community care for older adults statewide across the socioeconomic spectrum.

UPLIFT’s progress thus far has been filled with successes, challenges, and opportunities as its team continues to explore new possibilities to make meaningful changes.

As it looks toward the future, UPLIFT will continue to build a strong organization to advance its mission, enhance its already strong leadership team, expand its talent and experience base, and establish itself firmly as a statewide organization providing services to villages and organizations throughout Florida.
As the partnership between TPF and UPLIFT Florida Network closes, success is celebrated. TPF is proud to have been a catalyst for UPLIFT’s work in the Suncoast Region and beyond and generously dedicated time and resources to develop this impact report. TPF would also like to thank those interviewed to create this impact report.

**Acknowledgments**

Cynthia Kemp, Board President
Diana Shoemaker, Board Vice President
Roger Blanken, Board Treasurer
Emile Gauvreau, Board Secretary and Past Board President
Pamela Baron Mahoney, Board Member
Cathy Lieblich, Board Member
Bill Little, Board Member

Ex-officio:
- Brenda MacKay, Founding Volunteer
- Sue Berger, Sarasota County’s Aging System Coordinator

Other
- Rachel Rivlin, Former Board Secretary

**UPLIFT Leadership and Team**

**Board of Directors**
- Cynthia Kemp, Board President
- Diana Shoemaker, Board Vice President
- Roger Blanken, Board Treasurer
- Emile Gauvreau, Board Secretary and Past Board President
- Pamela Baron Mahoney, Board Member
- Cathy Lieblich, Board Member
- Bill Little, Board Member

**Villages in Florida**
- Cathy Lieblich, President, Neighbors Network
- Carrie Gaudio, Executive Director, Neighbor to Neighbor in the Nenes
- Diane Gutman, Director of Operations, Wellington Cares LLC, A Naturally Occurring Retirement Community
- Margo Walbolt, Lutheran Intentional Village - Upper Pinellas
- Patty Duncan, Co-Lead, Neighbors Network of Lee County

**Local and National Individual Organizations**
- David Blehar, Chief Financial Officer & Chief Operating Officer, Senior Friendship Centers
- Joel Shapira, Founder and Chief Orchestrator of Beyond Age Consulting
- Suzy Brenner, Executive Director; The Longboat Key The Paradise Center

**The Patterson Foundation**
- Debra Jacobs, President and CEO
- Deborah Gauvreau, TPF Consultant
- Kiarra Louis, Initiative Support Coordinator
Evolution of UPLIFT

2019
- Deborah Gauvreau, a TPF consultant, begins a *Stepping Forward* book circle at her condominium to connect, learn, and share with her new neighbors. Book circle participant, Mary Haber, becomes inspired by the idea of creating a Sarasota Village.

2020
- Of the eight book circle participants, Deborah Gauvreau and Mary Haber take the lead in exploring the formation of a Sarasota Village.
- TPF begins facilitating the incubation of a Sarasota Village.
- Brenda MacKay, Emile Gauvreau, Sue Berger, and Cynthia Kemp join the movement to make the idea of a Sarasota Village a reality.

2021
- The Exploratory Team’s research guides the development of a hub. Suncoast Villages becomes the new model to serve Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties, and Senior Friendship Centers becomes the fiscal sponsor for the organization.
- The organization’s name changes from Suncoast Villages to UPLIFT Florida Network to better reflect the mission and statewide focus.

2022
- UPLIFT receives approval from the IRS for its 501(c)(3) status.
- UPLIFT elects its first board of directors and hosts a virtual Lift Off event to formally announce the new organization within Florida’s ecosystem.
- UPLIFT’s village development initiative launches with a village formation orientation for individuals interested in forming a village and organizations interested in creating a strategic partnership.
- Deborah and Emile Gauvreau present at the Florida Blue Foundation’s 17th Annual Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards conference. Their presentation “Healthy Aging for All Floridians – A Fresh Approach,” gives attendees insights into burdens arising from demographic shifts and covers UPLIFT’s development.
- Pam Mahoney and Cathy Lieblich begin hosting ongoing meetings to engage representatives from existing villages and developing villages in Florida.
- Deborah decides to close her TPF chapter and begins supporting the transition of UPLIFT from TPF’s portfolio.
- UPLIFT’s Board launches a listening tour to understand how each village meets the unique needs of its community, gain greater clarity around the challenges villages face, and discover perceptions of the role UPLIFT can play.

2023
- UPLIFT has its first-ever official board meeting and selects its 2023–2024 officers.
- TPF closes its engagement with the UPLIFT initiative and discontinues its staff and consultant time related to the initiative. The TPF’s UPLIFT webpage moves from “Current Initiatives” to “Past Initiatives.”