



AVUS Connect

Volunteer Newsletter

September 2022

Our Experiences with AVUS Connect at United HomeCare



My Adventures in the AVUS Connect Program

Ana Acosta
Student, Doral Academy

My name is Ana Acosta. I have been a volunteer in the AVUS Connect program at United HomeCare since 2021. At first, I became a volunteer because I wanted to complete my community service hours for school, but then I learned the true meaning of the AVUS Connect Program which is not only a place to do community hours, but to learn, make nice memories, and see things as elderly people do. I have met new people and hear all types of stories about what they are going through in life.

After learning the true meaning of the program, I wanted to make a difference. I wanted seniors to feel appreciated, to show them that they are not alone and have someone who is willing to listen to them even if they tell the same story every time we call. Another reason I became a volunteer is because most of the people that we called reminded me of my own family experience and the way we always talked to each other when I was a child.



AVUS Connect Benefits Seniors and Volunteers

Lucas Bogardus
Student, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School

My name is Lucas Bogardus. I have been a volunteer in the AVUS program since February 2021. I am actually one of the Co-Founders of the program; I became part of the project after my good friend Shawn Martinez brought it up to me. I thought of it as a good opportunity to finish my service hours for school. As soon as I made my first call, I realized I had become part of something much bigger and more beneficial for the community than I thought.

AVUS was a huge eye opener to me about senior isolation and depression, seniors are forgotten members of our community. Just like anyone, they need someone to talk to, in order to not feel alone. They are truly human encyclopedias with numerous amounts of stories and lessons. I never would have thought I was going to learn so many new things from simply making a call. AVUS is just as beneficial to the seniors as it is to the callers, and I truly recommend volunteering.



My Experience with AVUS Connect

Carmen Figueroa
Student, Doral Academy

My name is Carmen Figueroa, I am an AVUS Connect, United HomeCare volunteer, and I started volunteering in the program during late September of 2021.

At first, I didn't know much about AVUS Connect or United HomeCare's non-profit mission, only the things my two other friends told me. I was interested in an instant. To begin with, I was very nervous because I did not know what to do, what to say or how to communicate with the elderly, but little by little I got comfortable. Every call I made, it was a different story, different cultures, and different lives; and I got to learn a lot from them.

This program made me realize a lot, and they gave me multiple life lessons like, for example, that life is short and that every moment will go as fast as a flash. With these seniors, I get to be myself and not have to pretend to be someone else because that's how comfortable I've gotten with them. United HomeCare is the perfect place and AVUS Connect is the perfect program to make new friends, learn social skills, get more comfortable with the world, and feel safe with the people around us.



Volunteering Increases Awareness

Bismark Omane-Achamfour
Student, Barbara Goldman Senior High School

While being stationed as a volunteer at United HomeCare, it has been an amazing experience. I came into this not knowing what to expect, thinking it would be a waste of time. This volunteer opportunity idea was introduced to me by my father. He believed it would be a learning experience and would benefit me since it would give me necessary community service hours for my high school graduation.

I don't do too much talking, but here at United HomeCare, I am easily able to converse with the adults and young adults my age. This program has improved my communication and listening skills and gave me new insight about the elderly. To be completely honest, I didn't pay much attention to elderly citizens before this program. Although I would perform good Samaritan-like actions; for example, opening the door and holding it or picking up their belongings if it were to be dropped. They were always furthest in the back of my mind. But then I came to United HomeCare and realized that keeping the youth alive through inter-generational contact with the elderly is a beautiful sight. It's always great to help senior citizens understand how crucial they are to the environment.

Our Experiences with AVUS Connect at United HomeCare



Making an Impact on the Community

Alexander Montero Jr. Student, Pinecrest Preparatory

Hello to everyone reading this. My name is Alexander Montero Jr., and I am an AVUS Connect Summer Intern at United HomeCare. I want to share my experiences at United HomeCare under the AVUS Connect Intergenerational Youth-led Volunteer Program. First, I want to give a big thank you to Blanca, Maglio, Elie-

ser, Carlos, Roger, Alina, Ana, and Carmen, and all the other staff and team members for making the workspace and environment phenomenal.

Since day one, I felt at accustomed to the place and warmly welcomed by all employees at United HomeCare. We had a big event the following week with me joining the Village of Allapattah YMCA Family Center to help distribute Hurricane Preparedness Meal Kits to Older Adults. Prior to this event, my partners and I had a lot of prep work to accomplish to get ready for the event. We had to prepare bags which contained FPL hurricane safety information and United HomeCare services information that can help the elderly who are in need home care supports. In total, we prepared five hundred of these bags for the event.

Furthermore, we needed to put labels created by FPL and the Florida Council on Aging on the Hurricane Prevention Meal Kits to promote hurricane safety and highlight the various groups which have come together to help older adult communities throughout Florida. Prior to the start of the event, we went to the Village of Allapattah YMCA Family Center and continued to put labels on the Hurricane Prevention Meal Kits. Once we finished, we proudly distributed 300 Hurricane Prevention Meal Kits to the elderly of the Village of Allapattah so they could ensure their emergency food requirements would be met during this hurricane season. Hopefully, Miami will be hurricane free this year!

During my time there, I learned a lot about the importance of volunteering and how this type of work is what ties the communities of Miami-Dade together. I am proud to be part of United HomeCare and the AVUS Connect Intergenerational Youth-led Volunteer Program, along with great minds like Shawn Martinez, Blanca Ceballos and many more who make our community more resilient and stronger. Together, we can really make an impact on this community.



Not Just Community Hours

Maxwell Omane-Achamfour Student, Barbara Goldman Senior High School

In the academia, students often gloss over the communal impacts they can have in an environment due to the focus of community hours being the most important element of their work. However, at AVUS Connect, it has been made distinct and general practice not to only give hours but to value the individual effects students can have in a community by volunteering, revising the conventional approach of most.

This program profoundly expands on a rather widening gap of neglect between younger and older generations, leaving the elderly to mild and severe isolation from loved ones and common visitors. That said, participating in this program helps students to maintain exposure to this issue, creating much more hospitable connections for elders through phone calls or video chats.

Volunteers can also assist with charitable events. Of considerable mention are the possible openings for students to access other internships facilitated by the sponsorship of United HomeCare. Join today and help Older Adults by volunteering with AVUS Connect. "



My AVUS Connect Experience

Gabriella Valdes Student, Miami Springs Senior High School

My name is Gabriella Valdes, and I am currently a junior at Miami Springs Senior High School and began participating in the AVUS Connect program at the beginning of July.

Initially, I chose United HomeCare to gain work experience in the health field but what I have learned has been much more enriching to my life. I have been able to expand my communication and leadership skills while learning how to efficiently work in a team. I have been able to give back to the elders who have made Miami into the city it is today. Through events such as the Hurricane Meal Kit Distribution at Patterson Senior Center, myself and other volunteers had the privilege of interacting first-hand with the seniors in our community and witnessing the importance of staying connected and "united" with those around us. During my time in the office, my team members and I have been able to make phone calls to various seniors. Seniors, often overlooked, are unique in their own ways and have been able to give me pieces of wisdom while taking us all on a trip down memory lane.

United HomeCare has provided me with a fun, unique, and memorable experience. I am proud to be a part of the AVUS Connect program and hope to continue participating in this program in the future and making an impact on my community.



**Join our team as an AVUS Connect Volunteer
and check out upcoming opportunities!**

avusconnect.org

Founder of United HomeCare's AVUS Connect honored at the Florida Conference on Aging



On August 23, Shawn Martinez, Founder of United HomeCare's AVUS Connect Senior Assurance Program was awarded the 2022 Quality Senior Living Award for Public Service for his many accomplishments at the Florida Conference on Aging. The award was sponsored by FPL and the Florida Council on Aging.

The 2022 Florida Conference on Aging was presented by the Florida Council on Aging, Florida Association of Aging Services Providers, and State of Florida Department of Elder Affairs in Orlando, FL at the Hyatt Regency. The awards luncheon featured a special speech by Dave Barry. Awards were presented by Steve Whitworth, Assist Program Area Lead Manager, FPL.

The Quality Senior Living Award recognizes individuals and organizations whose efforts have improved the quality of life of older Floridians.



Join AVUS Connect and United HomeCare at the Walk to End Alzheimer's Disease



WHEN: Saturday, November 19, 2022
TIME: 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
WHERE: FIU Football Stadium
11200 SW 8th Street, Miami, FL 33199
REGISTER: <http://act.alz.org/goto/unitedhomecare>



**Help us achieve
our goal of**

100

team walkers!

AVUS CONNECT



Become an AVUS Tech Pal™
Help alleviate isolation &
loneliness in elders

Volunteer with United HomeCare

You will help setup computer tablets
and educate seniors on how to use them



Visit us online:
avusconnect.org



United
HOMECARE®

There's just no place like home.

Call today! Stipends available.

Blanca Ceballos, Community Relations Manager
305-716-0736

bceballos@unitedhomecare.com

8400 NW 33rd Street, Suite 400
Miami, Florida 33122
unitedhomecare.com

United HomeCare, the agency for your home care needs, is a non-profit and community-based organization serving older adults and family caregivers since 1973.



**AVUS
Connect**

8400 NW 33rd Street, Suite 400

Miami, Florida 33122

Phone: (305) 716-0710 or (305) 716-0736

avusconnect.org