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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

According to Don Anderson, Sharon Hughes 'just showed up' at his house one day late last fall. The Hughes and the Andersons have been fast friends ever since.

Sharon Hughes did show up at the home of Don Anderson and his wife Eloise at the prompting of an e-mail she received from Sue Dunn , Community Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church who initiated the Cary Grove Neighborhood Life program, a ministry of Willow Creek. The Cary Grove Neighborhood Life program is a partner with Faith in Action McHenry County's (FIAMC) pilot program, the Senior Connection.

The program started when Dunn began to organize neighborhoods for the purpose of building community and helping those neighbors who have some difficulty helping themselves. The neighborhood groups had a desire to reach out to the seniors in their communities, so Dunn contacted FIAMC, a faith-based service organization dedicated to working with McHenry County Seniors who live at home, to find seniors who might be in need of a friendly 'neighbor'. "I got the e-mail from Sue," says Hughes and saw that the Andersons were just a block away. I responded back immediately." It wasn't long before the Anderson family 'adopted' Sharon Hughes and her family, including their dog, Jackson and within weeks Hughes wrote to Dunn to report her jubilation in the relationship that she and her family had struck up with her octogenarian neighbors. The Senior Connection pilot not only worked, but had a mutually beneficial outcome.

"The relationship that the Hughes and Andersons developed exceeded all of our expectations," says Faith in Action McHenry County's (FIAMC) Executive Director, Rhonda Anderson. "Recognizing that the predictions show that McHenry County's 60+ population will nearly triple in the next 15-20 years, it is obvious that the Senior Connection program is the wave of the future to help our organization meet the increasing demand for services."

McHenry County Community Foundation also saw the value in the FIAMC Senior Connection program and granted the organization \$2500 to pursue other community groups who might like to involve themselves in the lives of seniors and their neighborhood. The Foundation, which was established to create a permanent endowment that will meet the changing needs and interests of the people of McHenry County, has supported past FIAMC initiatives including Safe and Flip Day and a transportation booklet that was published by FIAMC.

“We are extremely grateful to the McHenry County Community Foundation for allowing us to continue these special projects which enhance the lives of seniors in the county to the benefit of all,” says Anderson.

“I’m just so happy that I took a chance and tried becoming involved with the Andersons,” says Sharon Hughes, underscoring what the Senior Connection program has meant to her as a volunteer. “You start out going to serve and you end up being served!”

To find out how you can become involved in the FIAMC Senior Connection program please call 815.455.3120 for more information.