



Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors

Laurel Area Faith in Action



2025-2026



Newsletter

A Season of Renewal: Finding Hope and Grace in any Season

As 2026 unfolds, the days grow longer and light begins to linger again. The rush of January's new beginnings has quieted, and the steady rhythm of the year invites us into a gentler kind of renewal — one that grows with time, rooted in patience and purpose.

Embracing Continued Renewal

March reminds us that growth is rarely sudden. It begins in stillness, deep beneath the surface, where life quietly takes hold. It is time to pause, breathe deeply, and let go of what still weighs us down. Every ending carries a new beginning within it, and every day offers a chance to live with greater intention, openness, and love.

The Enduring Power of Hope

Hope is the steady flame that keeps us moving forward when progress feels slow. It reminds us that even what seems dormant can bloom again. Hope asks us to trust the process — to believe that renewal often happens in the quiet spaces where change is still taking shape.

Living with Purpose

Purpose gives direction to our hope. It moves us beyond ourselves and toward one another. Purpose shows up in how we treat people, in our willingness to listen, and in the compassion we extend. Even small acts of kindness, done with care, can have lasting meaning. When we live from a place of purpose, every ordinary moment becomes sacred.

The Gift of Giving

Fulfillment often comes not from what we accomplish, but from what we share. When we give our time, attention, and kindness, we shift our focus from what is lacking to what can be offered. Giving connects us to something greater — awakening joy and reminding us that our lives make a difference, even in quiet ways.

Grace for Others — and Ourselves

Grace is what allows us to move through the year with gentleness. It helps us meet others with patience rather than frustration, understanding instead of judgment. Grace recognizes that everyone is carrying unseen burdens. Just as importantly, we need to extend grace to ourselves — releasing perfection, celebrating small steps forward, and trusting that growth unfolds in its own time. With grace, we free ourselves to begin again and again.

Growing in Peace

Peace blossoms where hope, purpose, and grace meet. It is not the absence of difficulty, but the quiet confidence that we are exactly where we need to be. This peace keeps us steady through change and reminds us that even in uncertainty, beauty is still blooming within and around us. As you journey through 2026, may you be grounded in hope that sustains you, purpose that guides you, generosity that lifts others, and grace that frees your heart.

Grace and peace,

Amy
Executive Director

Hearts & Hands Helping Seniors Turns 25

A Legacy of Caring for Our Neighbors

This year, **Hearts & Hands Helping Seniors**, Laurel Area Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers, Inc., proudly celebrates **25 years of service** to our community. What began in **2001** as a simple idea rooted in compassion has grown into a trusted program that supports our senior neighbors with care, dignity, and connection.

Since **2001**, Hearts & Hands Helping Seniors, LAIVC, has continued to grow and evolve to meet the changing needs of those we serve. Through the dedication of our volunteers and the generosity of our supporters, the program has expanded its reach and strengthened its impact across the community.

In **2025 alone**, Hearts & Hands Helping Seniors volunteers provided **more than 9,200 hours of service** to recipients. These hours represent transportation to appointments, help with everyday needs, and—most importantly—human connection. Every ride given, every pantry filled, every pleasant voice on the other end of the phone, and every hand extended and every smile shared reflects the mission at the heart of Hearts & Hands Helping Seniors.

Our **volunteers are truly the heart of this organization**. Their time, compassion, and commitment turn good intentions into meaningful action. Without them, this program simply would not exist.

Hearts & Hands Helping Seniors also relies on the **generous donations and support of our community** to sustain this vital work and ensure we can continue providing services to our senior neighbors. Community support makes it possible for us to serve today while planning for tomorrow.

As we mark this 25-year milestone, **the need is real and the moment is now**. The services Hearts & Hands Helping Seniors provides depends on people stepping forward—**today**. Whether you can give your time as a volunteer or make a financial contribution, **your action right now matters!**

Without continued community support, these services cannot continue. With it, Hearts & Hands Helping Seniors can remain a lifeline for senior neighbors who depend on us. **Please act today—volunteer, donate, and help ensure this legacy of care continues for the next 25 years and beyond.**

*25th Anniversary
Celebration*



**Hearts and Hands
Helping Seniors**



We're Going Digital: Quarterly Newsletter Now Delivered Electronically

We are excited to share that our quarterly newsletter is going electronic! This change allows us to:

- Provide you with timely updates and news more efficiently
- Reduce our environmental impact by using less paper
- Be more financially responsible by saving printing and postage costs
- Offer a more interactive and accessible reading experience

Starting with our Spring 2026 edition, you will be able to read our newsletter through a link on our website — Laurelfia.org — and via a link posted on our Facebook page.

If you would prefer to receive the newsletter as part of our email blast, please make sure we have your current email address on file so you can stay up to date. Simply send a message from your current address to faithinaction@msn.com to confirm your information.

If you do not have access to the internet and would like to continue receiving a printed version, please contact us at 724-539-4357 to be added to the mailing list.

Thank you for helping us make this sustainable transition and for being a valued part of our community!

URGENT: Standing With the Seniors Who Built Our Community!!!

Right now, seniors in our community are facing impossible choices. Choosing between groceries and medication. Choosing between paying the electric bill and filling a prescription. Missing a much needed medical appointment because they can no longer drive themselves safely. Sitting alone for days on end because their friends are getting older and their family has either moved away or are too busy with their own lives to reach out just to talk.

At **Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors**, we are dedicated to ensuring that older adults are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. They have spent their lives building families, careers, and communities. Now, they deserve our support in return. But today, the need is growing faster than ever — and we **urgently need your help!**

The Growing Crisis Among Seniors

We are seeing a significant increase in requests for assistance. More seniors are reaching out for:

- Emergency food support from the food bank and emergency pantries.
- Transportation to critical medical appointments.
- Help with picking up medications and essential items.
- Help accessing assistance for rising heating costs
- Requests for friendly visits have risen significantly.
- Assistance with small home repairs, changing lightbulbs, leaking faucet, running toilet.
- Opportunities for social connection to combat isolation. Isolation and depression are a major issue as mobility decreases. These conditions can exacerbate medical conditions and significantly decrease quality of life.

Many of the seniors we serve live on fixed incomes that simply no longer stretch far enough. Even a small financial setback can spiral into a crisis. Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors is here to provide assistance to help our recipients remain living independently in their own homes while maintaining an optimum quality of life. Without immediate funding, we may be forced to limit services at a time when demand continues to rise. That is not a decision we want to make — especially when vulnerable older adults are depending on us.

Your Gift Makes Immediate and Lasting Impact

When you donate today, you are doing more than funding a program — you are providing stability, dignity, and human connection. Your support can:

- Put nutritious meals on a senior's table
- Ensure someone gets to a life-saving medical appointment
- Prevent a utility shutoff through enabling referral assistance
- Provide reassurance through a friendly check-in
- Help a senior remain safely and independently in their own home
- Every dollar makes a direct and measurable difference.

Time Is Critical

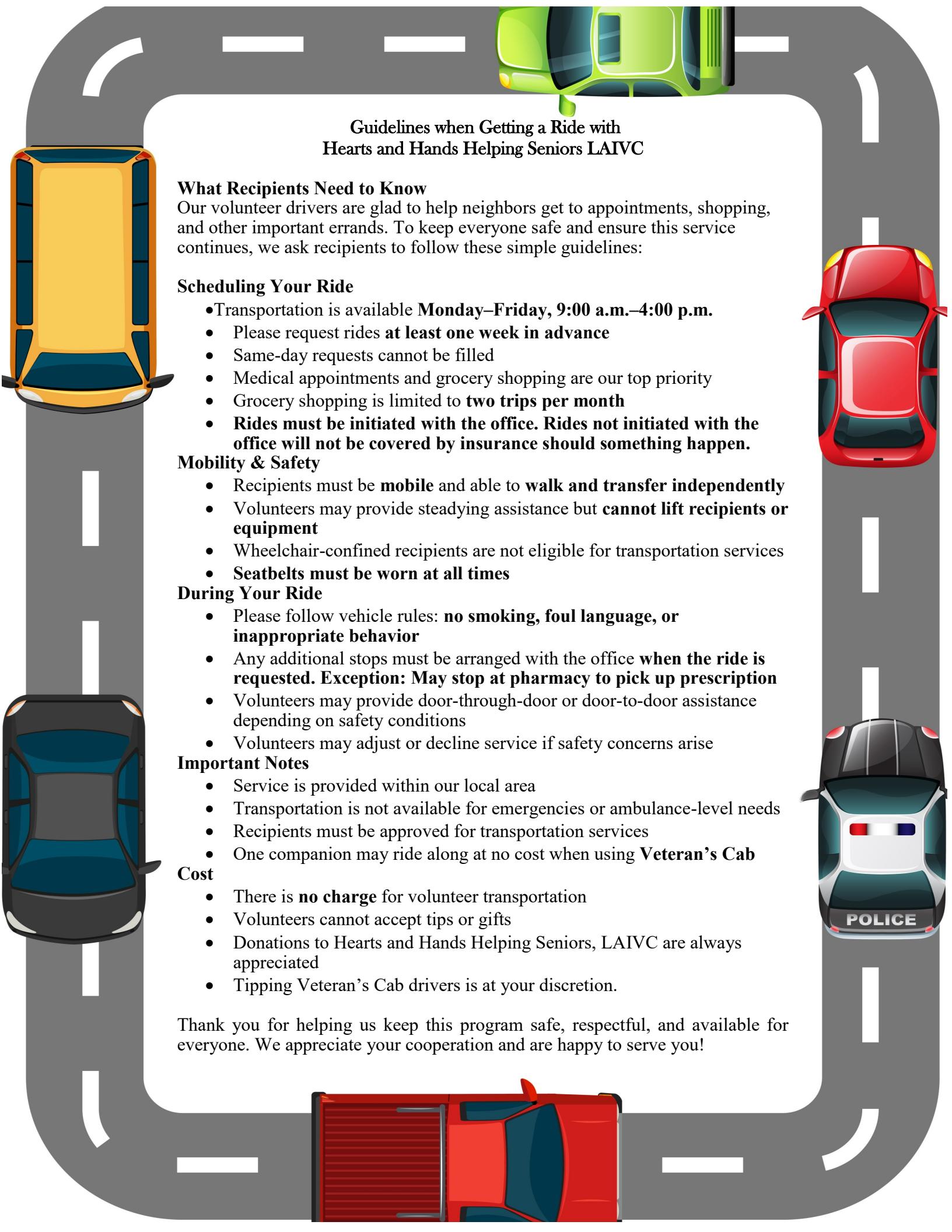
We cannot meet this growing need alone. We are working tirelessly to ensure that no senior feels forgotten, hungry, or alone. We cannot continue at this pace without immediate community support. The seniors we serve are our parents, grandparents, neighbors, veterans, and mentors. They once cared for our community. Now they need us to stand with them. If you have ever wondered whether your gift truly matters—it does. Please consider making an urgent donation today to help us meet this growing need.

- Donate now at Laurelfia.org
- Become a monthly supporter. It is easy to set up through ZEFFY. The online giving platform on our web-site. Simply scan the QR Code and you will see the donation link on our website.
- Mail check to Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors, LAIVC at PO Box 854, Latrobe PA 15650

Your compassion today ensures that no senior in our community feels forgotten, hungry, or alone. Our senior neighbors once cared for us. Today, they need us to care for them.

Thank you for standing with those who once stood for all of us. Your generosity makes all the difference. Thank you for acting quickly and compassionately!!!





Guidelines when Getting a Ride with Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors LAIVC

What Recipients Need to Know

Our volunteer drivers are glad to help neighbors get to appointments, shopping, and other important errands. To keep everyone safe and ensure this service continues, we ask recipients to follow these simple guidelines:

Scheduling Your Ride

- Transportation is available **Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.**
- Please request rides **at least one week in advance**
- Same-day requests cannot be filled
- Medical appointments and grocery shopping are our top priority
- Grocery shopping is limited to **two trips per month**
- **Rides must be initiated with the office. Rides not initiated with the office will not be covered by insurance should something happen.**

Mobility & Safety

- Recipients must be **mobile** and able to **walk and transfer independently**
- Volunteers may provide steadyng assistance but **cannot lift recipients or equipment**
- Wheelchair-confined recipients are not eligible for transportation services
- **Seatbelts must be worn at all times**

During Your Ride

- Please follow vehicle rules: **no smoking, foul language, or inappropriate behavior**
- Any additional stops must be arranged with the office **when the ride is requested. Exception: May stop at pharmacy to pick up prescription**
- Volunteers may provide door-through-door or door-to-door assistance depending on safety conditions
- Volunteers may adjust or decline service if safety concerns arise

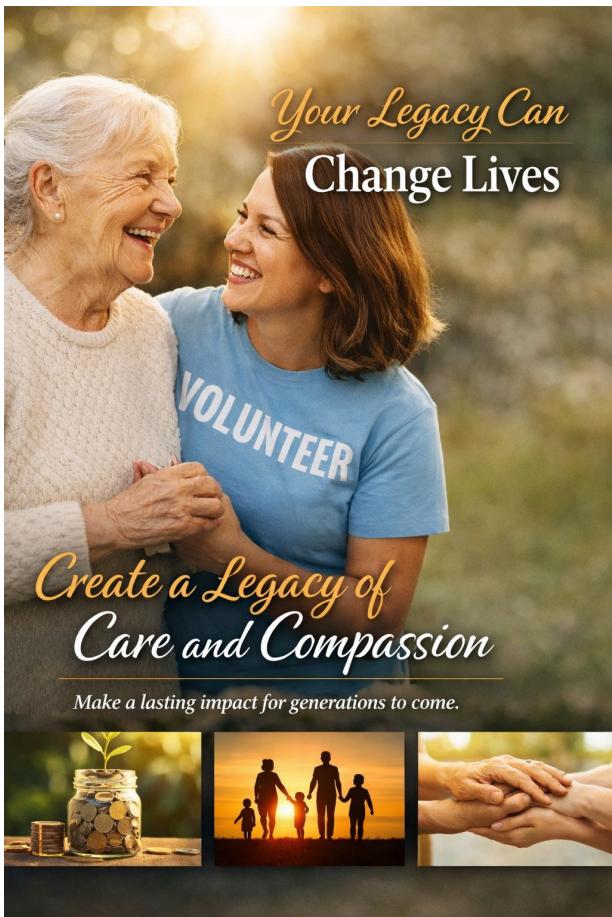
Important Notes

- Service is provided within our local area
- Transportation is not available for emergencies or ambulance-level needs
- Recipients must be approved for transportation services
- One companion may ride along at no cost when using **Veteran's Cab**

Cost

- There is **no charge** for volunteer transportation
- Volunteers cannot accept tips or gifts
- Donations to Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors, LAIVC are always appreciated
- Tipping Veteran's Cab drivers is at your discretion.

Thank you for helping us keep this program safe, respectful, and available for everyone. We appreciate your cooperation and are happy to serve you!



Make a lasting impact for generations to come.



Hearts & Hands HELPING SENIORS

Scan the QR code to visit our website and click **Donate**.

We use **Zeffy** to make giving quick and easy! Choose a **one-time gift** or set up a **recurring donation**—monthly or another interval that works best for you. Your gift is securely and automatically processed using the card you select.

Every donation makes a difference—thank you for sharing the care



LAIVC is an independent 501 C 3 nonprofit corporation. Our Tax Exempt number is 20-438-0836. The official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll-free within PA 1-800-732-9999.



LAIVC is a United Way Partner Agency and has received a grant from the Non-designated Community Impact Fund. **LAIVC designation #1462314**



Advent Angels Program 2026

This past holiday season, the true spirit of giving and community came to life through our Advent Angels program. Thanks to the incredible dedication and creativity of our volunteer sewers, knitters, and crocheters, each gift recipient received a handmade heart pillow—carefully crafted as a symbol of comfort, care, and connection. These heartfelt creations were paired with Christmas activity books and festive holiday goodies, bringing moments of joy and warmth to local seniors during a season that can often feel isolating.

With the support of our generous volunteers and community partners, including Aaron B. and his motorcycle group, we were honored to deliver **595 gifts** to Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors recipients and residents of local nursing homes. Every delivery represented more than a holiday package—it was a meaningful reminder that our seniors are remembered, valued, and deeply connected to their community.

None of this would have been possible without the time, talent, and compassion of our volunteers and partners. Your commitment ensures that local seniors feel loved, supported, and seen—not just during the holidays, but throughout the year.

THANK YOU!!!

If you know a senior who could benefit from our services, or someone seeking a meaningful and impactful volunteer opportunity, we invite you to help spread the word. Together, we continue to make a lasting difference in the lives of local seniors, one thoughtful gesture at a time.



How to Grow a Windowsill Herb Garden

Fresh flavor, natural beauty, and simple joy—right in your own kitchen.



Winter may keep us indoors, but a small windowsill herb garden can bring life, color, and delicious aromas to your home year-round. Tending to herbs is easy, relaxing, and rewarding — a little bit of nature right at your fingertips.

Choose the Perfect Spot

Herbs love sunlight! Select a **south- or west-facing window** that gets at least **4–6 hours of sun each day**. A bright kitchen window is perfect. If natural light is limited, use a small **clip-on grow light** to give your plants the boost they need.

Keep your herbs away from cold drafts, radiators, or heating vents — they prefer steady, mild temperatures.

Start with Easy-to-Grow Herbs

For beginners, try a mix of herbs that grow well indoors and add variety to your meals:

- **Basil** – Loves warmth and adds flavor to pasta and salads.
- **Parsley** – Hardy and dependable; great for soups or garnishes.
- **Chives** – Mild onion flavor and very easy to grow.
- **Thyme and Oregano** – Compact and fragrant; wonderful for stews and meats.
- **Mint** – Thrives in cooler rooms and adds freshness to drinks and desserts.

You can grow from **seeds** or buy **starter plants** from a garden center for an easy beginning.

Plant with Care

Use **small pots (4–6 inches wide)** with **drainage holes** so water can escape easily, and place a **tray or saucer** underneath each pot. Fill pots with a **light, well-draining potting mix** made for indoor plants.

Water your herbs thoroughly but **only when the top of the soil feels dry**. Most herbs prefer slightly dry soil to soggy roots. Rotate the pots every few days so your plants grow evenly in all directions.

Ongoing Care and Harvesting

- **Trim regularly:** Snip often to encourage fuller growth. Don't cut more than one-third of a plant at once.
- **Fertilize lightly:** Once a month, use a gentle, water-soluble plant food.
- **Clean leaves:** Wipe dust gently with a damp cloth to help herbs absorb more sunlight.

Enjoy fresh flavors: A few clipped leaves can brighten soups, sauces, teas, and salads.

Add a Touch of Beauty

Arrange your pots on a small decorative tray or line them neatly along your kitchen window. Label each herb with a handwritten tag or small sign — a charming addition that makes your garden both useful and beautiful.

A Garden for the Heart and Home

More than just plants, an indoor herb garden brings comfort, purpose, and a daily reminder of growth and renewal. Caring for something green — even a few tiny pots — can lift your spirits and connect you to the changing seasons.



*Encouraging small joys, shared care, and community connection
— one little garden at a time.*

M Q C S P N F Y S L E E T U P F F D O S L U S H S
 I C E B E R G G U Q G R P O I K N R W O J U T H H
 N T X T P K S N O W S T O R M N Z V O F W S S K I
 U H N F Q R R P Y B G H Z P M U C E M S O S G Y V
 E N A R C T I C P B O R E Z B U S F R R T P J G E
 F R O S T S R V L K X K Q X D D M S F E O B S J R
 L E J H Y P O T H E R M I A B Q X R Q P R N I N E
 B J L A C W B Q U D U B T Q C L A H S W O M N T U
 L Z S S N O W F L A K E G H R O X H W W Q H E E E
 I U W K L S U T C E B Q X H H S F L F Y Y L Y U K
 Z Q Y Y G W I I F N F P E B L Q R A E A C W R I Z
 Z M Y Q W Y X C E L G R J D W D L A T I P S E E L
 A Q G Q S I R G E D U S A V J L T O C W R N D Q Y
 R T Y L P Z N C D O C R L Z N P H I O H O O W K C
 D F J B A E S T T D O P R D I I L J O I Y W O U H
 H W N M S C R E E E O W V E Y N L D Q A T X M P W I
 C N I P P Y I M M R B U A D U T I W E E T A T I L
 E T K V E R O A A W J O Y U X G C C W O F N X N L
 S N O W P L O W L F S B G R N U E T E U I G V D H
 Q R L T Q Q Z E Q M R E B G Y L S W K T R B J C W
 P O L A R V O R T E X O F I A B P K D S D R I H T
 U D Y R T G O E P G I H S I O N L V I H W I K I Y
 S K G N I T A K S S A B H T W I I X B I O W N L B
 E Z E E R F V N J D Q G H I A Y Q N O S N X A L V
 N J A V A L A N C H E Z F H U C L B G X S G H I P

Winter Weather

Hypothermia	Snowplow	Snowdrift	Nippy	Icicle
Winter	Chill	Powdery	Hail	Slush
Frostbite	Skiing	Shiver	Freeze	Whiteout
Snowman	Glacial	Snowstorm	Polar vortex	Frost
Flurry	Blizzard	Skating	Windchill	Iceberg
Arctic	Snowflake	Tobogganing	Subzero	Frazil ice
Snowfall	Hoarfrost	Avalanche	Sleet	Ice
Permafrost				

3 CAN TOMATO VEGETABLE SOUP

Cook Time 25 Minutes

This pantry friendly soup is as easy on the cook as it is on the wallet. All you need are the three cans (tomatoes, beans, and mixed vegetables) and some staple seasonings. To give the soup extra body and a creaminess without adding dairy, mash some of the beans directly in the can. The result is a hearty, satisfying soup with minimum effort.



Ingredients

1 tablespoon olive oil (If you do not have olive oil, vegetable oil is fine.)
1/2 teaspoon Italian Seasoning
1/4 teaspoon onion powder
1 15 ounce can mixed vegetables (with or without potatoes)
1 14.5 ounce can petite diced tomatoes with their juice
1 15.5 ounce can cannellini beans with their liquid (kidney or black beans work)
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Combine the oil, Italian season and onion powder in a medium saucepan over low heat. Bring to a gentle simmer, stirring occasionally until the spices infuse into the oil. This takes about 5 minutes.
2. Add the mixed vegetables, 1/4 teaspoon of salt, and add pepper to taste. Increase the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally until everything is well cooked. 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Add the tomatoes and their juice. Then fill the empty can half way with water, swirl and add to soup. Add 1/3 of the beans along with 1/2 of their liquid. Simmer for 3 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, mash the remaining beans and their liquid with a fork directly in the can until slightly smooth. Stir into the soup. Add 2 Tablespoons water to the empty can, scrape the can to remove any mashed beans. Stir this into the soup. Let simmer for 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
5. Divide between bowls and enjoy.







WAITING FOR SPRING

BY: AMY MCLENDON

**WINTER LINGERS, AND THE WORLD FEELS HUSHED
BENEATH ITS QUIET VEIL. THE TREES STAND BARE,
THE GARDEN SLEEPS, AND THE SKY HOLDS ITS
BREATH.**

**YET BENEATH THE FROZEN EARTH, LIFE STIRS UNSEEN. ROOTS
REACH, SEEDS AWAKEN, AND THE PROMISE OF RENEWAL GATHERS
STRENGTH IN SECRET.**

**THEN ONE GENTLE MORNING, THE FROST BEGINS TO MELT. A SINGLE
GREEN SHOOT RISES THROUGH THE SOFTENED GROUND**

A WHISPER OF HOPE, A REMINDER THAT PATIENCE HAS PURPOSE.

**SPRING DOES NOT RUSH; IT RETURNS IN ITS OWN TIME. AND WHEN IT
COMES, IT BRINGS THE TENDER TRUTH THE EARTH HAS ALWAYS
KNOWN:**

EVEN IN OUR STILLNESS, WE ARE ALWAYS GROWING.

Our Donor Bill of Rights
Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors – Laurel Area Faith in Action

We know there are many organizations asking for your support each year. When you choose Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors, we want you to give with complete confidence — knowing your generosity is honored, protected, and used to serve our neighbors with care.

Here is our pledge to you:

Transparency—We are open about our mission, finances, and how your donations make a difference in the lives of local seniors.

Accountability—Your gifts are used exactly as you intend, managed with integrity, purpose, and gratitude.

Privacy—Your personal information is handled with respect and confidentiality. We never share or sell donor details.

Gratitude—Every contribution is deeply appreciated and personally acknowledged. Your kindness sustains our mission. We could not do anything without your generosity!

Integrity—Our staff, board, and volunteers uphold the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct.

Your trust is our foundation. Every act of giving strengthens our community, uplifts our seniors, and reflects the compassion at the heart of who we are.

Thank you for your continued support!!!



Protect Yourself from Medicare Fraud

Medicare is a lifeline for many older adults—but it's also a target for scammers. Fraud costs billions of dollars each year and causes stress and confusion. The good news: by staying alert, you can protect yourself and your benefits.

What Is Medicare Fraud?

Medicare fraud happens when someone lies to get money or services they should not qualify for. Common examples include:

- Billing for services or equipment you never received
- Charging for more expensive services than what you got
- Using your Medicare number without permission
- Offering cash or gifts for your Medicare information

Warning Signs—Be cautious if:

- Someone asks for your Medicare number to “verify” or issue a “new card.”
- You’re offered “free” braces, tests, or supplies in exchange for your number.
- Your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) lists unfamiliar services, dates, or providers.
- If something looks off, it may be fraud—or a simple billing error.

Protect Yourself

- Review your Medicare Summary Notice or plan statements regularly.
- Compare dates and services with your own records.
- Don’t share your Medicare or Social Security number with strangers.
- Hang up on unsolicited calls offering “free” services or equipment.

Remember!!!

Medicare never calls to sell you anything or threaten your coverage.

1 Report Suspected Fraud 1-800-MEDICARE

2 If you notice suspicious charges:

- ♦ Call your provider’s office for an explanation.
- ♦ If it still seems wrong, contact: 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)

Have your Medicare card and details of the charge ready when you call.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Staying alert protects your health and peace of mind. For support, talk with trusted family, your doctor’s office, your local area Agency on Aging office or local programs like Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors.

Together, we can keep ourselves, our seniors neighbors—and their Medicare benefits—safe.

Help Us Spread the News!

Are you a member of a **club, church, business, or community organization?**

Invite Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors – Laurel Area Faith in Action

to come and speak with your group!

We would be delighted to share about:

**Volunteer opportunities
Services provided to local seniors
Ways to support our vital mission**

Let us work together to strengthen our community through compassion and care.

 Compassionate Hearts

 Connecting Hands

 Creating Hope

Call Us: 724-539-4357

Email Us: *faithinaction@msn.com*

We look forward to connecting with you — and **spreading the word of service, support, and neighborly love!**



Visit our website for more
information at
www.Laurelfia.org or scan
the QR code

Helping Seniors Hearts and Hands



Celebrate 25 Years
of Caring & Community!

Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors –
Laurel Area Faith in Action proudly celebrates
25 wonderful years of connecting neighbors, vol-
unteers, and compassion.

Together, we've spent 25 years helping seniors live
independently—with dignity, friendship, and care.

Join us as we honor this milestone!

Visit our website and Facebook page for
updates on 25th Anniversary events,
stories, and ways to get involved.

Volunteer • Donate • Support • Celebrate!
Together, we have made a difference for the
past 25 years, and together, we will keep
changing lives for 25 more!

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage PAID
Latrobe, PA
Permit No. 59

Hearts and Hands Helping Seniors
428 Main Street, 2nd Floor
Latrobe, PA 15650
(724) 539-4357
faithinaction@msn.com

