

Prontopia Launches Community Caregiving Pilot Program in Santa Barbara County

Innovative program addresses gaps in paid caregiving workforce – especially in underserved population. Grant-funding from the Santa Barbara Foundation and matching funds from Prontopia will accelerate recruitment and upskilling of paid caregivers in Santa Barbara County in collaboration with local area health and human services organizations.

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. ([PRWEB](#)) September 12, 2021 -- Prontopia, a Santa Barbara-based human services start-up, launched a novel pilot program with Washington, D.C.-based AgeWell Global to accelerate recruitment and upskilling of paid caregivers in Santa Barbara County. Prontopia received grant-funding support from the Santa Barbara Foundation in collaboration with local area health and human services organizations.

According to the California State Master Plan on Aging, one in four adults in California will be over age 60 by the year 2030. Despite national recognition of this seismic demographic shift, the availability of affordable solutions that help older adults to age safely at home is limited. Connected to this gap in services is a critical lack of qualified paid caregivers. Over the next decade, California will face a 3.2 million person shortfall of paid direct care workers.

Prontopia's CEO and Founder, Shannon Kenny, said the company designed the Community Caregiving Solutions Pilot to expand availability of affordable and flexible home assistance services for older adults at home.

Kenny emphasizes the virtualization of care services is simply insufficient for most people. "In large part, technology companies have sacrificed human connection to minimize human effort." Kenny observed. "The fact remains that there are essential areas of our economy – such as caregiving – that require investment in people as the first principal factor to succeed in filling critical service gaps today."

Prontopia intends to increase the availability of paid direct caregivers by recruiting local people looking for flexible work to provide simple assistance with everyday living at home. The pilot includes systems and processes designed to motivate candidates to attain licensed certifications and training with the potential for career advancement.

Prontopia partnered with D.C.-based AgeWell Global and is utilizing its 20/20 Social Determinants of Health assessment tool to analyze how early assistance at home saves money across the health and human services ecosystem. It does this by reducing injuries related to falls, improving well-being among older adults and slowing the advancement of illness. The Founder and CEO of AgeWell Global, Dr. Mitch Besser, said the Prontopia pilot program offers a promising model for the future of caregiving.

"Through Prontopia's efforts, we believe an accessible and scalable response can be explored." Besser said. "And hopefully, with success, a new model of community caregiving can contribute to local, state and national solutions."

Additionally, the pilot program will address disparities in resource allocation and service availability between the north and south regions of Santa Barbara County. The program's outcomes will be reported in alignment

with four of the five “Bold Goals” outlined in the California State Master Plan on Aging: health reimagined; affordable aging; caregiving that works; and inclusion and equity, not isolation.

According to Barbara Finch, Director of the Santa Barbara County Adult & Aging Network. “The county-wide Prontopia pilot program will give Santa Barbara County an opportunity to take action on local implementation of the Master Plan. Affordable quality caregiving and workforce development are essential if we are to meet the growing needs of our community, not just for older adults, but also for the family members and friends who contribute their time and energy to the responsibilities of caregiving.”

Rubayi Estes, the Santa Barbara Foundation’s Vice President, Programs, believes this is an important step in solving the caregiving crisis in Santa Barbara County, especially for underserved and vulnerable populations.

“The Santa Barbara Foundation has been working with county-wide partners with the Community Caregiving Initiative since 2014,” said Estes. “Our years of research shows that access to paid quality care is a necessary part of the spectrum of family caregiving. Santa Barbara County has an older population that is rapidly growing. We must invest in the care economy by growing a workforce that is a critical part of the success of family caregiving, increasing access to resources, and reducing health disparities in our county.”

The Prontopia program addresses these needs by developing a pool of “local assistants” who are dedicated to helping older adults with daily activities such as errands, technology troubleshooting, home organizing, pet care and companionship. Local assistants are, therefore, ideally placed to complete needs assessments and optimize community referrals for their clients. The three issues to be addressed initially are: evolving health problem identification, fall prevention and well-being improvement. The Social Determinants of Health results (often referred to as SDOH) will be analyzed and mapped to the AgeWell Global Care Coordinator Dashboard to allow community health and public services partners to manage and track healthcare referrals.

Besser asserted that Prontopia, AgeWell Global and the Santa Barbara Foundation are leading the way for addressing the needs of older adults in the United States and around the world.

“By implementing this program, new jobs will be created, older people of all means will have access to caregiving, and health and well-being among seniors will improve,” Besser stated.

Prontopia is matching community funding with its own corporate funding to ensure the pilot launches quickly and with the capacity to provide inclusivity and sliding scale supplements to reach those who currently do not have access to home health services in Santa Barbara County. Kenny said pairing this pilot with Prontopia’s workforce development programs will significantly benefit families and working women.

“Many families – with an especially large part of the burden falling on women – struggle with balancing unpaid family caregiving responsibilities for their children and aging parents with the need to earn stable income for their households,” notes Kenny.

To recommend any older adults in Santa Barbara County who might benefit from the types of home assistance available, or local residents interested in flexible and affordable work that benefits the community, contact Prontopia at santabarbara@prontopia.com.

Prontopia is currently in discussions to offer similar pilots in five additional locations in the United States: New York, Florida, Colorado, San Diego and Chicago.

About Prontopia

Prontopia creates human services technologies that put people back into the equation. Powered-by-Prontopia software and recruitment solutions enable eldercare and travel businesses to access an on-demand local assistance workforce, ensuring flexible, affordable and in-person help is always just a click away for clients. Prontopia local assistants earn meaningful extra income helping older adults and travelers in their local communities, and they gain access to upskilling opportunities that advance “gig-economy” work into careers that make a difference. Prontopia is a public benefit corporation focused on fostering human connection and empathy around the globe to drive the sustainable development goals of providing decent work and economic growth, creating sustainable cities and communities, and encouraging responsible consumption and production.

About Santa Barbara Foundation

The Santa Barbara Foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life in Santa Barbara County for all who live, work, play and visit here. Working in partnership with individuals, community organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and government, we strive to address our communities’ most challenging needs. Recognizing that our work depends on the strength of the nonprofit sector, we are committed to its health and vitality. Nearly every Santa Barbara County nonprofit 5 organization and essential community project has been supported by the Foundation during its 93-year history. The Foundation connects those who give with those in need – and all who dream of stronger communities. To learn more, please visit SBFoundation.org.

About AgeWell Global

AgeWell Global is a model of elder care coordination combining peer-based social engagement and mobile technology to improve well-being and health outcomes and drive down medical costs. AgeWell employs able seniors to visit less able seniors in their homes in order to reduce isolation, identify evolving health problems and link seniors to appropriate primary care providers and social services in their communities. AgeWell’s model combines best practices of several care coordination models: employing able older people as peer companions, providing social engagement through home visits, deploying a mobile health screening tool with accompanying referral algorithms to identify and address evolving health and social problems before they escalate, and ensuring that linkages to community services occur. Programs in South Africa, New York City, Fort Lauderdale and Ireland have achieved profound increases in well-being scores and significant reductions in signs of depression. Program participants with identified medical and social problems were successfully referred to medical and social service providers.



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