Summary

The senior home care service project Amagi provides an online platform which makes non-medical home care services easily accessible in Georgia, as well as educating the public about the preventative care of the elderly and how to handle emergency situations. Amagi is dedicated to helping seniors safely remain in their homes while improving their health and social conditions.

Project Description

According to a United Nations report, Georgia is an aging country due to low birth rates and high levels of emigration. In 2020, the share of the senior population was 14.3% according to the Census Bureau. Elderly citizens are the only major age group with increased numbers since 1989 and no decline since 2002. Despite this, healthcare services and comfortable housing conditions remain relatively inaccessible for the elderly. The Universal Healthcare program does not cover home health care services, while elderly care and nursing home services are poorly developed in the country. According to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, there are only 13 public nursing homes in the country, and few private ones mainly supported by non-governmental organizations with the help of foreign donors. Currently, only 350 elderly citizens are admitted to the nursing homes, with 150 more on a waiting list.

When I, Elene, was in middle school in Georgia, I often helped my parents care for my grandparents. I assisted them with basic necessities like cooking and moving around the house, as well as crucial tasks like tablet counting. This was the result of the lack of a system for finding home care services, which most often happened by word-of-mouth, which is often unreliable and inefficient. This is evidence of the problem that I was unable to recognize when I was younger: Georgian public healthcare does not have the capacity to assist the growing number of elderly citizens, and the lack of home care services leaves them in inadequate living conditions. I grew up observing these issues and developed a profound interest to address it in my work, leading to the creation of Amagi, which is a Georgian word that means “taking care of.”

The moral and religious beliefs of most Georgians consider it unacceptable for families to refuse to care for their elderly or to place them in nursing homes. Nevertheless, not everyone has the financial means nor the opportunity to remain attentive to their elderly family members. This results in many elderly citizens living in harsh and inadequate health conditions.

Our beliefs align with what Nelson Mandela once said best: Peace is not just the absence of conflict; peace is the creation of an environment where all can flourish regardless of race, color, creed, religion, gender, class, caste or any other social markers of difference. Amagi creates health care opportunities for the senior citizens and alleviates stress on families that cannot always be present for their loved ones. This allows both elderly and their families to remain connected to society and continue to flourish.

To achieve the primary goal of the project, we developed an online platform to facilitate the search for home care services. According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, 83.3% of the Georgian population has access to the internet, making our platform widely accessible. Through the platform, caregivers create a user profile and submit their home care offers, city or area of work, price, images, and other information related to the services they offer. Personal information, such as home address or email, is not disclosed anywhere on the website.
Meanwhile, families are able to browse through the offers, and if they find a service they are interested in, may contact the caregiver through our website to schedule an interview. We have provided guidelines on how to meet someone safely. Users are instructed to meet in public places, with company, and never at their home address, etc.

Our website actively avoids collecting data to prevent unwanted circumstances. The website only requires a username, email address, and password, of which only the first is visible to others when posting a service or responding to a post. We utilize tags to categorize what is being offered, and where. This way, no addresses or other sensitive data are collected. We do not share data with third parties nor profit from it in any way. All our data, however little it is, is securely stored in AWS (Amazon) servers.

Offering a platform to increase accessibility to home care was not our only goal. Our website also contains multiple health care and emergency response guides and informatics. These were developed in tandem with certified doctors, both in the United States and Georgia. We aim to offer support to families in Georgia beyond facilitating a match by providing information that is meaningful and relevant to the care of the elderly and the rest of the population. We hope that the designed informatics will be a quick accessible point of information, while the guides will give detailed information. While the guides are available in Georgian, the informatics are available in both Georgian and English.

Unfortunately, we were unable to travel to Georgia due to Visa restrictions, as we are both international students who graduated in May 2022. However, as our project is focused on creating an online platform, this was not a large obstacle to overcome. To adjust for this challenge, we maintained continuous remote communication with doctors, lawyers, and programmers throughout the project.

Reflection

We are committed to maintaining the website and continuing to develop our project throughout 2022 and beyond. In the event that we are unable to maintain the project, we are committed to finding suitable replacements. In the following months, we will compile responses on how effective and useful the website and its tools are. To measure our effectiveness, we will observe the website traffic, the number of downloads of guides and infographics, and the number of matches completed.

In sum, we aim to simplify the process of finding appropriate home care for families in Georgia, and to spread awareness of wellbeing and best practices in elderly care. We have accounted for the presence of COVID-19, and we have opted for a website as a tool that is accessible to most people in Georgia, indistinguishable of their geographical location. The sustained presence of the website will offer basic guidance and decrease the percentage of elder citizens in harsh living conditions, both through matching and education of the population. In this way, we aspire to create an environment where families, including their elderly, can thrive and live a healthy life, including both physical and mental health. Ultimately, this will lead to a stronger community that fosters peace in the world.

Personal Statement

We believe that a person can share their peace when they are at peace within. To cultivate this inner peace, we seek a way to fulfill their necessities, so that they may flourish and share with the rest their wish to grow. - Íñigo Auza de la Mora and Elene Charkviani