



Starting a Grandma Stand in your city

Pop-up grandmas. Real connection. Zero agenda.

Welcome — we're so glad you're thinking about bringing a Grandma Stand to your community. Below is everything you need to know: what it costs, how payment works, and answers to the questions asked most often. If anything is unclear, just [reach out to us](#). We're here to help along the entire process!

\$800

one-time, tax-deductible
materials donation

~2 hours

a week, at whatever
pace works for you

5 minutes

for a typical
conversation

12 cities

with active stands
and growing

Why This Matters

Loneliness has quietly become one of the most widespread health issues in the country. **Nearly half of U.S. adults report experiencing loneliness** — a risk to health comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day — with young adults hit hardest. It even affects people surrounded by others, who can feel just as lonely.

Source: U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation (2023).

Grandma Stand Background

Mike Matthews [started the Grandma Stand in 2012](#), after a coworker walked into his NYC office in tears over a breakup and, on a whim, he gave her the phone number for his 96-year-old grandmother, Eileen, back in Washington state.

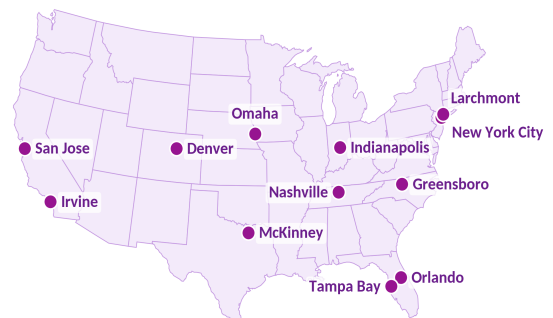
She came back the next day feeling completely lifted and the two ended up speaking every week — which gave Mike an idea.

He bought a lemonade stand, placed it on a NYC street corner with a laptop and headphones, and let Eileen talk to whoever sat down. From 2012 to 2018, she connected with thousands of New Yorkers this way, until she passed away at nearly 102 and Mike retired the stand in her honor.

Six years later, in early 2024, watching friends navigate the same loneliness Eileen had always eased, he brought it back — painted purple, her favorite color, with her face built into the design — this time staffed by volunteer grandmas sitting in person.



Today, the Grandma Stand pops up across NYC every week, with more stands run by volunteers like you from Denver to Orlando. It has been [featured on hundreds of media outlets](#) including the TODAY Show and Drew Barrymore Show. In addition, PBS recently released a documentary titled "[Grandma Stand](#)", and you can [watch our Emmy-winning ABC segment](#) on YouTube.



Where you can find a Grandma Stand today

How to Get Started

1 Reach out Email to talk through your city	2 Donate Make your one-time \$800 donation	3 Get your stand Materials ship directly to you	4 Pick a spot & prompt Choose where and what to ask	5 Meet your mentor We'll pair you with a grandma who's done it
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What a Grandma Stand Costs

A complete Grandma Stand costs about **\$800* in materials**. Here's what's included (shipping cost not included):

Item	Cost	Details
Custom-built stand	\$300	Folds up for easy storage at home (watch how it folds)
Foam-core branded signs (3)	\$130	One large sign for the top of the stand, two for the sandwich boards
3" branded stickers & buttons (250)	\$125	Handed out to everyone who stops by to chat — always a hit
15"x30" sandwich boards (2)	\$100	Placed on both sides of the stand so the discussion prompt is visible from either direction
Purple & white chalk pens	\$30	For writing the discussion prompt on the sandwich boards
Velcro	\$15	Secures the branded signs to the stand and sandwich boards

Optional (but recommended)

Item	Cost	Details
33"x81" branded retractable banner	\$150	Helps passersby quickly understand how the Grandma Stand works
4"x6" scan-to-donate sign	\$TBD	Displays a QR code so visitors who ask can donate to the Grandma Stand Foundation
Collapsible wagon cart	\$60	Makes transporting everything to and from your car easy

**Organizations wishing to start or sponsor a stand should contact mike@grandmastand.com for information and pricing. The costs above apply only to individual volunteers covering their own materials.*

How Payment Works

You cover the cost of your materials with a one-time, tax-deductible donation of \$800 to the Grandma Stand Foundation, a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit. You can [donate online](#) or mail a check — once your donation is received, everything ships directly to you.

When we receive outside donations, grants, or corporate gifts, we sometimes use those funds to help offset materials costs for new volunteers, so don't hesitate to reach out if the cost is a concern.



A Grandma Stand in action in New York City

Running Your Stand

SETTING UP

How often should I set up my stand?

There's no set schedule — go at whatever pace works for you. Most grandmas set up once a week, weather permitting, for about two to two and a half hours each time.

Do I need someone to help me?

We highly recommend having a second person with you. They can help transport the stand, stay close by to answer questions from passersby, capture photos or video for social media, and help keep an eye on things. College-age volunteers tend to be especially eager to help.

How do I choose a location?

You know your community better than we do. Look for areas with steady foot traffic — parks, farmers markets, shopping districts, street corners, downtown plazas. For private property, just ask permission (we're happy to help — send along their contact info).

Most locations are glad to host a Grandma Stand if it doesn't block foot traffic. Some volunteers work with their city council or local business district to secure additional locations. The more people see you out there, the more invitations tend to follow — in Denver, for example, the stand started in one park and within a couple of months had been invited to set up outside five local businesses.

Should I use the same spot every time?

Whatever works best for you. In New York, we rotate locations most weeks — it's a fun way to meet new pockets of the community, whether that's tourists in Central Park or students on a SoHo plaza. Other volunteers prefer one consistent spot and stick with it. Either approach works.

How do I pick the discussion prompt?

We maintain a running list of prompts you're welcome to use, or you can write your own — whatever feels right for your community. Take a look at our [example prompts](#) to get started.

AT THE STAND

Who tends to stop by?

You'll meet people from every walk of life, but after years of doing this, the most common visitor is a woman in her 20s or 30s who's in college, new to the workforce, or navigating a career or relationship change.

How long does each conversation last?

Nobody is ever rushed, but most conversations run about five minutes. That's enough time to get into a real conversation while giving more people a chance to sit down. Most visitors have already thought about the discussion prompt before they sit, so they get right into it — talking with an anonymous, disarming grandma tends to open people up faster than casual small talk. If a conversation runs long, a quick glance to your helper lets them know it's fine to gently make space for the next person.

Do we accept donations from visitors?

The Grandma Stand is always free. If someone asks to donate, a 4"x6" scan-to-donate sign displays a QR code linking to the Grandma Stand Foundation, or they can give directly at grandmastand.com/donate.

What else should I know?

Grandmas aren't therapists

No one's expected to solve or fix anything — just show up as yourself. What people need most is someone who listens, shows empathy, and asks good questions. If a conversation ever calls for professional support, you'll have business cards with national helplines to pass along.

One thing we often hear: people love their own grandmothers, but conversations at home often come with a lecture, unsolicited advice, or a bit of judgment. That's exactly what makes the Grandma Stand different.

The 30/70 rule

The best conversations are ones where the visitor does most of the talking. **Ideally, the grandma is talking about 30% of the time and the person sitting down about 70% of the time.** Rather than the grandma replying with their own experience ("I went through something similar"), grandmas default to a follow-up question ("Can you tell me more about that?").

Many grandmas find it helpful to run the week's prompt by their own kids or grandkids first, just to practice which follow-up questions land best. Grandma Eileen mastered the art of listening and that's part of her legacy.

COMMUNITY & SUPPORT

Can I use a rotation of grandmas?

Yes! You can run every session yourself, rotate with a group of grandmas, or reach out to us — we have an ever growing list of volunteers who've reached out and may already be in your area.

Can I connect with other Grandma Stand volunteers?

Absolutely — you'll never be doing this alone. When you start, we'll pair you with an experienced Grandma Stand volunteer for **one-on-one mentorship**. She'll share what's worked at her own stand, help you think through your first locations and prompts, and be there to answer questions any time you need. Every quarter, we also host the **Grandma Gathering**, an optional Zoom call led by Jan Matthews (jan@grandmastand.com), our Group Discussion Facilitator, where grandmas from across the country swap stories from their stands, trade tips on everything from setup to favorite prompts, and share ideas that help shape where the Grandma Stand goes next. We can't wait to introduce you to this group of amazing women!

What if media or influencers reach out?

It happens quite often! When media outlets or influencers reach out, connect them with Mike at mike@grandmastand.com. He'll answer their questions and help facilitate interviews (if you feel comfortable being interviewed).

We're so excited to have you join the Grandma Stand and see the impact it has on your community!