

What is a Shepherd's Center?

A Shepherd's Center is a community of older adults who come together for social, educational and civic activities that promote aging in place. It's often described as a "center without walls." Shepherd's Centers create relationships that bind society together, advance opportunities to reduce isolation, and encourage individuals to take on new challenges, learn new skills, make new friends, and serve others.

Essential Characteristics of the Shepherd's Center Model

Characteristics of the SCA IMPACT Model



- I = inclusion of all people and all faiths
- M = meaningful programs and services designed by older adults
- P = power of volunteers to make a difference
- A = aging well
- C = connecting individuals to each other and to community
- T = team effort with a group of people, congregations, and community agencies

Network Impact

Originating in 1972 in Kansas City, MO, the Shepherd's Center Network has changed the lives of more than 2.1 million older adults and families.



The network of close to 60 Centers in 17 states reaches nearly 170,000 older adults, through lifelong learning, social enrichment, and volunteer caregiving initiatives.

Last year, 14,000 Shepherd's Center network volunteers gave 660,000 hours of service with an estimated value of \$16.7 million to society.



Program Philosophy

Each Shepherd's Center strives to meet the unique needs of the community, thus no two Centers are exactly alike. Some focus on life-enriching educational opportunities (also commonly known as Adventures in Learning), and some offer a variety of volunteer caregiving services, such as a ride to medical appointments or help around the house, which allow the older adult to continue living independently in their own home where they most want to be. A majority of Centers offer both educational and support services.

All of these services are designed by, with, and for older adults, which ensures each and every opportunity is intentional and meaningful.



Organizational Leadership

Typically, a Shepherd's Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization led by an independent board of trustees. Other structures within existing nonprofits that share the core characteristics are encouraged to consider the benefits of affiliating with the national network to increase awareness of the work we all do in communities across America.

Life-Changing Difference of a Shepherd's Center

At 81, Kathleen moved from out-of-state to be closer to her son. While she had family and a garden, all other connections were left behind. Her first encounter with Shepherd's Center was through a volunteer who drove her to a medical appointment when her son wasn't available. The volunteer asked Kathleen if she'd be interested in Tai Chi at the Shepherd's Center. She was skeptical, but tried it and is still participating four years later. And she is quick to add, "My balance is so much better!"

From Tai Chi, she learned about Adventures in Learning, and actively participates in a variety of classes each session. One of her favorite classes was learning to line dance. She kept at it, and now she often travels to nearby cities to dance on Friday and Saturday nights!

Kathleen shared, "Before I became involved with the Shepherd's Center, I had an existence, but since being involved with Shepherd's Center, I have a life."

To learn more about how you might help start a Shepherd's Center in your community, or to learn how your organization might collaborate with the Shepherd's Centers network, please contact the national office at 816-960-2022. We are eager to collaborate to help older adults age well!