



The Need for Shepherd's Centers

Every day, 10,000 people are turning 65. In about a decade, 1 in 5 residents will be retirement age, and older adults will outnumber children for the first time in U.S. history.

But with age, many individuals lose connections with family, friends and the community. Loneliness and isolation affect one-third to one-half of older adults. And these feelings act as a fertilizer for disease and illness, such as cognitive decline, heart disease, high blood pressure and depression. Any one of these can have a profound impact on one's health; among older adults, up to 60% manage two or more chronic conditions.

Fortunately, Shepherd's Centers counteract the negative effects of loneliness and isolation by connecting older adults to empowering programs that foster friendships. Our hallmark is that services are designed by, with and for older adults, which ensures each and every opportunity is intentional and meaningful. Whether it's a ride to the doctor, enjoyable educational classes or intergenerational service projects, Shepherd's Centers work to reduce isolation, increase independence and enhance quality of life. This connection with others and to the community inspires older adults to give back and make a difference for today's and future generations of older adults.



"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." —Mother Teresa

What Does a Shepherd's Center Do?

No two Shepherd's Centers are exactly alike. Each develops based on the needs in the community and interests of older adults. Innovation and creativity are welcomed!

One philosophy of Shepherd's Center is to provide educational and social opportunities that bring older adults together. Our signature Adventures in Learning program supports personal growth and discovery with college-type courses, cultural enrichment workshops, hobby and recreational opportunities. Subjects cover a wide range of topics: computer and technology, finance, literature, music and art appreciation, world religion, "how-to," politics, current events, historical events and figures, foreign languages, hobbies, and so much more. Most class instructors are retired older adults, with a number of special interests presented by community experts.

Another philosophy of Shepherd's Center is to provide support services that help older adults remain independent in their own homes and communities. One of the most vital services is personalized transportation. Volunteers drive to medical appointments and chauffeur on essential errands, such as to the pharmacy, bank, hair dresser, and even to classes at the Shepherd's Center. Other support services might include friendly visiting or calling, in which volunteers check in and provide valuable companionship; completing minor chores or repairs around the house; performing personal services such as shopping; and advocating for those with

challenging situations, from referrals to supplemental services to interceding to prevent scams.

The majority of Shepherd's Centers is a combination of both educational and support service. However, during the first few years, many Shepherd's Centers identify one area to start and as the new Center becomes more established, it branches out to include the other area of focus. There is no one right way. The path is determined by the needs of the community and the leadership team.

IMPACT Model

What sets Shepherd's Centers apart is the high level of community engagement of participants, whether through stimulating physical and cognitive activities or social support to remain more independent in one's own home. The outcome is increased connections to life-enhancing services and friendships for a higher quality of life. The model is based on IMPACT, and includes the following six core characteristics:

- 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 today and tomorrow
- C** = connecting individuals to each other and to community
- T** = team effort with a group of people, congregations and community agencies

Demographics of the Network

There are nearly 60 Shepherd's Centers in 17 states across the country. These community-based organizations represent a range of sizes and services. A few key demographics include:

- Program structure
 - 30% of Centers are education only
 - 5% of Centers are volunteer caregiving service only
 - 65% of Centers are both education and service
- Caregiving services
 - 70% offer transportation
 - 63% offer friendly visitor/calls
 - 58% offer home repairs/handyman services
 - 58% offer shopping
 - 53% offer advocacy and referral services
 - 42% offer yardwork and light housekeeping
 - 32% offer intergenerational activities
 - 80% of Centers provide four or more services to clients
- Staffing
 - 80% of Centers have a paid director compensated for an average of 30 hours/week
 - 70% of Centers have other paid staff supporting operations
 - 75% of Centers have volunteers working routinely to implement programs
- Community partners
 - Average number of congregations involved is 12, ranging from 1-45
 - Average number of community agencies involved is 16, ranging from 1-65
- Financial Information
 - Expense budgets range from a low of \$3,000 to a high of \$1,000,000 with a median budget of \$105,000
 - All centers have three or more funding sources
 - 32% of centers receive at least 50-60% of funding from individuals
 - 50% of centers received at least 10% of funding from congregations

Common Purpose

Though each Shepherd's Center is unique, all are bonded together through our history and our common mission, vision and values.

Mission: To create significant opportunities for service, lifelong learning and healthy living for older adults through an interfaith network of community-based organizations.

Vision: Transforming aging into an empowering experience of personal growth and meaningful living.

Values: Building on nearly five decades of experience serving older adults, our values guide all decisions.

- *Diversity and inclusion:* to celebrate the individuality and contribution of each person regardless of race, gender or religion
- *Empowerment:* to provide resources for older adults to pursue life enriching experiences they value most
- *Compassion:* to treat each person with kindness, dignity and respect
- *Collaboration:* to leverage strengths for the collective good
- *Volunteerism:* to advocate good citizenship
- *Interdependence:* to build community through the mutual reliance on each other

How It All Started

As a minister, Elbert Cole recognized that as individuals were retiring from careers and moving into the next stage of life, they maintained an intense desire to continue growing and contributing to society. Cole also held strong beliefs about personal wellness (physically, mentally and spiritually), lifelong learning, interfaith and interracial cooperation. So in 1971 a community planning team, using concepts of empowerment and participatory decision-making, designed an organization that provided opportunities to meet a range of needs of retired adults. A year later, the first Shepherd's Center opened in Kansas City as a new model for aging that empowered older adults to use their wisdom, skills and talents to create opportunities for themselves and others.

As one of the first organizations to celebrate the power of aging, Shepherd's Centers of America is dedicated to establishing new centers, supporting existing ones and contributing to the national aging network. With nearly five decades of experience, Shepherd's Centers are demonstrating the key to aging well.



You are invited to learn more about the Shepherd's Center model and network. Call the national office (816-960-2022), or visit our website (www.ShepherdCenters.org). We welcome the opportunity to partner with your community!