

September 2021



LIFE IS A ROLLER COASTER

Do you enjoy the thrill of riding a roller coaster? After you're strapped in, you begin the slow, creaky climb up the steep hill. You either hold on white-knuckling tight or throw your hands in the air at the crest of the hill before the screaming descent.

Some say life is like a roller coaster with its ups and downs, sudden and sometimes extreme changes in a short time. The pandemic has certainly felt like an out-of-control roller coaster ride. We quickly channeled our adrenaline to pivot to online learning in Spring 2020 and implemented modified safe services. Then in Spring 2021, we began planning for a return to in-person learning, with some relaxed protocols and hybrid options only to have another sudden corkscrew turn.

I read a blog recently sharing a different yet powerful perspective about this roller coaster analogy. The writer emphasized that the thrill and fun of the ride on a roller coaster are the downs—you get on the roller coaster for the "downs," not the "ups." You anticipate the thrill on the ride up knowing you are going to enjoy the experience during the accelerating ride down.

Let's look for a moment at the mechanics of roller coasters. They don't have engines. They are pulled by a motorized chain (that's what creates the creaky sound) to the top of the first big hill, building potential energy which is then converted to kinetic energy. This kinetic energy pushes the cars up the next hill. The steeper the hills, the faster the train will go.

So the "ups" of a roller coaster ride are just a means to get to the point of riding down. After all, a roller coaster that only goes up would just be a very large elevator. It may be practical, but it isn't very much fun. The adrenaline of the thrill has its benefits. Adrenaline causes raised levels of endorphins in the blood along with increasing feelings of euphoria, and yes, stress. But all stress isn't bad.

Crisis can bring out the adrenaline junky in us. Some of us are throwing our hands in the air with creative joy—introducing new and novel services to empower older adults. I think of the great strides we have all made with the use of technology during the pandemic. I doubt many of us imagined the progress we made in such a short time. Computer labs and classes are common across the network. And, I think of how our network did whatever it takes, as you all usually do, to ensure older adults were connected to vital services. We have long known the value of our services, but now more people have a better understanding of the power of the connections we facilitate and how these connections reduce social isolation and loneliness.

This progress and creativity is the thrill of the ride for me. Look beside you and you will see network friends and colleagues in the car and on this roller coaster train with you. Holding you in, being the safety strap, being the fun-loving, creative one who sends you on your way out of the gate. Such is the joy of roller coaster riding.

Sarah Cheney

DON'T LOOK DOWN

Look at your accomplishments...thirty-five years of building meaningful community relationships don't end in the middle of a health crisis for the **Shepherd's Center of Kansas City, KS**. While this year's celebration may not look like previous anniversary events, the Center continues to provide critical long-term support by reducing food insecurity with the delivery of groceries and providing gift cards to offset ever-increasing grocery costs. They also are instrumental in providing vaccination information and making appointments for their area mobile vaccine unit.



But the greatest success story this past year giving the Center something to celebrate is the growth of their minor home repair program. Melissa Bynum, executive director, exclaimed, "We have done incredible work with our older adults. We worked with our young police cadet program, our community police officers, a collaborating congregation, and Kansas University medical students to provide hours of service to older adults that are now confined to home more than ever before. It was nothing short of amazing, to be honest!" SCA and the network would like to toast the Shepherd's Center of Kansas City, KS celebrating 35 years of the indomitable spirits of older adults aging well with the help of friends.

THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

It is important to celebrate milestone events with your Shepherd's Center. One strength of our network is our longevity, and milestone anniversaries are one way to highlight your accomplishments in sustaining your work to deliver your mission.



It was not planned this way, but **LifeQuest of Arkansas** has been celebrating its 40th anniversary with a series of video presentations they are calling, Walking Down Memory Lane. Each month, they have a focused panel presentation about a topic and speakers that are meaningful to their organization. It's a creative way to not only document how some of their programs were started but also to spotlight some of their current and past leaders, instructors, and volunteers. Click the photo for a quick link to one video. You can find more videos [here](#).

Congrats LifeQuest! For more information connect with [Lindy Harrell](#).

RIDE ON

Another testament to our strength is the length and level of engagement of older adults with centers. It is very common for older adults to be involved for 10, 20, 30, or even more years with a Shepherd's Center. Just look at Betty Weller.

Betty was a founding mother of **Shepherd's Center of Spartanburg (SC)**, and sadly passed away this month. Cindy Tobias, executive director, shared a bit of [history](#) of how Betty and Elbert Cole met and worked to launch this center in 1979. We think it is worthwhile to remember our roots and those who had the vision to try something new. Shepherd's Center of Spartanburg is the second oldest Shepherd's Center in the country, and their story is similar to so many others. Moreover, this history is a lasting tribute to Betty and all founding mothers and fathers.



WILDER AND FASTER

Since Shepherd's Centers are dynamic organizations constantly in motion serving older adults in their communities, for many Centers designing or redesigning a website tends to get lost in the shuffle. However, a robust online presence is an essential tool for driving engagement in your mission. Up-to-date information, intuitive design, compelling storytelling, and prominent calls to action can help nonprofits achieve their goals more than you might think. When planning your next website consider these suggestions for being best in class.



Your website should be the flagship for your brand. It is important that your mission is paramount on every page and builds a cohesive story about your organization. A cohesive brand not only differentiates your nonprofit but helps you build credibility with stakeholders.

Energize your site by keeping it fresh. Creating interest in exciting new activities and events boosts engagement from volunteers and donors. Stagnant, tired websites can make visitors tend to wonder if anything of interest is really happening at your organization.

Use your website as a marketing machine. A well-designed website should have a place that you can link to easily request an e-newsletter, donate now buttons, contact email, and links to all social media so that you can spread awareness for your cause.

Functionality is the key to interaction. A confusing or poorly constructed website will frustrate viewers and cause them to minimally engage with your organization. Implementing ways for visitors to donate, view an event calendar, register for an event, and volunteer all within one website makes it easier for you to connect with your audience and increase support on many different levels.

For a few examples around the network take a look at these websites:

[Shepherd's Center of Hamilton County](#)
[Northland Shepherd's Center](#)
[Shepherd's Center of Raytown](#)
[Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke](#)
[Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church](#)

FACE YOUR FEAR

Instagram registered a big 22.9% increase in the number of users in 2020, and doesn't show signs of stopping. If you don't know where to start, or if you need some quick tips to grow engagement, try these strategies from social media expert Julie Campbell:



Avoid text-heavy graphics. Instagram is a visual storytelling channel, heavily used on mobile devices. Fliers and photos that are hard to read or have a lot of text don't work on Instagram. Instagram graphics that aren't too crowded, hard to read, with little text, work best.

Choose 5-10 hashtags that you always use on EVERY post. Hashtags are a fantastic way to get more exposure and visibility with future followers. It is recommended that you use hashtags related to the region you are targeting and incorporate some that people use when searching for organizations and causes just like yours.

Glow up your bio. Update your bio and do not send people to your homepage. You want to add compelling language like "Join Us," "Join the Movement to (whatever your mission aims

to do), "Read Our Stories." You want to make it inspirational and get people to click on the link in the bio to sign up for your email list.

Follow other accounts. Aim to discover and follow 10 accounts per week that are related to your cause. Think of the other accounts that your donors follow. You need to actively engage on Instagram to get engagement for yourself.

Engage. Instagram, like all social media platforms, is not a one-way street or a billboard. Comment on other people's photos and share their public posts to your Instagram Stories. **Use the features at your disposal.** Explore using Instagram Stories and Reels if you have the capacity. Stories and Reels are a fun, easy way to showcase your staff and the human side of your nonprofit, your mission, your vision, and to just have fun!

Shepherd's Center of Hamilton County (IN) does a great job marketing its programs on social media. They use an excel spreadsheet to keep track of the content with column headings of date, day/topic, message, link, notes. Day/topic includes things like "Feel Good Fridays" where they share thank you notes from clients, or they thank volunteers or donors. They graciously shared their calendar spreadsheet template, and you can check it out [here](#).

Remember to check out all the new, and tried and true, resources on the [Affiliate E-Exchange](#).

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Shepherd's Centers in Northern Virginia are joining their partner, NV Rides, to launch a Veterans Connect pilot program. The Veterans Connect program will recruit and match veteran volunteer drivers with fellow veterans who face significant transportation challenges. This pilot program was launched by the Dulles Area Transportation Association (DATA) and NV Rides to address the often-overlooked healthcare obstacle facing so many elderly and disabled veterans: a lack of basic transportation to get to vital medical appointments.



Several Shepherd's Centers in the area, notably, Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia, have recruited and matched veterans with other veterans for friendly visits. The Veterans Connect initiative hopes to harness the power of the special bonds that exist between the men and women who've selflessly served our country. While veterans have long stepped up to support their brothers and sisters in arms, elderly veterans have said they are more likely to take advantage of a volunteer ride provided by someone with whom they have literally or even figuratively shared a foxhole.

Watch this space for updates on this pilot project. We are eager to share lessons learned with all affiliates so that we can help connect more veterans.

FOR THE THRILL-SEEKER

As you consider options for in-person, virtual, and/or hybrid options this fall, keep in mind the resources available to help you in your planning. Check out the SCA AIL Speaker's Bureau [here](#). Please consider adding her speaker ideas to the list.



Additionally, we hope you will continue to share the *Searches for Seniors* newsletter, produced by high school senior Camille White. Camille does all the leg work and presents

diverse options for older adults to engage with free opportunities online. Camille welcomes suggestions of free resources you may know about or if you are offering free classes. Her newsletter is a great way to expand our reach and connect more older adults to the mission of Shepherd's Centers. The most recent issue of *Searches for Seniors* can be found [here](#).

One other free resource you may be interested in is *First Light Facts*, a short, daily, fun read to help get your day off on a positive beat. *First Light Facts* is a free service of Volunteers Insurance Service Association and is produced for the simple goal of entertaining and informing in a positive way. Take a peek at one issue [here](#). You can subscribe directly on their [website](#).

You are encouraged to share both of these free resources with your volunteers and older adults, reminding them that you are a trusted source of helpful information.

CONQUER FROM WITHIN

Encore.org is offering a free webinar on ageism that is not to be missed! Two influencers in aging, Dr. Connie Zweig and Ashton Applewhite will offer an interactive discussion with moderator Harry Moody, also an influencer in the field and friend of SCA's.



If we identify with youth and deny age, we are unaware of our ageism against ourselves and unknowingly support institutional ageism in our culture. Dr. Connie Zweig, bestselling author of *The Inner Work of Age: Shifting from Role to Soul*, shows us how to meet this "inner ageist," which has profound consequences for our self-acceptance, health, and capacity to discover the treasures of late-life.

Through her classic on ageism, *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism*, Ashton Applewhite launched a worldwide crusade against ageism and woke up millions of people to the fight for age justice. Together for the first time, Connie and Ashton will explore the inner and outer worlds of ageism—and why both inner work and social activism are needed now, when for the first time in history there are more people over 60 than under 18.

Registration is required by September 17 for this free webinar, which will be presented September 21. Don't wait, [register now!](#)

IN FOR THE RIDE

Filmmaker Sky Bergman reached out to us to share the exciting news that PBS stations across the country will be airing *Lives Well Lived* throughout September in honor of National Grandparents Day. If you missed this heartwarming documentary and presentation by Sky herself at our national conference last fall, now is a chance to view it! Or watch it again and celebrate the wit and wisdom of adults 75 years old+ who are living their lives to the fullest.



Viewers will enjoy the insights of dozens of fascinating individuals – 3,000 years of life experience – distilled into a delightful mosaic of essential life lessons. This is a perfect opportunity to invite your volunteers and participants to watch the film. Then ask them if you can record them sharing their life lessons. It would make for excellent content on social media.

For more information and to view local airing dates: <https://www.pbs.org/show/lives-well-lived/>

HANDS UP!

There's still time to nominate your outstanding volunteers for the **Donald Owen Smith National Volunteer Leadership Award**. The deadline is in one week--September 10.



Our volunteers give selflessly all year to help their neighbors, their communities, and society. And during the Coronavirus pandemic, they not only demonstrate unwavering loyalty and commitment in addressing immediate needs, but they also ensure the longer-term success of your organization. Show your appreciation by nominating your most treasured volunteers for this prestigious award.

Presented annually, this national award recognizes volunteers from across the Shepherd's Centers network who embody our core values and advance our shared mission of aging with meaning and purpose. Now more than ever, we are honored to celebrate our remarkable volunteers.

Follow the link for the [nomination form](#), or email [Sarah](#) with any questions. We look forward to learning more about the wonderful work of your volunteers!

THE FUTURE IS RIDING ON IT

At Shepherd's Centers of America, our goal is to help strengthen the internal capacity of affiliates to become high-performing organizations that are healthy, sustainable, and successful. That's why we are offering in-depth diversity, equity, and inclusion training for the Shepherd's Centers network.



Facilitated by an experienced educator and consultant, Aimee Bellmore will equip us with the knowledge and tools to create more inclusive cultures at our organizations. For one hour, across 8 consecutive weeks, we will gain knowledge and skills for creating a DEI statement and developing a DEI strategic plan, including the importance of collaboration, tangible action, and leadership. [Check out the full agenda](#).

We want to learn alongside our network peers, and we are motivated to undertake this work together. We believe that when we attract more diverse volunteers, participants, leaders, and staff we will stand out from the others as a truly collaborative and inclusive nonprofit.

[Register](#) for this important training today!



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **September 9 - October 28** for one hour over 8 consecutive Thursdays at 3:00 pm ET/2:00 pm CT/1:00 pm MT/12:00 pm PT

We are excited to offer this Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training, tailored to the Shepherd's Center Network. This vital education will prepare us with the skills and knowledge to foster greater engagement in our mission. [Pre-registration is required](#). Individual meeting links will be forwarded to registered participants in early September.

- **September 14** at 3:30 pm ET/2:30 pm CT/1:30 pm MT/12:30 pm PT

Network Roundtable, an informal time to connect with peers around the network to ask questions and share ideas. No registration required. Join on Zoom here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83551123399pwd=a0YvZHVva3JPZ1M0cUdQZDdnYVRUQT09>

- **September 21** at 12:00 pm to 1:30 pm ET/11:00 am CT/10:00 am MT/9:00 am PT

Free webinar offered by Encore.org with national leaders. See registration information above.

- **September** check your local PBS air dates at <https://www.pbs.org/show/lives-well-lived/>

To celebrate National Grandparents Month, the heartwarming documentary, Lives Well Lived, is featured on PBS throughout the month

- **October 12** at 3:30 pm ET/2:30 pm CT/1:30 pm MT/12:30 pm PT

Network Roundtable, an informal time to connect with peers around the network to ask questions and share ideas. No registration required. Join on Zoom here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83551123399pwd=a0YvZHVva3JPZ1M0cUdQZDdnYVRUQT09>

We welcome your suggestions for speakers and topics. Contact [Sarah](#) to share your ideas.

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True Link





*Kathy & Rick
Scaletty*

