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Aging Matters: Volunteerism for All Ages

Each generation possesses unique insight and talent. When harnessed effectively, these qualities can transform communities. As people of all ages unite to support a common cause, they are able to share thoughts and experiences. Through these collective interactions they become more empathetic to the plight of others reducing social bias. As the barriers between younger and older age groups dissipate, all people are able to bond together to address crucial social issues and create a lasting positive impact in their community.



Volunteer Appreciation Week (April 17-23, 2022) is quickly approaching. Shepherd's Centers across the country will be celebrating the ability of volunteers to tackle society's pressing aging challenges while inspiring multiple generations to take action to create lasting positive change for the betterment of older adult lives. Appreciation events allow our network to recognize the strength a volunteer workforce has to shape an inclusive world for all citizens regardless of age.

Around the network, Shepherd's Center communities are being enhanced by our growing diversity through intergenerational volunteerism. Whether providing a ride to the doctor, visiting on the porch to reduce isolation, or serving in a leadership capacity, Shepherd's Center volunteer opportunities are inclusive of variety of age groups and our network appreciates and celebrates them all.



Route 5 Through the Years

Carol, a veteran Meals on Wheels (MOW) driver with the **Northland Shepherd's Center (MO)**, has been delivering nutritious meals for over 20 years. Carol's family has been paying the gift of healthy dinners forward for decades, both her parents, aunt and daughters have participated in this multi-generational volunteer experience.

Meals on Wheels Route 5 is Carol's favorite place to be Monday around noon, as she visits with participants and checks on their well-being. During a recent delivery, Carol learned that Bob, one of her regulars, missed so much being able to have a pet. Bob told Carol he longed to pet and hold a furry friend and that was one of the things in his life he missed the most, since he was no longer able to care for a pet. So, Carol sprang into action and now brings her service dog, Sophie, to visit Bob. The visits bring Bob such joy.

Carol gushes, "It's just amazing what all Bob went through in WWII. He was in the leading charge at the Battle of the Bulge! I'm always spellbound listening to him, and I love the joy in his face when he's playing with and laughing at Sophie!" SCA is grateful for the



A Lifetime Handyman

Through each season of his lifetime, John has always enjoyed fixing things. Since the age of 11, he operated a handyman shop out of his father's basement workshop, was a remodeling contractor, and spent seven years as a handyman for Shepherd's Center of Greater Winston-Salem (NC). John always finds gratification helping someone in need, whether it is making repairs or installing much-needed grab bars to help with mobility. "I often think of what Maya Angelou said ... 'that people will forget what you said, people will forget that you did, Mr. Repairman,'" he retorts with a chuckle, "but people will never forget how you made them feel."

John recalls how his junior high school principal supported him when he had to care for his family's sick chickens which caused him to be late to school. Instead of punishing young John for repeated tardiness, the principal supported the boy's efforts to care for his chickens.

That one act of compassion changed John's whole outlook on education, he explains. "Like Maya Angelou advised: It's how he made me feel." John's story exemplifies

decades of joy every generation of Carol's family brings to older adults.

how every person regardless of age has the skill and ability to support their community.



Generations Unite for Change

Shepherd's Centers offer a multitude of meaningful intergenerational volunteer opportunities.

For instance, Charles is a Vietnam War veteran who teaches an Adventures in Learning class which explores historical events of the 1960's and their impact on American society. You

might be similar to Emily who works full-time but wants to instill in her young children the value of helping others, by volunteering at a Shepherd's Center leaf raking event on the weekend. You could be the youthful spark that is driven to affect true social change like Mica who advocates for an inclusive society by sharing the stories he hears during Friendly Visitor calls with his classmates while earning his college degree in social work.

Intergenerational volunteerism has the power to positively impact society's most difficult issues and strengthen the bonds that tie all members of a community together. Regardless of your age you have the talent and voice to make a difference, so start volunteering today!

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