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Aging Matters: A Fresh Perspective Ahead

Many Americans think of aging as deterioration, decline, and dependency. Something to dread. But, Shepherd's Centers of America has long embraced a positive view of aging with older individuals having skills, knowledge, and wisdom. We promote aging as a time of opportunities, not challenges; new beginnings, not closure; reinventing possibilities, not retirement; creative expression, not ordinary living; and stepping up in service to others, not winding down.



Research by the Frameworks Institute found that the public's perception of aging is decidedly negative and antithetical to how most older people feel and what experts in the field know to be true. As a result, the Frameworks Institute continues to help reframe how society views aging. You can read much more about this work [here](#).

Ageism—discrimination based on age—is widespread. Yet, it typically goes unnoticed and unchallenged in employment, health care, and other parts of life. The good news is that if we change how we talk about aging, we can, over time, change how we think about it and act in response. Connect with the Shepherd's Centers Network to help in the ongoing efforts to promote the benefits of aging for all generations.



Celebrating Black History

In celebration of Black History Month, **Shepherd's Center of Webster-Kirkwood (MO)** is providing a rich retrospect of Black



Bridging the Digital Divide

At **Shepherd's Center of Greensboro (NC)**, the ShepNet Computer Center volunteer team offers instruction to older adults who

artists and their contributions to building the cultural history of the United States.

Participants are learning about the significance of artists such as Robert S. Duncanson, a famous Black landscape painter of the mid-nineteenth century. As a free black man in antebellum America, Duncanson is considered the first African-American artist to be internationally known during his time.

Rounding out the events is a viewing and discussion of *Summer of Soul* a feature film documentary about the legendary 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, which celebrated African American music and culture, and promoted Black pride and unity.

wish to enhance their lives by becoming more computer confident. ShepNet Computer Center was launched in 1996 with the intent of teaching basic computer usage to adults who were just entering the world of technology. But today they offer a vast range of assistance from the savvy digital user to the fledgling newbie.

Technology proficient teachers provide a 2:1 educational ratio so that each student gets the personalized attention they need to gain proficiency no matter the task. Participants learn to navigate new devices, operational systems, as well as application software. The Center estimates that more than 4,000 individuals have completed a ShepNet course since its inception.



Reframing Ideas

The fundamental concept behind reframing is that the frame through which a person views a situation determines their point of view. When that frame of reference is altered, the focus changes, shifting thinking and behavior. So how can you lead by example to reframe the aging experience in your community?

One way to shape a new narrative is by creating strategies to challenge aging bias. Instead of using words such as "seniors," "elderly," "aging dependents," and similar "othering" terms that stoke negative stereotypes, try using more neutral terms such as "older people/Americans" and inclusive terms such as "we" and "us."

Maybe you want to embrace and be a cheerleader for new educational activities by joining an Adventures in Learning class. Show your community your excitement about learning new things, creating new memories, and improving your skills. Or maybe you want to advocate for the positive benefits of volunteering by recruiting intergenerational groups to assist with lawn maintenance or telephone reassurance programs. Using your wisdom and insight from a lifetime of experiences can help others reframe their perspectives on aging.

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