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Special Edition



CELEBRATING AGING

In 1972, 50 years ago, Elbert Cole and a community-wide planning team proposed a new image of aging in America. These visionary leaders believed the missing piece in the social policy on aging was the absence of a conceptual foundation needed to understand the aging process. Applying concepts of empowerment, ownership and participatory decision-making, the Shepherd's Center model was launched. The very first Shepherd's Center, **KC Shepherd's Center**, has been

thriving ever since! Perhaps no one knows the collective history of Shepherd's Centers better than Dr. Rusty Ryan. Rusty initiated a 10-month long project to compile the stories of those who helped make Dr. Cole's dream a reality. Thank you, Rusty!

My introduction to Elbert and Virginia Cole and KC Shepherd's Center was by accident. In August 1974, Truman Medical Center PharmD residents under my supervision participated in the "Update on Medicine" series that was part of the KC Shepherd's Center (KCSC) Adventures in Learning program. The resident gained experience in public speaking, interaction, and communication with older adults through this series. One Friday the assigned resident was ill, so we called the Center to let them know. I was asked to speak in place of the resident. I agreed to present, "If Pills Could Talk, What Would They Say?" The rest is history—I continue to participate at KCSC to this day.

Two major goals attracted me to join the Shepherd's Center movement: I loved the welcoming interfaith vision—no one was excluded—and the emphasis on lifelong learning for older adults. For 36 years I was blessed to know and work with Dr. Elbert Cole while he served as founder and executive director of the Shepherd's Center organization. He was a visionary pastor whose personal attributes included friendliness, persistence, persuasiveness, kindness, and concern for others. His leadership helped change the image of aging throughout America. He personally demonstrated how older adults could live independently longer and continue to make valuable contributions to their communities.

Elbert lived a life that mattered. He founded the interfaith nonprofit organizations KCSC and Shepherd's Centers of America. From brainstorming sessions with six church members on ways to keep older adult members involved in their communities, the innovative Shepherd's Center concept was created. Through Elbert's leadership, this effort grew to a national movement of active older adults providing home services along with life enrichment and education programs in 53 Shepherd's Centers in 17 states,

comprising a network of 15,000 volunteers serving more than 100,000 people. The growth of the Shepherd's Center movement gave testimony to the power and influence of Elbert Cole's dream and unleashed the ever-expanding, untapped resource of older adult volunteers in America who helped themselves by helping others.

Through his leadership with Shepherd's Centers, Elbert led thousands of older adults to not only add years to their lives, but to add life to their years.

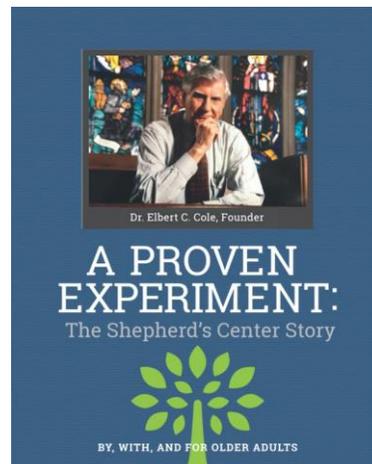
Rusty Ryan
SCA Emeritus Board Member

CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY

What better way to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the KC Shepherd's Center than with a book describing the journey. Our revered founder, Dr. Elbert C. Cole, created a legacy of ministry by, for, and with older adults that remains with us today. This book documents the 50-year history and offers a deeper look into the future leadership qualities and models needed to reach older generations for decades to come.

The Shepherd's Center, "a proven experiment," provides evidence of the impact on quality of life for older adults when we meet and exceed their vital personal, social, and spiritual needs. As Rusty Ryan, editor of this Shepherd's Center story, points out, the names of everyone who played a part in creating Shepherd's Center cannot be noted. Deep appreciation is expressed to the hundreds of volunteer servant leaders for their work and dedication in developing and implementing 50 years of programs and services while offering their resources and support through the years.

You can order a copy for yourself and your Centers through Amazon [here](#). It's an enjoyable read!



CELEBRATE 70 OVER 70

KC Shepherd's Center is celebrating this milestone anniversary with the public on September 17 in conjunction with its fifth annual 70 over 70 Awards Gala. As one of the center's largest fundraisers, this event is designed to recognize 70 individuals each year who are over the age of 70 and making a meaningful contribution to the Kansas City metro area. Individuals do not have to be affiliated with Shepherd's Center to be nominated. The 70 over 70 Award honorees represent community leaders and builders, business owners, entrepreneurs, volunteers, environmentalists, and arts and cultural leaders.



The center does a fabulous job, sparing no expense, in featuring honorees each year. Check out the [web page for photos and bios](#) of last year's honorees (2022 honorees will be up soon). Watch this [heartwarming piece](#) from honorees that highlights our core values and what it means to lead a life worth living. The professional photos and videos help tell the story of empowered older adults and create a powerful connection with stakeholders. A picture indeed speaks a thousand words!

Janet Baker, executive director, goes one step further with an [interview](#) with a local news program promoting the anniversary and gala. Congratulations on a terrific job!

CELEBRATE GROWTH

Just as no two communities are exactly alike, no two Shepherd's Centers are exactly alike. Each grows and develops under the leadership of older adults and the needs of the community. KC Shepherd's Center started with five older adult volunteers delivering meals to seven older adults who were isolated. Since the start of the pandemic, their meals on wheels program has significantly increased the number of older adults served, averaging 1,000 meals every week! They also added a phone pals program to keep older adults connected. You can review their [2021 impact report here](#).



But as we all know, it's not about the size, but the effectiveness of a Shepherd's Center in empowering older adults to continue growing and giving back to the community. KC Shepherd's Center is leading by example--transforming our shared beliefs and values into action. And they continue to shape Elbert Cole's dreams for a better tomorrow for all older adults.

CELEBRATE OUR LEADERS

KC Shepherd's Center's Executive Director, Janet Baker, was selected as a recipient of Fox 4 KC's weekly Pay It Forward. Janet is passionate about the mission and the team of volunteers and staff who make it possible to connect older adults in many ways



Watch the special surprise recognition [here](#). As Janet is quick to point out, it takes a team, and KC Shepherd's Center has an exceptional team of staff and volunteers!

CELEBRATE OUR FUTURE

This milestone 50th anniversary of the first Shepherd's Center is the perfect time to announce the launch of a new Shepherd's Center, **Shepherd's Center of Fort Scott** in Fort Scott, KS. Their first Adventures in Learning session is scheduled for October. We are thrilled to welcome Pastor Christopher Eshelman and the community team to our network family!



You continue to tell us that expansion and awareness are the two things that would help build your local success. You can help grow the network--and Elbert Cole's vision--by sharing information about the Shepherd's Centers Network. Information is easily accessible on the [SCA website page, Get Involved](#). In particular, you can point out the [Shepherd's Center Overview](#) for start-up and [Membership Sign-Up Form](#) for like-minded organizations. Working together, we can transform the concept of aging into an empowering experience for living a life of meaning...for today's and future generations.

We are grateful for our sponsors!



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