

## Overcoming Social Isolation and Loneliness

Sadly, social isolation and loneliness are steadily increasing in the U.S., and the pandemic helped to spotlight the challenges and impact on health. An estimated 25-30% of older adults are socially isolated. Loneliness is not just about being alone but about not having social needs met. These feelings can hurt as much as physical pain. Furthermore, persistent loneliness is linked to higher risks for dementia, increased heart disease, increased stroke, and premature death.

As we age, we are more likely to have experiences that can contribute to or intensify loneliness, such as living alone, the loss of family or friends, and chronic health impairments. The Shepherd's Centers of America Network addresses these challenges by offering a supportive community, comprehensive services, and meaningful opportunities to engage with others.

Our network offers a variety of programs and activities that encourage older adults to connect with one another. From health and wellness to social enrichment activities and volunteer opportunities, there is always something of purpose and someone to meet. In addition, support services, such as transportation, are provided at no fee to help older adults get around the community and maintain connections with family, friends, and activities of interest.

This supportive environment empowers older adults to maintain physical, mental, and emotional well-being, allowing them to age with dignity and live their lives to the fullest. The more we understand ways to alleviate social isolation and loneliness and foster social connection, the more we can help ourselves and others. You can learn more about the impact of social isolation here.

[Read More](#)



## Pickleball Craze

The fastest-growing sport across America is pickleball. Often described as a combination of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong, it's an easy game to learn and played by anyone regardless of age or athletic ability. Pickleball has become so popular that many cities and community organizations have created courts specifically for pickleball use. Some parks even offer classes where you can learn how to play from instructors who specialize in teaching new players how best to utilize their paddles and balls during gameplay.

The pickleball craze is sweeping the country, and our very own **Shepherd's Center of Topeka (KS)** has had an established league for the past 12 years. Meeting every Monday and Wednesday from 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm to learn the game, compete, and make memories with the company of their community. The Shepherd's Center has a robust league for the competitive and the friendly, averaging 30 players per week on four courts. The age ranges from 58 to 88 years old, and sometimes grandkids or other teens have been known to get involved

Participants with Shepherd's Center of Topeka describe it as a great way to meet new people and connect with others after a life transition, such as retiring, being new to the area, or losing a spouse. The volunteer organizers set up play so players rotate courts and can play with many different people. Their goal is "exercise, fun, and fellowship." This pickleball league is one example of how older adults are finding physical and social support through Shepherd's Center.



### National Volunteer Leader of the Year

Shepherd's Centers of America (SCA) announces **Jayne Young**, with the **Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia (SCNOVA)**, the recipient of the **2022 Donald Owen Smith National Volunteer Leadership Award** (pictured with Scott Schroth). This award recognizes exceptional volunteers with the SCA Network for helping older adults lead meaningful lives through connection with each other and their community. This volunteer leadership award is the only national award recognizing older adults in service to

communities to help older adults age with dignity, meaning, and purpose.

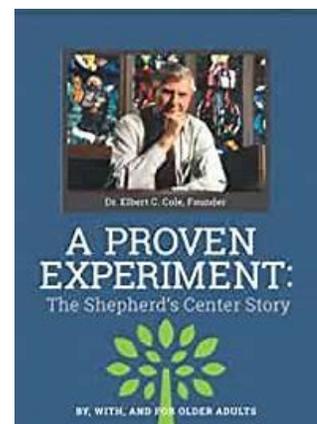
Jayne has served continuously with Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia for 12 years. "She always seems to know how to hit the right chord in meeting the needs of both our participants and volunteers," says Scott Schroth, Chair SCNOVA Board of Directors. "Her leadership has been instrumental in our ability to grow our organization and reach new communities."

The review committee noted Jayne's profound dedication to the mission, citing that she is an inspiration to all. Congratulations Jayne!

## New Book on the History of the Shepherd's Center Model

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first Shepherd's Center in the nation, Emeritus Board Member, Dr. Rusty Ryan has compiled and edited, ***A Proven Experiment: The Shepherd's Center Story***. The book's contributors, most of whom have been connected to the national movement for 40-50 years, share unique points of view on the relevance of the mission, then and now.

Copies are available from **Amazon** for \$14.99 or check with your local Shepherd's Center about getting a copy. This is a great read, outlining the birth and growth of our visionary model of aging and the vital



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