

Sacred Encounters

A few years ago, while walking on the beach early one morning, I saw a beautiful, nearly full moon fading in the sky. Just before the moon dropped below the horizon, the sun peaked over the ocean in all its glory. I've walked on the beach a lot, but this was the first time I'd experienced a rising sun and a setting moon almost simultaneously. It was a sacred encounter.

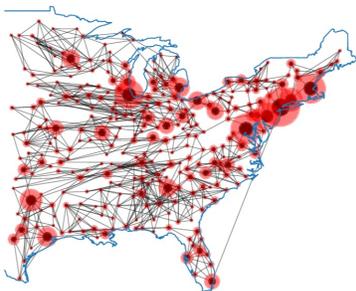
I've been reflecting on our volunteer engagement seminar with Tobi Johnson last month. One of my takeaways is the importance of the interactions we have with our volunteers. Volunteers, including older adult volunteers, have many opportunities to use their skills, talents, and passions for good. As a result, many want to use their volunteer time for sacred work. It's not about the tasks they necessarily do for older adults and hence the delivery of our mission. Rather, it might be about being a good listener, not just a volunteer driver, as someone shares their anxiety about a medical appointment. It might be about being a friend, not just a handy helper, as a widow shares her grief that her husband used to take care of that type of household chore. Or it might be shared laughter with others, not just learning something interesting in a class.

Our work, and the work of our volunteers, is sacred because regardless of the task, it is more about the listening and caring during the encounter. Sacred encounters teach us about the quality of intention and attention given to the moment. People engaged in sacred work often report they gain more than they give. Is this a familiar comment from your volunteers?

As we engage more volunteers to help connect more older adults, we might want to remember that our experiences are the collection of hundreds, maybe thousands of individual encounters. We hope all those connected with our network somehow experience the individual and collective encounters as something distinctive and sacred. We might not always see it directly, but it is happening.

We are honored by all of you across the network creating sacred moments for older adults, beautiful new beginnings like the sunrise and the moon's reflection splashing on the water.

Sarah Cheney



Network Census

Demographic data is a crucial aspect of understanding the populations we serve and can inform our cultures, processes, and overall understanding of center operations. SCA is distributing a census tool in the coming weeks to encourage all centers to gather census information to share with the network and other stakeholders.

While the idea of asking people about their identity can seem awkward, it can also be empowering. Not engaging with people on these issues can lead to

assumptions that hide or exclude important aspects of who they are and make them feel invisible and undervalued.

It's important to note that it is legal to gather demographic data, but it must be done in a way that protects everyone's rights and privacy. Individuals should be given an option to not answer a question or your census survey.

GuideStar, a leading nonprofit organization, launched a program in 2014 to collect demographic data from nonprofits and foundations at scale. As part of the GuideStar Nonprofit Profiles, organizations can now report data about their staff, board, and volunteer demographics. This voluntary program has launched numerous conversations in individual organizations and various sectors about diversity, equity, and inclusion and strategies for improvement.

By gathering demographic data in a respectful and private manner, we can increase openness and transparency and have data that allows us to understand gaps and strategies to enhance our impact. The collection of demographic data is a critical opportunity to improve our understanding and better serve the populations we work with. Watch for information soon.

Volunteer Engagement

Volunteer recruitment is a critical aspect of many organizations, and this past January we held a webinar with Tobi Johnson, who specializes in volunteer engagement. This webinar has shed some light on the challenges and opportunities in this area. One of the top challenges faced by organizations is consistency in recruitment. Despite this challenge, it's encouraging to know that the average number of active volunteers is back to pre-COVID levels.

To better understand these challenges and opportunities, organizations can access the 2022 Volunteer Management Progress Report. This report provides valuable insights into volunteer impact and how it's often tracked, including the number of people served, the average dollar value of volunteer hours, and outcome metrics specific to the program where volunteers serve.

If you're interested in learning more about volunteer recruitment and management, you can get a free copy of the report by visiting the [report web page](#). With this report, you'll have access to key takeaways and best practices that can help you enhance your volunteer recruitment efforts and better understand the impact of your volunteer program.



Since 1998, the *Shepherd's Center of Webster-Kirkwood (MO)* has helped older adults find enrichment, maintain independence and stay socially active. Now reaching much farther than just the Webster Groves and Kirkwood communities, they serve over 1,300 older adults a year. Join us in sharing congratulations for their 25th anniversary! They will be offering special programs, events and promotions throughout the year.

Sam Matthews at the *Shepherd's Center of Greater Winston Salem (NC)* has been honored as the SHIIP Coordinator of the Year. Sam is recognized as a great communicator, who is punctual, proactive and willingly shares information with volunteer counselors. Sam holds the distinction of being the first coordinator to organize and offer a monthly "Welcome to Medicare" workshop in North Carolina.



Copy of Report

The Board of Directors at *Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church (VA)* honored volunteer driver **Connie Van Zandt** with its 2022 Ed Schrock Volunteer of the Year Award. Connie was recognized for selflessly providing 39 of their clients with 193 rides during the year, driving over 3,300 miles and devoting over 300 hours of her time.



2/14: Valentine's Day. Send a "love letter" to your supporters.

2/17: Random Acts of Kindness Day. Catch volunteers in the act of doing something good with photos. Or ask your supporters to share good deeds they see on social media.

2/20: President's Day (U.S.). Profile a President who was a champion of volunteerism, such as John F. Kennedy, George H. Bush and all recent Presidents.



Corporate Sponsorship Success

LifeQuest of Arkansas is partnering with the local Right at Home franchise. SCA and a number of Shepherd's Centers have successfully partnered with Right at Home over the years. In Little Rock, Right at Home is sponsoring their lifelong learning program. Right at Home is a good partner given the shared focus on quality services to help older adults age at home with dignity.

The *Shepherd's Center of Greater Winston-Salem (NC)* and Right at Home of Winston-Salem collaborated with other community partners to create an innovative hospital to home program, named Right Transitions, that focused on reducing hospital readmission of older adults. We encourage you to reach out to your Right at Home agency to explore collaborative opportunities. Go to their [website](#) to find a Right at Home office near you.

Read More

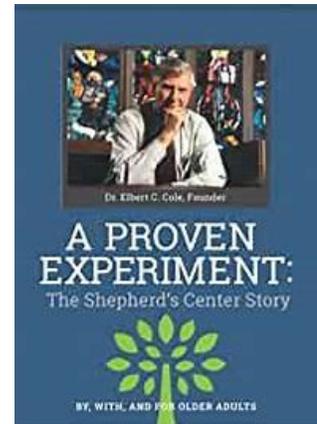
Fundraising Success

During the holiday season, the **KC Shepherd's Center** was invited to participate in the Giving Machines Kansas City initiative. This innovative idea, started by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is all about giving back and spreading love to those in need. Individuals who selected **KCSC** had the option to pay for an older adult's emergency utility bill, give a 12-week scholarship for them to attend Adventures in Learning, or provide lawn maintenance to an older adult to brighten their day. Thanks to the kindness and generosity of the KC community, they raised an incredible \$18,420.

Order Your Copies of the New Shepherd's Center Book

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 of the relevance of the mission, then and now.

SCA affiliates can make bulk purchases at the author discounted rate of \$5 each. A minimum of 25 books is required. There is no shipping fee! Dr. Rusty Ryan is graciously underwriting this expense as an added benefit to all SCA affiliates.



For bulk purchases, email staff@shepherdcenters.org or call 816-960-2022. Include your name and center name along with the number of books you wish to purchase.

Quick reminder...*please add Mary Wiles, Marketing & Communications Manager (mary@shepherdcenters.org) to your newsletter and announcement distribution list. This is a great way for us to stay up-to-date and celebrate the many exciting things you do with your Shepherd's Center.*

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