

Volunteering: The Key to Healthy Aging and Community Connection

A recent study by the Mayo Clinic has shown that volunteering provides numerous health benefits, especially for older adults. **Shepherd Centers of America (SCA)** recognizes the importance of volunteering for older adults and offers meaningful opportunities to grow and give back to the community.

SCA offers a range of volunteer opportunities for older adults, including driving older adults to essential destinations in the community, helping with minor home repair and maintenance projects, providing friendship and companionship through personal visits and phone calls, and assisting with a variety of other support services. These volunteer activities allow older adults to stay physically active, mentally engaged, and socially connected, which can contribute to better health outcomes. In addition, volunteering with the SCA Network can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment, which are essential for older adults to maintain their overall well-being.

Volunteering with the SCA Network also allows older adults to develop new skills and explore new interests. Volunteers come from diverse backgrounds and bring a range of experiences and skills to their volunteer work. This diversity creates an enriching environment for older adults to learn and grow while giving back to their communities.

Moreover, volunteering allows older adults to make a positive impact on the lives of others. Through the SCA Network, volunteer opportunities help to improve quality of life and social connections to community.

[Read More](#)

Making Connections Across America

Iris is 91 and registered for transportation services at **Shepherd's Center of Webster-Kirkwood**, outside of St. Louis, MO. When staff asked a routine question about how she found out about Shepherd's Center, they were surprised by her answer. Iris explained her cross-country connection to Shepherd's Centers. Iris has arthritis, and years ago her doctor told her the best medicine is Tai Chi. So she learned tai chi at **Peninsula Shepherd's Center** while living in California. When she moved to Virginia, she started the tai chi class at the **Shepherd's Center of Richmond**. The class grew to a regular attendance of 40 people. Iris claims that the lectures at the Shepherd's Center are wonderful and still recalls a very interesting class on Mark Twain.



Iris now lives in St. Louis, and although she has children in the area, she says she “doesn’t want to impose on them.” Iris has just given up driving and sold her car. She is the primary caregiver for her husband who has Alzheimer’s disease. Volunteer drivers are now escorting her to physician appointments. What she says she likes most about Shepherd’s Centers is the shared values of respect and responsibility toward others that are lived out every day.

Iris, like the nearly 170,000 older adults connected with Shepherd’s Centers across America, lives a meaningful and purposeful life throughout every phase of aging. This nationwide network of Shepherd’s Centers works to not only promote happy, healthy aging but also to make our communities better for all.

Why I Volunteer with Shepherd's Center

by Bernie Henderson

For several years, I have enjoyed teaching a course for the [Shepherd Center’s of Richmond](#). I volunteered to do this for two reasons. First, I have collected information on the course subject for a long time and wanted a reason to assemble it into a teaching format. Second, I thought doing this for the Shepherd's Center would be a way to demonstrate my appreciation for their helping my mother maintain the dignity of her independence for a while.

My mother was a fiercely independent, self-reliant woman. As she grew older and basic tasks became increasingly challenging, she did not want her family to know that she was becoming less able to care for herself. Mobility in the community, such as going to the grocery store and doctor appointments, was one of the first issues to threaten her independence. She had been a volunteer helping older adults for many years and was not ready to let family and friends know that she now needed the same kind of help she had provided to others.

So, ever the coordinator, my mother identified several organizations that would provide the assistance she needed, and the Shepherd's Center would be one source of transportation for her. She methodically used several organizations for her needs so as not to become “a burden” on any one of them, and also to avoid being identified as “a frequent customer” to prevent word getting out about what she was doing. It was a couple of years before we discovered her secret. Looking back, my family and I are grateful to the Shepherd’s Center for permitting my mother to preserve her dignity and extend her independence during those years.

While I am still working full-time, I cannot be a volunteer driver, but I am delighted to do other things for the Shepherd’s Center such as teaching for the lifelong learning program. And when I retire, if I am able to safely do so, one of the first things I intend to do is sign up to be a driver. Until then, I hope others will do the job.



SCA Featured in the NYT

We are thrilled to share that our volunteer companion services were recently featured in *The New York Times*, in an article titled **"You May Need That Procedure. But Do You Really Need an Escort?"** by Paula Span, published on March 25, 2023.

The article highlights the challenges faced by older Americans who require basic screenings or operations that involve anesthesia or sedation and need to arrange for someone to

take them home afterward. The piece shares the story of Mr. Lewinger, who struggles in scheduling procedures due to the requirement of having a medical escort.

Our volunteer driver program has been addressing this crucial need by providing trained volunteers who serve as medical escorts and offer door-through-door transportation for older adults in our community. This service is instrumental in ensuring that older adults can access healthcare without the added stress of finding transportation. [Read the full story](#)

here.

Small Acts Make a Big Difference

Volunteering is a great way to share kindness and help others. Small acts of kindness can have a big difference in the lives of others. At Shepherd's Centers, volunteers help older adults with ordinary activities, such as driving to an appointment, making a friendly visit or phone call, or delivering groceries.

These acts of kindness make it possible for older adults to continue living safely in their own homes and communities where they most want to be. And this makes all the difference in the world. Share joy and kindness with an older adult by volunteering at Shepherd's Center today.

[Find a Shepherd's Center near you.](#)

We are grateful for our sponsors!



ONE SKIN



Online
Meditation
Events.com™



CREATIVE
PLANNING

Shepherd's Centers of America | 5559 NW Barry Road #333, Kansas City, MO 64154

[Unsubscribe tdavis@shepherdcenters.org](mailto:tdavis@shepherdcenters.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by staff@shepherdcenters.org in collaboration
with



Try email marketing for free today!