

### Celebrating National Volunteer Month: Honoring the Power of Giving Back

National Volunteer Month in the United States is observed in April every year, and it is the perfect time to recognize those who give their time and energy to help others. Volunteering is believed to have existed throughout human history. In many cultures, the concept of volunteering was intricately linked to religious beliefs and traditions. For example, in ancient civilizations, there were religious and civic organizations that provided assistance to the poor and vulnerable members of society. With our interfaith roots, we have long talked about how all the world's religions have a common tenet of helping others as a means of promoting greater compassion, kindness, and social harmony.

Additionally, volunteerism has played a significant role in American society. In fact, the founding principles of the United States, including the idea of civic duty and the importance of individual responsibility, are closely tied to volunteerism. With the pandemic, our network saw a reduction in our volunteer ranks, understandably given the higher health risks to our older adult volunteers. A Fidelity Charitable survey found that two-thirds of volunteers before the pandemic reduced or eliminated their time spent volunteering. In a 2022 year-end survey, Tobi Johnson and Associates' found that volunteerism has rebounded to pre-pandemic rates.

Recognizing this upheaval in volunteerism, it seems wise to review a few trends in volunteerism post-pandemic.

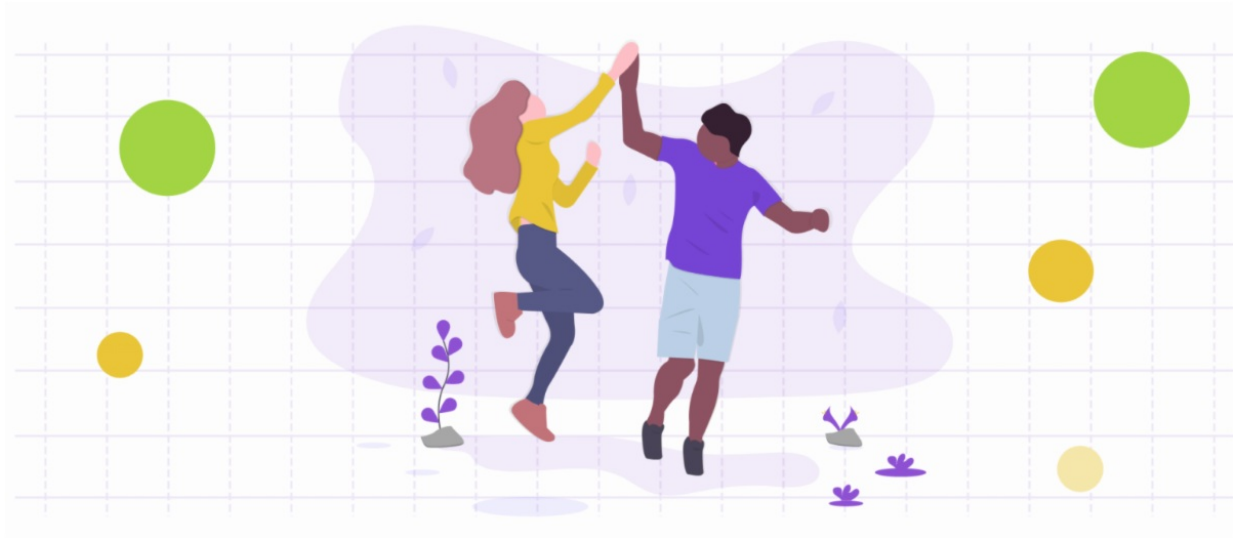
- Volunteering is becoming more skills-based: more organizations are seeking volunteers with specific skills, such as web design, social media management, or data analysis. This shift toward skills-based volunteering allows volunteers to make a more meaningful impact, while also developing their own skills and advancing their careers.
- Virtual volunteering is on the rise: it's easier than ever to volunteer from anywhere in the world. Virtual volunteering allows people to use their skills and expertise to help organizations without ever leaving their homes. This not only makes volunteering more accessible, but also helps organizations reach a wider pool of volunteers.
- Volunteer commitment is more flexible: many volunteers are now looking for shorter-term or episodic volunteering opportunities, rather than committing to long-term service. This allows volunteers to try out different causes and organizations, and find ways to make a meaningful impact even if they have limited time to devote to volunteering.
- Volunteerism is becoming more diverse and inclusive: there is growing recognition that volunteerism must be inclusive and accessible to people of all backgrounds and abilities. Many organizations are taking steps to ensure that their volunteer programs are welcoming to diverse volunteers, and that volunteers feel valued and respected for their contributions.

Overall, these trends reflect a growing recognition of the value and importance of

volunteerism in addressing social problems, building stronger communities, and promoting individual and collective well-being. They also reflect the changing needs and preferences of volunteers. Shepherd's Centers need to adapt in this evolving environment.

There is an opportunity for our network to leverage National Volunteer Month to not only celebrate current volunteers but also to recruit new volunteers to join our cause, give back to their communities, and make a positive impact in the lives of others. We applaud and celebrate the tens of thousands of volunteers with the Shepherd's Centers Network. We see first-hand how a single individual can make a significant difference in the lives of others.

Sarah Cheney



## Volunteer Appreciation Ideas

April is recognized as Global Volunteer Month, with the week of April 16-22 designated as Volunteer Appreciation Week in the United States. This time of year provides an opportunity to honor and thank the volunteers who give their time and energy to make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

To help organizations and individuals recognize their volunteers, **Points of Light offers resources and ideas for Volunteer Appreciation Week.** The organization encourages people to celebrate volunteers in a variety of ways, such as hosting a volunteer recognition event, creating personalized thank you notes, and sharing volunteer stories on social media. They also offer a [toolkit](#) that you can download on your own.

Additionally, we found a list of 60 volunteer appreciation ideas below to inspire organizations and individuals looking to recognize their volunteers. Some of these ideas include hosting a volunteer recognition breakfast or lunch, creating custom t-shirts or hats for volunteers, or organizing a volunteer appreciation week with daily themes or events.

Volunteering is a selfless act that deserves recognition and appreciation. By taking the time to acknowledge their contributions, organizations and individuals can show their volunteers how much they are valued and inspire them to continue making a positive impact in their communities.

**60 Volunteer Appreciation Ideas**

## SCA Volunteer Recruitment Ideas

The Shepherd's Center of Greater Winston-

**Salem (NC)** is seeking a male visitation volunteer with "The Domino Effect" to bring joy and support to an older gentleman with Parkinson's and memory issues. This playful and positive ad lists the value the volunteer brings by brightening the day of a domino aficionado while providing caregiver support to his daughter.

The ad specifies that the volunteer would only need to commit to a few hours a month on a Saturday or Sunday to play dominoes with the gentleman, and even includes a new set of dominoes as an added bonus. This is a great opportunity for someone who loves playing dominoes and wants to make a positive impact in the lives of others.

If you're interested in volunteering with "The Domino Effect," please contact Carol Ann Harris at [charris@shepherdscenter.org](mailto:charris@shepherdscenter.org). By volunteering your time and talents, you can help bring joy, companionship, and support to an older adult in need.



**Shepherd's Center of Greater Tupelo (MS)**, seeks volunteer drivers. The center has been active in Lee County for nearly 30 years and used to have 54 volunteer drivers who completed 2,200 driving requests in 2019. Unfortunately, the ranks of their volunteer drivers have dwindled over the years. Recently to bolster driving numbers the center has worked to engage student populations to increase inter-generational service-learning. Leadership also attended the SCA Webinar Series, "Grow Your Volunteer Base" with Tobi Johnson. The Shepherd's Center is hopeful that by employing a host of new approaches they will add new volunteer drivers to their ranks. Sometimes to find new volunteers it takes approaching the problem with new vision.

Like most Shepherd's Centers, the Tupelo location provides free services to seniors, including transportation to medical appointments, therapy sessions, the grocery store, the bank, and more. Volunteers must have a valid driver's license, proof of car insurance, and be in good physical shape to help seniors in and out of vehicles. **Shepherd's**



Board Members of **Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke (VA)** for jumping in to do what's needed during the sad transition with the passing of the Executive Director, Rhiannon Duck. Multiple board members have reached out to get clarification on different initiatives. Hang in there! We're all with you!

**Shepherd's Center of Kernersville (NC)** co-hosted a "Senior Singles Mingle" - a fun social gathering for older adults to make friends and friendly connections.



**04/15: World Art Day.** Have supporters create art based on how your cause has helped them or how you make them feel. Or showcase your staff's artistic talents.

**4/17 - 4/21: National Volunteer Week.** Download this [toolkit](#) for a week full of content.

**4/22: Earth Day.** How can you connect what you do with protecting the environment, even if your core mission isn't environmental? This year's theme is climate action.

**Center of Greater Tupelo** even reduced their age requirement to engage a broader group of volunteers. Volunteers can drive as little or as often as they like, and the organization uses a software program called Assisted Rides that enables volunteers to log in and see clients' requests and sign up for a request that works with their schedules.

**4/27: Tell a Story Day.** Time to share stories from your members or volunteers or be more creative storyteller and write about how much better the world would be with your org (or a horror story about the world without it).

[Link to Article](#)

## DEI and Volunteerism

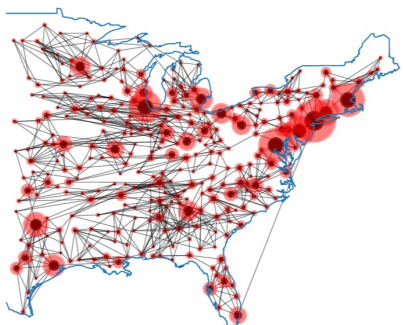
In the world of volunteerism, there's a troubling trend that seems to be perpetuating year after year. According to Tobi Johnson, the founder and CEO of VolunteerPro, the lack of diversity among those who work in the sector may also result in issues of equity in volunteerism as a whole. Johnson's concern is well-founded as the results of the Volunteer Management Progress Report survey continue to reveal a consistent trend of white (84%) women (88%) being the primary respondents for six years.

The statistics are concerning, as they suggest that finding equity in volunteerism will continue to be an issue unless something changes. Johnson's article on equity in volunteerism brings attention to the fact that barriers to volunteering exist, especially for marginalized groups. One of the takeaways from the article is that we need to be aware of the common barriers that prevent people from volunteering and then craft messages that demonstrate how these barriers can be overcome.

This lack of diversity is concerning not only from an equity standpoint but also because it may result in issues of equity in volunteerism as a whole. When volunteer management teams are not diverse, they may struggle to engage with and understand the needs and perspectives of marginalized groups. This, in turn, can lead to barriers that prevent these groups from accessing volunteer opportunities or feeling welcome and valued in the volunteering space.

To address this trend and promote equity in volunteerism, we need to be aware of the common barriers that prevent individuals from marginalized groups from participating and craft messages that speak to their needs and concerns. For example, some common barriers include lack of transportation, inflexible scheduling, and inadequate training or support. By understanding and addressing these barriers, we can address volunteering as whole with a better outcome.

[Link to Article](#)



## SCA Data & Census

Each year, we ask our affiliates to share data about their people and programs from the previous year so that we can aggregate information and report on the national impact Shepherd's Centers have. To be mindful of your time, the impact survey is significantly shorter for 2022. If you are regularly collecting data on the number of people served, the number of volunteers, etc., this year the SCA Impact Survey should take no more than 20 -30 minutes to complete.

We kindly ask that you please return the SCA Impact Survey completed form by **April 14, 2023**. All affiliates who return a completed form by **April 14** will be entered into a drawing with **two chances to win \$100 off** their annual affiliate dues.

New this year in an effort to increase the demographic data collected at each center, SCA has also released census data collection forms. Accurate census information will improve our ability to gain funding to enhance and expand our programs and better help more older adults. Forms were recently sent to your center via email. We hope you will take the time to participate in both.

[Download the Form](#)

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