



Aging Forward

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

Shepherd's Centers of America is now Aging Forward!



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Strengthening Our Mission



Age = Living

Our country has an urgent and ongoing need for social support to reduce isolation and increase community connectivity for older adults. Isolation and loneliness affect older adults at higher rates than other adults: about one in four older adults report being socially isolated and about one in three say they are lonely. The U.S. Surgeon General's 2023 Advisory highlights the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection in our country. These feelings of loneliness and social isolation affect both physical and mental health.

Research documents the health impact of loneliness is comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and it is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death. The Surgeon General's Advisory presents a remedy to this "epidemic" of loneliness and isolation... "By taking small steps every day to strengthen our relationships, and by supporting community efforts to rebuild social connection, we can rise to meet this moment together. We can build lives and communities that are healthier and happier."

Strengthening Our Mission

For close to five decades, Aging Forward (formerly Shepherd's Center of America) has focused precisely on these issues. During 2023, the Aging Forward Alliance engaged more than 150,000 individuals and their families through a variety of services that promote community connections, offer opportunities to learn and grow, advance health and wellness, and discover avenues to social enrichment. We all face aging issues, whether our own or those of a family member, a friend, or a neighbor. By supporting Aging Forward, you lend a helping hand that empowers older adults. Together, we can make our own and others' lives richer, happier, and more energetic. After all, aging is another word for living!

Building Community Connections

The Aging Forward Alliance provides essential services to older adults in need that help them continue living safely and independently in their own homes, where they most want to be. Our volunteers offer a helping hand with things such as a ride to a medical appointment, replacing a burned-out light bulb, picking up groceries, resolving a fraud issue, or just checking in to see how the individual is doing. The friendly face at the door (or voice on the phone) means so much in maintaining connections that bind the community together.

Learning and Growing

To help older adults grow and thrive, we offer our Adventures in Learning program. Lifelong learning includes college-type courses and cultural enrichment workshops. Instructors are mostly retired older adults or community experts who offer their special interests for classes that enrich lives and keep minds vibrant. Classes like music and art appreciation, foreign languages, using computers and other technology, current national and global affairs, local and regional history, genealogy, and many more await you.



Strengthening Our Mission

Staying Healthy and Active

Aging Forward's wellness programs range from weekly exercise classes to nutritional education to health screenings to health literacy initiatives. They provide the knowledge, skills, and social support for ensuring healthy lifestyles. Classes in Tai Chi, yoga, and line dancing, among others, offer opportunities for older adults to come together, work together, and be healthy together.

Finding Social Enrichment

Our 50 affiliates host an array of socially enriching programs for the older adults in their service areas. Group trips and activities encourage learning and cultivate active lifestyles. One week you might go on a day trip to a nearby museum; another week you might join an overnight getaway, sing with a choral group, or dance with your new-found friends. Whatever you choose will mean getting to know people and enjoying life with others.

Engaging in Your Community

In addition to classes, the Aging Forward Alliance offers opportunities for community involvement to all ages. Volunteering with an affiliate is deeply fulfilling for those who have a little extra time and the inclination to give back. Whether you're over 60 yourself, retired, still working or raising a family, you can be a volunteer. Opportunities vary with the affiliate and are flexible enough to meet any schedule.

Together, our affiliates affect the lives of many thousands of older adults around the country. This past year has been especially rewarding not only for those we serve but also for all our volunteers and staff. Elsewhere in this report you'll find details of our impact on the community, highlights during 2023, and our financial report for the year, along with thanks to our individual and organizational donors.

Remember: Aging is another word for living!

Mission, Vision, Values



Mission

Creating significant opportunities for service, lifelong learning and healthy living designed by, with, and for older adults through an interfaith network of community-based organizations.



Vision

Transforming aging into an empowering experience of personal growth and meaningful living... for today's and future generations.

Values

Building on five decades of experience serving older adults, our values guide all decisions.

- **Diversity and inclusion:** To celebrate the individuality and contribution of each person regardless of race, gender and religion
- **Empowerment:** To provide resources for older adults to pursue life enriching experiences they value most
- **Compassion:** To treat each person with kindness, dignity and respect
- **Collaboration:** To leverage strengths for the collective good
- **Volunteerism:** To advocate good citizenship
- **Interdependence:** To build community through the mutual reliance on each other

The Difference You Make



Impact Results

In 2023, the Aging Forward Alliance made significant strides as we continued to adapt in our everchanging world. Many affiliates reported unprecedented engagement and connection of older adults, a record number of rides provided, an all-time high in the delivery of meals and groceries, and unparalleled attendance in the classes they offered.

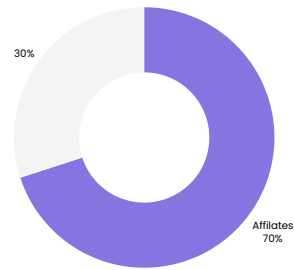
The **recent impact survey** across the Alliance highlights significant contributions to older adults and the community:

- **Lifelong Learning: 34,500** older adults participated in educational activities, with a total attendance of **931,500**.
- **Volunteer Engagement: 10,800** volunteers contributed **312,000** service hours.
- **Caregiving Support: 48,475** older adults benefited from free, informal caregiving services.
- **Service Value:** The estimated value of these services is **\$10.5** million, calculated using the Independent Sector's valuation of **\$33.49** per volunteer hour.

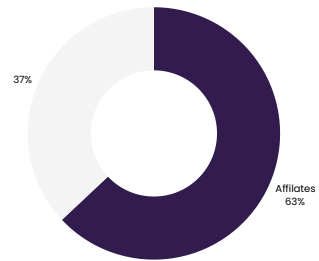
The Difference You Make



Services



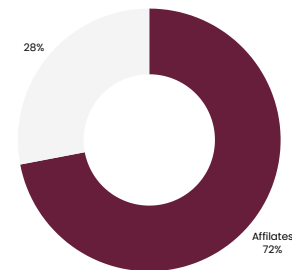
70% of affiliates operate a combination model of education and volunteer caregiving support.



63% of affiliates offer four or more services.



90% of affiliates offer lifelong learning programs.



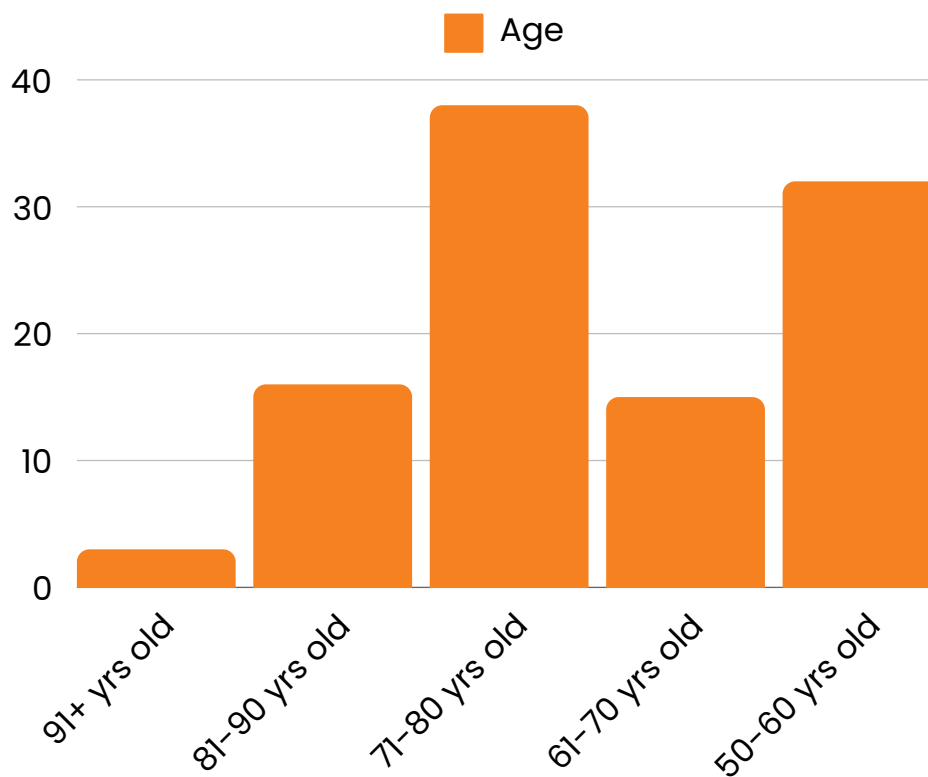
72% of affiliates offer volunteer caregiving services.

The Difference You Make

Most Popular Service

Volunteer Driver Services

- Approximately **84,036** one-way rides provided.
- Top destinations for medical rides include medical centers, doctors' offices, physical therapy, imaging centers, diabetes treatment, and dialysis centers.
- Top destinations for nonmedical rides include grocery shopping, pharmacies, and banks.



Participants

- Participant and volunteer engagement:
 - Over **50%** engaged for **6** or more years.
 - **15%** engaged for **11** or more years.

Impact Stories & Testimonials

Beyond the Numbers: How One Volunteer Helps Ann Marie Stay Independent and Connected

We spend a lot of time counting...the number of people served, numbers of volunteers, numbers of hours volunteers have given, number of rides, and so on. These numbers are important, but it's equally important to remember that each number represents a person: an older adult whose life has been changed because of what we do in communities around the country.

Meet Ann Marie. On Tuesday mornings just before 10AM, she is always waiting on Laura, a volunteer who drives Ann Marie to the grocery store and other errands she might need to attend to that week. Ann Marie shops for her favorite things and discusses meal ideas with Laura, who patiently but enthusiastically moves up and down the aisles by her side. After the grocery store, they might make a quick stop at the pharmacy or bank. All the while, the two chat continuously about everything—their families, books, news stories, the past and so much more. Upon arriving home, Laura helps take the shopping bags inside the house and assists with putting things away, just like Ann Marie showed her.

Sometimes, after the groceries are put away, Ann Marie will make them both a cup of tea and they continue to share with one another the events of their week. Laura is far more than a volunteer, but a friend. The comradery goes both ways. Laura enjoys spending time with Ann Marie. In fact, she says that she gets more out of this arrangement than she gives. She cherishes the friendship and easy conversation the two share.

As a result of Laura's help, Ann Marie is able to continue living in the home she and her husband bought together nearly 60 years ago. It's where her memories are and where she is happiest.

"The best thing about Shepherd's Center is finding the kind, caring community of people. They have saved my life!" – Charlotte

Impact Stories & Testimonials



Helping Iris and Bob Stay Connected and Independent Across Communities

And then there is Iris. Iris reached out to the Shepherd's Center of St. Louis to inquire about transportation. She and her husband, Bob, recently relocated to the area to be close to their daughter. Bob has dementia and Iris gave up driving when they moved to St. Louis. They don't want to be a bother and always depend on their daughter for rides. Iris shared that she first connected with the Shepherd's Center in San Diego where she learned Tai Chi after her doctor encouraged her to try some form of physical activity. She fell in love with Tai Chi and became good enough to help teach classes.

Bob and Iris then moved across the country to Virginia. Iris reached out to the Shepherd's Center of Richmond to sign up for Tai Chi. Upon learning that the Richmond Shepherd's Center didn't have a Tai Chi class, Iris offered to start one. She and Bob also got involved in the lifelong learning classes offered. The class on Mark Twain is one of the most interesting classes Iris says she has ever taken.

Both Iris and Bob's needs have changed, but they continue to turn to Shepherd's Centers. They are grateful there has been a Shepherd's Center in whatever community they have called home. "There needs to be a Shepherd's Center in every city and town," says Iris, "so older adults can make friends, stay healthy, enjoy life and live with dignity."

Impact Stories & Testimonials

Great Nonprofits & Guidestar Platinum

It is important to us to be a trusted partner with our affiliates, participants, communities, and donors. We understand that this trust is earned only when we consistently act with integrity and compassion. Thank you for putting your trust in us and our mission. Because of your trust, we are honored to be a top-rated **Great Nonprofit for the past 11 years!**

"I would like to take a moment to commend the outstanding efforts of Shepherd Centers of America. The services they offer, aimed at keeping older adults actively involved and connected within their communities, have undeniably left a lasting and beneficial impact on so many. Their commitment to serving older adults with genuine compassion truly sets them apart." – Great Nonprofit Reviewer

"For years I have been asked why I volunteer, and my answer remains the same: I volunteer because it makes a difference. Being a part of SCA brings a light into my world and brightens up my daily life. From the amazing staff to the responsive community – SCA never makes me question the 'why.'" – Great Nonprofit Reviewer



In 2023, we're proud to say we earned the **Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level of recognition offered by GuideStar**, the world's largest source of nonprofit information. By sharing metrics that highlight the progress we are making toward our mission, we're helping to demonstrate the impact your donations are making to move our network forward.

"The moment I walked through the doors at Shepherd's Center, I knew this must be the best nonprofit you'll ever find." – Charlie

Notable Achievements

Introducing the National Gallery of Volunteer Excellence

Aging Forward rolled out an enhanced volunteer recognition program to honor more dedicated volunteers who freely give their time and talent in countless ways to benefit others. Their selfless efforts have had an enduring impact on their communities, the nation, and society.

To better celebrate the many extraordinary volunteers from across the Aging Forward Alliance, this initiative, named the Donald Owen and Katherine Horridge Smith National Volunteer of Excellence Award, represents an expansion of the Donald Owen Smith National Volunteer Leadership Award created in 2014. Historically, this esteemed annual National Volunteer Leadership Award was bestowed upon a single outstanding volunteer. Now, this award will annually honor one exceptional volunteer from each affiliate.

This transformative shift will better celebrate the multitude of extraordinary volunteers from across the Aging Forward Alliance. One volunteer from every Shepherd's Center or affiliate will be inducted into the "National Gallery of Volunteer Excellence" annually. Together, we will increase awareness of the Aging Forward impact and connect more volunteers, furthering our shared mission to advance healthy aging with meaning and purpose.

Nominations were gathered in the Fall of 2023 and inductees recognized throughout the year, most especially in conjunction with National Volunteer Appreciation Week in April as well as at a dedicated ceremony during the Aging Forward National Conference. Past Donald Owen Smith National Volunteer Leaders will be inducted with the first class into the National Gallery of Volunteer Excellence.

Just as we are empowered by our visionary leaders, Founder Dr. Elbert Cole and Volunteer Leaders Donald Owen and Katherine Horridge Smith, Alliance volunteers leave a lasting legacy for future generations of older adults. This change to a prestigious Volunteer of Excellence Award with induction into a National Gallery of Volunteer Excellence is an ideal way to honor more older adult volunteers for their gift of giving that changes lives and makes our communities better places to live.

Notable Achievements

Inspiring Generations: The Lasting Impact of Dr. Elbert Cole's Vision on Aging

In 1972, Elbert Cole and a community-wide planning team proposed a new model of aging in America. These visionary leaders applied concepts of empowerment, ownership and participatory decision-making to create a new way for older adults to engage with the community. The very first Shepherd's Center has been thriving ever since! Perhaps no one knows the collective history of the Aging Forward Alliance better than Dr. Rusty Ryan. Rusty initiated a 10-month long project to document the history and evolution of Dr. Cole's dream.

My introduction to Elbert and Virginia Cole and 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 Shepherd's Center 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 Shepherd's 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—to this day. I continue to participate at affiliates across the country.

Two major goals attracted me to join the 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 Shepherd's Centers of America (now Aging Forward). 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 KC Shepherd's Center and Aging Forward. From brainstorming sessions with six congregation members on ways to keep older adults 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 more than 50 affiliates in 17 states, comprising a network of more than 150,000 older adults. The growth of the Aging Forward 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, Elbert led thousands of older adults to not only add years to their lives, but to add life to their years.

Dr. Rusty Ryan
SCA Board of Trustees, Emeritus

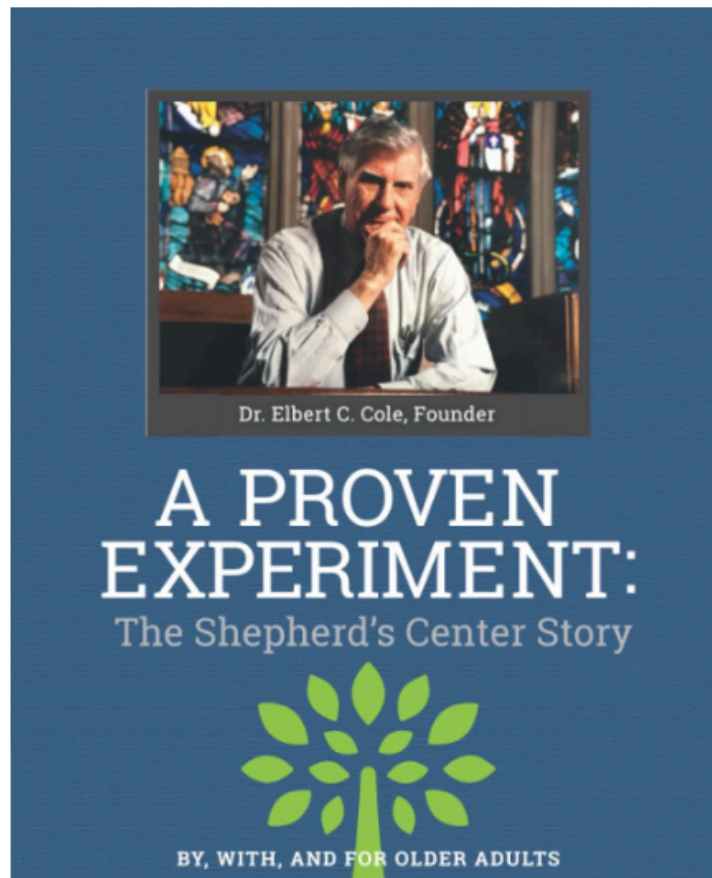
Notable Achievements

Inspiring Generations: The Lasting Impact of Dr. Elbert Cole's Vision on Aging

In honor of the legacy of our revered founder Dr. Elbert C. Cole, Dr. Rusty Ryan and Rev. Dr. Clayton Smith documented the vision and journey with the book, "A Proven Experiment: The Shepherd's Center Story."

Deep appreciation is expressed to the hundreds of volunteer servant leaders for their work and dedication in developing and implementing 50 years of services while offering their resources and support through the years.

You can order a copy of this book for yourself through Amazon. The complementary companion book, "A Proven Model" sharing life-changing stories from around the Alliance is available September 2024.



Financial Summary for 2023

A Year of Growth and Stability

We set ambitious revenue goals for 2023, and while we did not meet all of our targets, our revenues still surpassed those of the previous year. Additional unbudgeted costs arose, but our overall expenses were carefully managed to maintain stability. Our financial position remains strong and healthy, showing improvement compared to the end of 2022.

Funds are crucial in supporting our mission by:

- **Building Knowledge:** Providing educational opportunities and data tracking for better practices.
- **Expanding the Network:** Assisting with new startups and capacity building with affiliates.
- **Raising Visibility:** Promoting the collective vision of happy, healthy, and empowered aging.

Financial Transparency

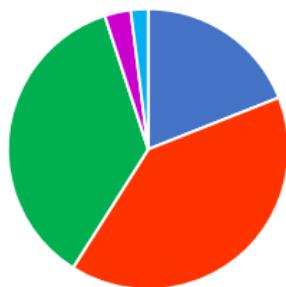
This financial summary is based on unaudited financial statements for 2023. We remain committed to financial transparency and responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to us.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to our mission and confident in our financial stability. We appreciate the continued support of our donors, partners, and community as we work together to achieve our goals.

Thank you for being a part of our journey toward a brighter future for aging.

Income



■ Individual Contributions ■ Corporations ■ Grants ■ Center Affiliation Fees ■ Other

Expense



■ Programs & Services ■ Operations & Supplies ■ Technology ■ Salaries & Professional Fees

2023 Donors

Thanks to you, more than 150,000 individuals were connected to a community of caring friends and neighbors across the Aging Forward Alliance. Together, we are changing lives by providing life-enriching opportunities and life-supporting services. Thank you for making a difference!

2023 Donors

Julie Adams-Buchanan
Tom Akins
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
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Renee Bild
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Linda Breytspraak
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Leadership

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“There is something special about volunteering—about contributing one’s time and/or abilities to help others. Things that we may consider small, maybe even insignificant, can often have an outsized impact on the life of another—filling a need or maybe just doing something that gives another person joy that otherwise might not be had.” - Peter

Leadership

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Teresa Davis

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Mary Wiles

Marketing & Communications Manager

Mindy Bethke

Operations Assistant



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