



**2024**  
**Year End**  
**Review**



# Table of Contents

03

A Letter From  
Our Leadership

04

2024 Impact  
at a Glance

06

Celebrating 50  
Years of Impact

11

Financial  
Summary

13

With Gratitude  
to Our Donors

14

Stories From Across  
the Alliance

17

Our People: Staff &  
Contact Information



**Aging Forward**



# Message From Leadership

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2024, one truth stands out: when older adults are connected to community and free from the weight of ageism, they don't just live longer—they live better. Research shows that a positive, empowered outlook on aging can add up to 7.5 years to a person's life. That's the kind of impact we're building together.

This year marked a milestone in our journey: the 50th anniversary of our organization and the launch of a bold new chapter under the name Aging Forward. This rebrand reflects both where we've been and where we're headed—a future that recognizes aging as a source of strength, joy, and collective well-being.

For more than five decades, we've led the way in addressing social isolation and ageism—long before they entered the national spotlight—because we've seen how connection brings purpose, resilience, and belonging.

In our anniversary year, that commitment only deepened. We launched innovative initiatives, rolled out a forward-looking strategic plan, and forged partnerships that expanded our reach nationwide. With more than 10,500 volunteers across the Aging Forward Alliance and a dedicated board leading the way, we're stepping into the future with renewed momentum.

The stories in this report reflect the soul of our movement: older adults finding purpose, generations connecting, and communities coming alive with possibility. They're also a reflection of you—our partners, supporters, and fellow believers in this work.

As we begin the next 50 years, we carry a simple but powerful promise: to build a world where no one ages alone and where growing older means growing bolder, together.

With deepest gratitude,



Oren Renick, Th.M., J.D.  
Chair, Board of Directors



Sarah Cheney, M.S.  
Executive Director



# 2024 Impact at a Glance

In 2024, Aging Forward continued to champion its mission of inspiring purpose, connection, and well-being for older adults nationwide. Grounded in a community-driven approach, Aging Forward empowers people to take charge of their health, relationships, and engagement with the world around them.

Through its signature initiatives—including Adventures in Learning and volunteer support services—Aging Forward reached 165,000 older adults, helping them build stronger social networks, embrace new possibilities, and foster vibrant, age-inclusive communities.

## Impact Results

**53,690**

Older adults in  
lifelong learning  
programs

**\$13.1 M**

Estimated value  
of services  
(+21% YoY)

**46,500**

Older adults  
helped via  
caregiving

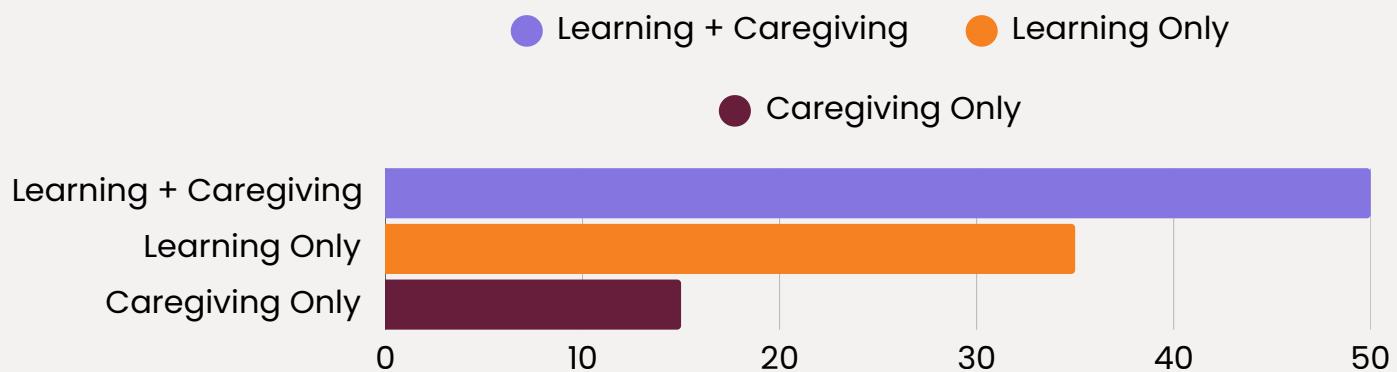
**10,000 +** Volunteers

**377,500+** Hours



# Operational Model + Services Breakdown

Over recent years, the share of affiliates offering both programs shifted from **70% → 50%** as new affiliates launch with a single-program focus.



## Caregiving Services Offered by Affiliates

Affiliates offer an average of six services, strengthening sustainability, expanding funding opportunities, improving volunteer retention, and creating multiple access points for older adults.

- **88%** medical transportation
- **88%** handy helper services
- **~75%** friendly telephone visits
- **60%** non-medical transportation
- **~40%** friendly visiting
- **~40%** meal delivery / food assistance
- **~40%** light household chores / yard work
- **24%** shopping services
- **94%** information & referral

## Longevity of Engagement

**50%+** Engaged for 6+ years

**15%** Engaged for 11+ years



# Celebrating 50 Years of Impact

## Quarter 1

### **Educational Webinars: Building Capacity and Connection Across Communities**

Through Aging Forward's educational webinars, affiliates exchange practical ideas and proven strategies on topics such as program innovation, fundraising, and board development. These sessions are especially valuable for smaller, community-based organizations that often have limited budgets for professional development—providing accessible opportunities to learn, grow, and strengthen their operations.

By fostering collaboration and shared learning, your support helps every affiliate, regardless of size, build the skills and confidence needed to thrive. In 2024, we offered **10 webinars** with a total attendance of **more than 225 individuals**, each one helping to advance the impact of our network and ensure more older adults benefit from vibrant, connected communities.

## Quarter 2

### **The National Gallery of Volunteer Excellence: Expanding a Legacy of Service**

The Kathrine Horridge and Donald Owen Smith National Volunteer of Excellence Award, first presented in 2014, was created to honor one extraordinary volunteer from across our network—someone whose compassion, service, and dedication embodied the very heart of our mission. For a decade, this award recognized remarkable individuals whose commitment inspired us all.

Each year, the review committee met with an exceptionally difficult task: selecting just one honoree. Time and again, reviewers echoed the same sentiment, "Every affiliate needs a volunteer like this." And they were right. Every nominee demonstrated a meaningful, lasting impact in their community.



## Quarter 2-Continued

After thoughtful reflection with Kathy Smith and the review team, we decided it was time to expand our vision. From those conversations, the **National Gallery of Volunteer Excellence** was born—a new way to celebrate the extraordinary spirit of service that runs throughout our network.

Now, instead of recognizing just one volunteer, we celebrate remarkable individuals from every affiliate that chooses to nominate someone for this honor—those whose generosity, leadership, and compassion make their communities stronger.

This year, we proudly recognized **15 new Kathrine Horridge and Donald Owen Smith National Volunteers of Excellence**, who joined the **10 past honorees** to form the **inaugural class of the National Gallery of Volunteer Excellence**. You can read their bios on our website. Together, they represent the very best of who we are—proof that when people serve with heart, aging truly moves forward.



### Rebranding for Impact: Aging Forward

In honor of our 50th anniversary, Shepherd's Centers of America has rebranded as **Aging Forward**—a name that captures our momentum, our mission, and our bold vision for the future of aging in America.

This transformation addresses key challenges around visibility, growth, and brand consistency. Despite a strong legacy, only one-third of affiliates adhered to past branding guidelines, limiting national recognition. The name “Aging Forward” clearly communicates our mission and vision and resonates with today’s aging population.

This change is not a shift in our values or purpose—it is a strategic step to inspire growth, attract like-minded organizations, and secure greater funding. Local affiliates are not required to change their names but are encouraged to align with the new brand by using the Aging Forward Alliance badge and messaging.

**Aging Forward** is more than a new name—it’s a movement to ensure every person 55+ can age with dignity, purpose, and belonging.

We are not changing who we are. We are expanding what’s possible



# Quarter 3

Aging Forward National Conference & 50th Anniversary Celebration

**The 2024 Aging Forward National Conference** was a powerful gathering of learning, inspiration, and connection, bringing together affiliate leaders, volunteers, and partners nationwide to celebrate 50 years of advancing purpose and well-being for older adults.

Over three dynamic days, participants engaged in thought-provoking sessions, hands-on workshops, and countless opportunities to share ideas and renew their passion for the mission.

Day one featured discussions on ageism and honored **25 inductees** to the new **National Gallery of Volunteer Excellence**, along with the presentation of the **Rusty and Nancy Ryan Visionary Award** to **Sam Matthews**, Executive Director of the Shepherd's Center of Greater Winston-Salem, NC.

Workshops and networking events throughout the conference fostered collaboration, creativity, and community spirit. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive—**100% of attendees** rated their experience **4 or higher**, with **94%** praising the quality of sessions and networking opportunities.

**"I learned so much and felt supported by the community... Everyone was reassuring and willing to share information and guidance that made me feel like I am not alone on this nonprofit journey."**

The conference also marked **Aging Forward's 50th Anniversary**, celebrating five decades of impact made possible by the steadfast support of donors and partners. Together, we look ahead to a future where older adults continue to find purpose, belonging, and joy through vibrant, connected communities.



# Quarter 3—Continued

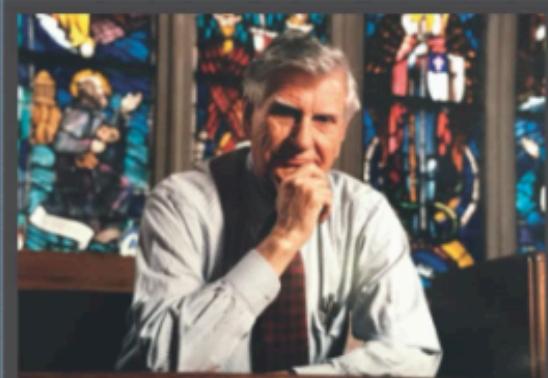
## A Legacy That Inspires, Empowers, and Redefines Aging

As we celebrated our 50th Anniversary, we are proud to unveil a landmark publication: **A Proven Model for Positive Aging: A Collection of Life-Changing Stories from Shepherd's Centers of America** by Dr. Rusty Ryan. This book is more than a tribute to our history—it is the result of Dr. Ryan's nearly five decades of visionary leadership and unwavering dedication to our mission.

From his early involvement to his pivotal role in shaping and sustaining our work, Rusty has been a driving force behind the growth of our movement. His deep understanding of the power of community and positive aging is reflected in every page of this compelling anthology. Through stories of resilience, vitality, and purpose, the book captures the spirit of a national network that continues to redefine what it means to thrive at every age.

What began with Dr. Elbert Cole's pioneering vision has become a dynamic, nationwide model for aging well. Thanks to your generosity, and with leaders like Rusty guiding the way, we continue to **help communities build new affiliates where older adults thrive** through lifelong learning, meaningful service, and authentic connection.

Each story in this collection is more than a reflection of the past—it is a spark for the future, inspiring continued growth and empowering older adults everywhere. Your support ensures this legacy endures, one story at a time.



Dr. Elbert C. Cole, Founder

## A PROVEN EXPERIMENT: The Shepherd's Center Story



BY, WITH, AND FOR OLDER ADULTS



# Quarter 4

## National Media Recognition: Amplifying Donor Impact

This year, Aging Forward's story reached new heights of visibility, thanks to **coverage in two major national publications**. For our champions, this recognition is more than publicity—it's proof that your support fuels a movement worthy of national attention.

In **USA Today**, one of the country's most widely read newspapers, Aging Forward was spotlighted in a feature calling on affiliate partners to join our inspirational social alliance. With millions of digital readers nationwide, USA Today introduced Aging Forward to a vast audience of potential allies—people who may become the next donors, volunteers, or champions of our work. This level of exposure ensures that every contribution from our donors is leveraged on a national stage, multiplying its impact.

Meanwhile, **LA Weekly** published a full feature celebrating our 50 years of dedication to older adults across the United States. With an expansive digital following, LA Weekly connected Aging Forward's story with engaged, community-minded audiences, particularly in California and beyond. The article not only honored our history but also elevated the credibility of our mission in the eyes of new supporters.

These features affirm that your investment in Aging Forward is building momentum. **National media coverage provides credibility, sparks new partnerships, and strengthens our ability to secure resources from foundations and sponsors**. Most importantly, it spreads the message that older adults matter—and that together, we can create a future where they thrive.

Thanks to your generosity, Aging Forward is not just serving communities, it's shaping the national conversation. And as our visibility grows, so does the impact of every gift.



# Financial Summary

## Strong Year with Strategic Investments

This year's revenue growth outpaced last year's, even though we did not fully reach our aggressive target. Expenses were higher than budgeted, largely reflecting the investment in the rebranding initiative.

Funds are crucial in supporting our mission by:

- Deepen Our Impact: We're reaching farther to touch more lives—expanding into new communities so that more older adults can stay connected, active, and valued. Every new community means more stories of independence, friendship, and purpose.
- Strengthen Our Connections: By sharing knowledge and better practices across our network, we're helping local affiliates grow stronger together. This collaboration means more efficient programs, better volunteer support, and ultimately, more meaningful experiences for those we serve.
- Amplify Our Voice: We're shining a brighter light on the power of aging forward—raising awareness of our mission and uniting people everywhere in the movement for empowered, joyful aging in community.

## Financial Transparency

This financial summary is drawn from the 2024 financial review (unaudited). We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of transparency and accountability in managing the resources entrusted to our care.

## Looking Ahead

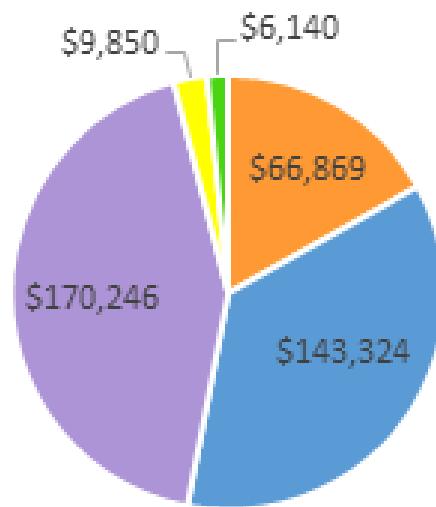
Together, we are building on a strong foundation for the future. With continued confidence in our mission and stability, we are grateful to our donors, partners, and community for standing with us as we advance our shared vision.

Thank you for helping us build a brighter future for aging.



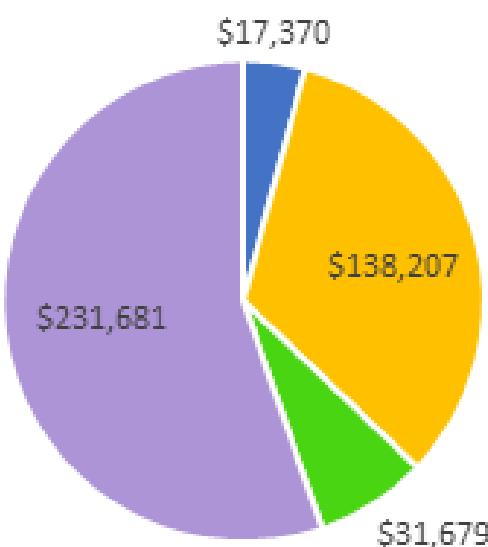
# Financial Summary–Continued

## Income



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

## Expense



■ Operations & Technology   ■ Programs   ■ Marketing   ■ Salaries & Professional Fees



# 2024 Donors

**AARP Foundation**  
**Julie Adams-Buchanan**  
**Aging Forward Central Texas**  
**Aging Successfully Employee Resource Group at Land O' Lakes, Inc.**  
**Robbi Alexander**  
**Pam Bell**  
**Julia Burrowes**  
**The C & C Tremann Foundation**  
**Shelly Chen**  
**Community Care Corp**  
**Robin Cook**  
**Alex David**  
**Teresa Davis**  
**William Farrell**  
**Sally Firestone**  
**Robert Flint**  
**Rossana Guido**  
**Maria Hernandez**  
**Erin Hustings**  
**Sarah James**  
**Jeffrey Latimer**  
**Helen Leonard**  
**Leticia Lopez**  
**Sam Matthews**  
**Robert Maurus**  
**Ann McClung**  
**Mid America Regional Council**  
**Sharon Monroe**  
**Leonardo Nunes**  
**OneSkin Technologies**

**Oren & Judy Renick**  
**Larry & Jane Rues**  
**Patrick Ryan**  
**MJ Salter**  
**Janet Seckel-Cerrotti**  
**Shepherd's Center Beachside**  
**Shepherd's Center of Greenbrier Valley**  
**Shepherd's Center of Webster-Kirkwood**  
**Kathy Smith**  
**Mike Stanfill**  
**Betsy Solomon**  
**Stotler Hayes Group**  
**Victoria Tomko**  
**Catherine Wallick**  
**Chenyu Yen**  
**Donna Zhang**

## Monthly Donors

**Janine Bell**  
**Mindy Bethke**  
**Sarah Cheney**  
**Sophia Lazare**  
**Sriram Peddibhotla**  
**Caitlyn Post**  
**Melissa Smith**  
**Charles Smithers**  
**Holly Whitfield**  
**Jeanette Wojcik**



# Stories from Across the Aging Forward Alliance

## Our Purpose

In our 50th Anniversary year, Aging Forward reached 165,000 older adults across the country through lifelong learning, volunteer caregiving, and community connection. With more than 10,500 volunteers, 377,500 hours of service, and programs spanning everything from tech tutoring to meal delivery, our alliance demonstrated once again that aging well is not an individual journey — it's a communal one.

This was also a year shaped by bold momentum. We unveiled our new name, Aging Forward, reaffirming our belief that aging is a chapter filled with possibility.

We gathered at a powerful National Conference, where leaders exchanged ideas, honored exceptional volunteers, and sparked collaborations that traveled home to communities across the nation.

Our work gained national visibility through features in USA Today and LA Weekly, ensuring that the message of purpose, dignity, and belonging reached audiences far beyond our network.

Across affiliates, older adults engaged in more than 53,000 lifelong learning experiences, found support through free caregiving services, and built the kinds of friendships and networks that strengthen well-being.

In fact, more than 50% of participants and volunteers have stayed involved for six years or longer — a testament to the community they've found and the purpose it brings.

These next stories bring those numbers to life. They show the moments behind the metrics: the independence restored, the friendships forged, the confidence rediscovered, and the ideas that grew into programs reaching hundreds.

This is what Aging Forward looks like in motion.

**"Knowing I had food on the table took away my biggest worry." - Walter**



# Stories of Impact

## 1

### **Walter's Story: A Meal, A Visit, A Lifeline**

In 2024, across the Aging Forward Alliance, an estimated **60,000 meals** were delivered to older adults — part of a network where nearly **4 in 10 affiliates** offer meal delivery and food assistance. For Walter, this wasn't just a service. It was stability.

He never had to choose between groceries and medication. And through weekly visits, he received something many older adults quietly long for: connection.

*"Knowing that I had food on the table took away one of my biggest worries," he said. "Visiting with the volunteers was the highlight of my week."*

*Half of all older adults supported through volunteer caregiving live below the federal poverty level.*

## 2

### **Anne Marie's Story: Independence Restored**

Across Aging Forward affiliates, nearly **9 in 10** provide medical transportation, and another **88%** offer handy-helper support. Anne Marie is one of the volunteers behind those numbers.

*"I remember when my parents could no longer drive," she shares. "Getting to basic things became a real struggle."*

Today, she is part of the **10,000 volunteers** who contributed **377,500 service hours** this year — a contribution valued at **\$13.1 million**.

Her weekly drives are more than errands. They are acts of agency and dignity.

*"I'm not just giving someone a lift. I'm giving them the independence my parents once lost — and I know how much that matters."*



# Stories of Impact

## 3

### **Elsie & Mary: Friendship Dealt From an Unexpected Hand**

More than **53,000 older adults** engaged in lifelong learning programs this year — classes and groups designed to spark curiosity, stimulate the mind, and strengthen social connection. Elsie and Mary are two of those participants whose lives were transformed far beyond the curriculum.

What began as a beginner's bridge class at Shepherd's Center of Greater Winston-Salem, an affiliate in North Carolina, became a decade-long friendship filled with holidays, travel, shared wisdom, and unshakable support.

Their story reflects what Aging Forward affiliates do best: create places where people can grow, belong, and rediscover joy at every age.

As Mary puts it, *"We're here to grow, connect, and celebrate what makes each of us unique."*

### **Closing Reflection**

These stories reflect only a fraction of the impact made possible this year. Behind every statistic is a neighbor finding connection, a volunteer discovering purpose, and a community growing stronger through shared compassion. As we look ahead, we carry the same promise that has guided us for five decades: to build a world where no one ages alone, and where every person has the opportunity to thrive, contribute, and belong. Your support makes this future possible — one meal, one ride, one friendship, and one story at a time.



# Staff

## **Sarah Cheney**

Executive Director

## **Teresa Davis**

Director of Programs & Services

## **Mary Wiles**

Marketing & Communications Manager

## **Mindy Bethke**

Operations Assistant

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