



Insider News

Winter 2019

Aging Matters

Our need to connect with one another is as old as time. Regardless of our age or circumstances, we derive comfort, meaning and purpose from strong connections with our families and communities. What is newer is the knowledge that in the absence of such connections, individuals are socially isolated and experience negative health consequences.



It's documented that social isolation can raise the risk of premature death by almost 30% with growing evidence showing increases in coronary heart disease and stroke. The epidemic proportion of social isolation is reported to have the same impact as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

But there is **good news**. Social relationship-based interventions, such as those provided by Shepherd's Centers enhance quality of life. Specifically, proven interventions around social facilitation, befriending and leisure/skill development alleviate loneliness and isolation. All of the services and outreach efforts of Shepherd's Centers focus on these documented strategies. Whether it is a ride to a doctor's appointment; a friendly visit or playing a pickleball game; participation in Lunch & Learn, lifelong learning classes, book club or art class; or volunteering to help a neighbor or around the Center, Shepherd's Centers foster friendships that connect older adults to others and community.

Learn more by visiting our [website](#) or your local Shepherd's Center today! You'll find accounts of life-changing and powerful connections...all because of the Shepherd's Centers network vision of learning, serving and connecting older adults.

Matters Around the Shepherd's Centers Network



Each Number Represents a Story

Across the Shepherd's Centers network, we spend a lot of time counting...number of people served, the number of volunteers and the hours they have generously given, the number of participants in lifelong learning classes and so on. These numbers are important because they help us know how we are achieving our goals. But more importantly, each number represents a person's life that has been changed because of our mission.

Meet Laura (pictured above left with chair yoga friend, Carol). On a typical Tuesday morning just after 11:00 am, Laura is arriving at chair yoga class with her friends. She is one of three ladies who carpool together every week and who have become the faithful core of the class since it first started at **Harrison Avenue Missionary Baptist Church** in 2010 with **Shepherd's**



A Real Joy to Ride

It's exciting for us to share that one of the newest Shepherd's Centers, **Shepherd's Center of Great Falls (VA)**, is up and running with volunteer transportation services. They provided their first ride last month on Monday, January 21, 2019, escorting Gayle Russell to her doctor's appointment (center pictured above with volunteer driver George Hersey and board member Carol Edelstein).

Like so many Shepherd's Centers, Shepherd's Center of Great Falls assessed the community and found transportation for older adults is a big need to support aging in place.

At 84, Gayle says she just doesn't feel comfortable driving herself much anymore. "When my eyesight was better, I could manage. Now, I just don't think I can. I live in my own place, have groceries delivered and such, but getting to

Center of Webster-Kirkwood (MO).

After attending literally hundreds of weekly chair yoga and line dance classes, as well as cooking and nutrition programs at the Shepherd's Center, Laura is proud to share the success story of her improved health. She is a diabetic and as a result of her commitment to an exercise routine and new eating habits, Laura's doctor has taken her off insulin. Determined to maintain her health, Laura just added another Shepherd's Center chair yoga class to her routine -- that makes 3 a week!

If you ask Laura what she enjoys most about the Shepherd's Center, other than exercise, she will quickly mention field trips to local museums and cultural sites. "I've been to interesting places I have never been before," says Laura. In the 8 years Laura has been connected with the Shepherd's Center she has made many new friends and become a friend to many.

Stories like these are what Shepherd's Centers are truly about...empowering older adults to continue learning, serving and connecting.

appointments is something of a worry."

She did try Uber, and while it was dependable, at \$40 for a ride to an appointment, the costs could quickly add up. "I guess it costs more when you live back here in the woods of Great Falls," she said. "So you start thinking about not going out much except for the emergencies. That's why I am so happy I heard about this service, especially since it's going to be provided by the people from our own community. That takes away a lot of the worry right there."

Gayle also likes that the drivers are "people who want to do this, so you don't feel like you're bothering anyone."

Volunteer driver George Hersey agrees. "That's exactly right. I have time on my hands. I like to meet people, and I don't mind driving."

According to Gayle, "I say to tell everyone that this is the greatest thing, a way to get out and keep living your life."

Congratulations to Shepherd's Center of Great Falls for its vision and leadership to help make the community better for all residents!

Matter of Perspective

Love is in the air this month, and we hope you will help spread the love and connect more people -- like Laura and Gayle -- to Shepherd's Centers.



It's easy! Help us share the joy of being part of Shepherd's Centers by "liking" us on [Facebook](#) and sharing what you love about Shepherd's Centers. Our goal is to inspire others...to enroll for needed services...to experience the fulfillment of volunteering...to know the fun of learning something new...

Please post a short blurb expressing one thing you have experienced with Shepherd's Centers. Sharing the love will go a long way in helping us raise awareness of the many programs provided across the network to connect older Americans.

Thank you for celebrating the love with us!

DONATE NOW

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www.ShepherdCenters.org