Volunteering:
Helping Others and Yourself!

By: Amy C. Vernon, Executive Director, The Shepherd's Center, Spartanburg, SC

I became the Executive Director of The Shepherd's Center three years ago. Until then, I had always worked in youth serving organizations surrounded by teenagers and young adults. I was a bit worried about the shift in generations. Would I know what was needed? Would I be able to adapt and feel comfortable after spending more than 20+ years at my previous job? At that time, I did not know how this shift in age focus would positively impact my professional life, but I quickly learned both my professional and personal life would be affected.

The Shepherd's Center is a special place. It is a day center for active older adults, age 50+, who want to spend their days with peers perfecting old habits or learning new ones. Our monthly calendar boasts more than 80 programs for our members to attend. A sample of our program selection includes: aerobics, line dancing, ukulele, tai chi, yoga, pickleball, needlework, hula dancing, art, card games, book club, and more. We also have lecture style classes on different topics, access to an full gym and indoor walking track, support groups, farmer's markets, ladies and men luncheons, social gatherings, and resource fairs. We are proud of these programs that have been created so far, but the calendar is ever-changing based on needs and interests of our members.

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We are fortunate to have a dedicated group of wonderful volunteers! Our volunteers work with us, where ever needed, and enjoy giving their time to help the center run smoothly. Especially our volunteer facilitators that make this diverse calendar possible. Our Facilitators commit their time, expertise, and friendliness to our members. Serving as a Volunteer or a Facilitator is a great way to share your interests, passions, and skills with others. It's also a fun way to make an impact in the lives of older adults in Spartanburg County.

Remaining active as you age is vital for a healthy life. Both mental and physical health are positively impacted and can contribute to a longer, more independent lifestyle. According to Johns Hopkins University "regular exercise can reduce pain, relieve stress, improve sleep, improve flexibility and balance, lower risk for chronic disease and injuries, and increase good cholesterol, among many other benefits."

We want our members to feel comfortable, valued, and stimulated. Our Facilitators and Volunteers make this possible! If you are interested in sharing your time, I would be happy to speak with you to tell you more about it. It is only by working and collaborating with each other that we are able to provide these wonderful services at The Shepherd's Center!