



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Live Life to the Fullest

“If you aren’t making a difference in someone else’s life,” Ella said, “then you aren’t really living life to the fullest.”

I first met Ella when she was a 91-year-old volunteer in the community I served for many years. A career educator, “Miss Ella” began volunteering upon her retirement at the age of 66. She was well known across the county for her commitment to education, providing grants and scholarships to local college students through her foundation. In addition, she was an active Sunday school teacher, a frequent reader in the local schools, a volunteer at the community food bank, and much more.

At her 100th birthday celebration hosted by our church, she was joined by family, friends, and over 200 people from the community including school personnel, local, county, and state politicians, and many others. Seated in front of the gathered crowd, Miss Ella challenged everyone to give back to the community. “The best gift you can give me, besides chocolate,” she said smiling, “is to start volunteering and making a difference.” She had arranged for over 15 community organizations to be present that day and, in honor of Miss Ella, over 125 people signed up to volunteer for a minimum of 10 hours!

A few years ago, Senior Corps (a national service program for active adults over 60-years-old) conducted research on the health benefits for older adults who volunteered in their program for one year. In their study, they found:

- 46% of participants reported significant health improvement throughout the year
- 67% of participants reported decreased social isolation and improved social connections

- Among volunteers who started their service reporting multiple symptoms of depression, over 70% reported significant improvement.

Similarly, Nicole Anderson, a senior scientist with the Rotman Research Institute and Associate Professor at the University of Toronto, concluded years of study indicating “volunteering boosts mental and physical health for older adults. Seniors who volunteer feel happier and less depressed, function better mentally, and experience more social support and satisfaction with their lives.”

The Princeton Senior Resource Center offers several ways for you to volunteer and give back to your community. GrandPals go into the Princeton Public Schools and read with kindergarten students weekly throughout the school year. HomeFriends provide in-home visits for older adults who may be homebound or in need of companionship. In addition, you can volunteer for our events, work at our front desk, or serve in our Technology Lab providing tech support.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Sharon Hurley, director of social services and volunteer coordinator. We rely greatly on our volunteers and are truly grateful for all that they do to help us carry out our mission to help older adults thrive!

My vision, however, is to expand our reach by mobilizing a senior corps of volunteers who are ready and willing to serve throughout the community. As April is Global Volunteer Month, I want to challenge you to find a way to give back. In the words of Miss Ella, if you want to truly live life to the fullest, it’s time to start investing your time in the lives of others. Thank you for making a difference!

All the Best,
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