



Retired
Senior
Volunteer
Program

Heroes of COMPASSION

Seniors Living, Loving, and Giving for a Better Community



Volunteering Helped Linus Through Grief and Loneliness After His Wife Passed Away

When Linus Affolder, 89, lost his wife, Carolyn, of 47 years in 2013, he said the grief was like going through a dark tunnel.

“I could be sitting on the patio and break down. Things would just trigger the tears,” the Oklahoma City resident explained. “I wanted her back. She was my foundation and strength; my right-hand person.”

Carolyn had been sick with leukemia for many years and as the disease progressed, the couple traveled to Houston’s MD Anderson Cancer

Center almost every weekend for treatments. During those years, the Affolders had to step away from all of the volunteer activities they did individually and as a couple to concentrate on Carolyn’s health.

The loss was overwhelming when Carolyn died, Linus said, and he tried to manage the grief and loneliness on his own for as long as he could.

“A lady from church who had lost a son told me about a grief program at Christ the King Catholic Church that helped her, and so I started

“[Volunteering] revitalized me because I have people that I look forward to seeing and a weekly obligation to help others.”

going. It was a four-month program, and we met on Thursdays and learned about the phases of grief and shared our stories with one another. One of the things that stood out for me was the suggestion that getting back to volunteering could help in my grieving.”

So, Linus picked up where he left off years ago as a volunteer with Britvil Food Pantry in north Oklahoma City, an opportunity he found through RSVP.

“That was the starting point for me to get back out and be around people,” he said. “It revitalized me because I have people that I look forward to seeing and a weekly obligation to help others.”

Today, Linus is involved with several volunteer opportunities each week and joins friends at three church-sponsored senior luncheons each month.

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There are no components of our life that grief doesn't affect," said RSVP of Central Oklahoma board member and Licensed Professional Counselor Marla Mercer-Cole, who has a private counseling practice and leads grief groups through Mercer Adams Funeral Service.

"Grief affects us emotionally, physically, and spiritually," she said. "There is a huge paradigm shift when we lose a loved one, especially a spouse. It leaves you shaken. You don't feel of much value any longer and don't know what your purpose is moving forward. I encourage the people in the groups that I lead that although we will always miss that person, we do begin to adapt physically and emotionally."

She said that volunteering often helps with that process and has on many occasions referred her senior clients or members of her grief groups to contact RSVP of Central Oklahoma or other organizations to find out about volunteer opportunities.

"We have the capacity to be enlarged as humans to have compassion and empathy because of what we've been through," she said. "Doing something altruistically for someone helps others but also gives you a break from the heaviness of grief. It helps with connections and making friends and reminds us that if we are still here, we have a purpose."

She also encourages griever to surround themselves with positivity and look for things for which to be grateful.

If you would like to take the step to get connected to others through volunteering, call RSVP at 405-605-3110.



Sunde Busby, OBI Director of Volunteer Services, with RSVP volunteers Pam Blackshere, Edie Aitken, Jerry VanZante, Sharon Baker, Debbie Blakeslee, Julia Davis, OBI Volunteer Coordinator, and OBI Assistant Blair Oakes.

MANY HANDS MAKE FOR LIGHT WORK

RSVP Volunteers at the Oklahoma Blood Institute (OBI) are a critical part of the process of making sure patients receive timely care.

"Volunteers feel like a big part of our organization at the Oklahoma Blood Institute, and RSVP volunteers really take ownership in what they do here," said Julia Davis, Volunteer Coordinator. "We couldn't do what we do without volunteers."

On average, we need 1,200 blood donors a day to meet hospital and patient needs in our state," she said. "That's why volunteer help is critical with our mobile blood drives and at our donor centers."

About 17 RSVP volunteers help on a regular basis at OBI doing a variety of jobs. Every Tuesday, a group known as the "Bag Ladies" (despite one member being male) is part of the Blood Bag Crew that labels 40-45 cases of empty blood bags.

"Volunteers are also needed to help as couriers, and with phone calls and special events, as well as volunteers who have been recipients of blood donations and who would be willing to tell how that donation impacted their lives," Julia said.

To learn more about volunteering with OBI, contact Laura McPheeters, RSVP Volunteer Coordinator, at 405-605-3110.

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Volunteer help is critical.

PROVIDE-A-RIDE HELPS ME:

live independently!

-Ruby, age 93

Ruby Herd turned 93 in June and takes a lot of pride in remaining independent and healthy.

"I don't even think of age. I feel good and only stopped cutting my yard three years ago. People often think that I'm lying to them when I tell them my age," she said.

The secret, Ruby believes, is to eat healthful foods and to keep moving.

"I'm a health fanatic. Long ago, someone gave me the book "You Are What You Eat," and I really believe it. Also, when I was young, my aunts used to say to me, 'Don't walk that slow and drag your feet. Walk like you have spirit.' So, I do. My grandson said to me once, 'Grandma Ruby, why do you walk so fast?'"

Ruby also understands that staying healthy and independent includes asking for help when needed. That's why in 2008 she reached out to RSVP of Central



Oklahoma's Provide-A-Ride program to help with rides to her regular medical checkups every three to six months.

"I learned about Provide-A-Ride from a friend. I needed help with transportation because I got hit in my car, and I developed a phobia about driving that my doctors couldn't help me with," she explained. "My first ride was October 14, 2008, and my driver was a nice gentleman. I didn't know what to expect, but I have loved it. It has helped me to be independent about getting to my doctor appointments."

To learn more about Provide-A-Ride, call Faye Beam at 405-605-3110 or email her at faye.beam@rsvpokc.org.

RSVP NEWS & EVENTS

OKLAHOMA CITY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ELDERLY IFUND GRANT

RSVP recently received a \$20,000 grant from the Oklahoma City Community Foundation and its Services for the Elderly iFund grant program. The grant will be used to assist in funding the RSVP Provide-A-Ride program.

"We are so pleased to receive this grant that will help to impact the lives of more seniors in our community who are no longer able to drive to their medical appointments," says RSVP Executive Director Beth Patterson.

"This grant will help us to coordinate more rides, recruit more volunteers, and promote the program in our community. We appreciate the support of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation."

Founded in 1969, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity that works with donors to create charitable funds that will benefit our community both now and in the future. An initiative of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation Trustees, the iFund grant program utilizes gifts from donors to support services for children and elderly, as well as provide access to health care. To learn more about the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, visit www.occf.org.



WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

When I first heard Linus' story, how through volunteering he has reconnected with others after the loss of his wife, I was moved knowing RSVP of Central Oklahoma was there for him when he needed us most.

RSVP exists to provide meaningful connections for folks like Linus who need opportunities to give back to the community. Your continued support equips us to open up to bring life back to broken hearts.

Many of our volunteers experience new-found happiness as they begin to give back. They find as they connect with new friends and serve others, anxiety and depression lessens. The truth is that we are all built for community. We all need real and meaningful connections.

Wherever you are in your journey, we are here for you. Whether you are just starting to think about volunteering, or thinking of a friend who may need that extra boost that comes from re-engaging and connecting through volunteering, we will help you find a place that is a natural fit for you and you can love giving of your time and talents. No one is meant to go through life alone. We are better together.

Beth Patterson
Executive Director

We Are Honored



Lance Ward of Crossings Community Church, Beth Patterson, RSVP Executive Director, and Eunice Khoury of Well Preserved Advisory Group.

We are honored to be the recipient of a generous donation from Well Preserved Advisory Group and Crossings

Community Church. Eunice Khoury of Well Preserved Advisory Group and Lance Ward of Crossings Community Church presented RSVP with a check in the amount of \$3,100 from the Senior Day proceeds. RSVP partnered with both organizations to host Senior Day in May.

The senior-focused educational event brought together the community's seniors with trusted professionals who provide services and have the resources seniors need. Approximately 20 classes on such topics as caregiving, Medicare, and elder fraud were presented.



In Fond Remembrance

In loving memory of our volunteers whose generosity in service touched all our lives.

*Doyle Sitton
Marie Vollmer
David Walker*

A proud partner of:



Congratulations to **JURLEAN LONGNECKER** winner of the hours drawing. Enjoy your gift card!

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