



# Heroes of Compassion

*The quarterly newsletter for volunteers and donors of RSVP of Central Oklahoma*



*RSVP volunteer Nancy W.*

## Volunteering Gives Nancy More Chances to Give Back

Nancy, a retired teacher and Naval Commander, knows firsthand the value of serving her community. "I had wonderful parents who taught me the value of serving God and serving people," she says. Staying active is important to Nancy, too. "My life has always been busy," she states. She noted that when some of her family members stopped being as active, their lives seemed to shrink.

*"With volunteering, you set your own hours. You control what you do, and you determine the time." - Nancy*

Late in her career, guided by her spirit of service to others, Nancy began volunteering in her community in Arkansas by arranging Honor Flights for veterans and also teaching AARP Driver Safety courses.

When she moved back to Oklahoma, where she had grown up, she learned about the Centenarians of Oklahoma while organizing a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party for her mother. Volunteers from Centenarians of Oklahoma came to the party and presented her mother and an aunt who had also turned 100 each with a short biographical sketch, a certificate, and a "Golden Okie" pin. The organization's founder, Gloria, also offered to send cards and check in with her mother at holidays and other special occasions. Nancy was impressed by their work to honor centenarians, and since her teaching experience had given her the confidence to talk and present in front of a group, she began volunteering with the organization and also joined RSVP.

Nancy reflected that meeting the centenarian honorees allows her to interact with interesting people from all walks of life and helps her learn local historical facts and stories without formal studying. She notes that doing presentations to recognize Centenarians has been very gratify-

*Nancy's story continues on page 2*

### Meet Our Partner: Centenarians of Oklahoma



Centenarians of Oklahoma was founded in Tulsa in 1991, and since then, their volunteers have honored over 3100 Oklahomans age 100 and over by presenting them with a biographical sketch, certificate, and Golden Okie pin through a short ceremony. Their organization has also participated in recognizing and celebrating important historical milestones in Oklahoma, such as the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oklahoma flag.

*If you're interested in joining Nancy in recognizing local centenarians, or if you know someone turning 100 who deserves recognition, please call Jamie Williams, RSVP Director of Volunteer Programs, at (405) 605-3110 to learn more or get connected.*

# Meet Abbi Hershey,

## RSVP's new Executive Director

Dear Friend,

I'm honored to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of RSVP of Central Oklahoma.

As a U.S. Army veteran, a working mom, and someone who has spent her career in service-focused roles, I believe deeply in the power of purpose and in staying connected to something bigger than ourselves. That's why I'm so proud to be part of an organization that gives older adults the opportunity to keep showing up for their communities, again and again.

After years of traveling the country, first in uniform and then as a devoted Army wife supporting my husband Shawn through nearly 20 years of active duty service, my family and I have finally found our home here in Oklahoma City. We've been welcomed with open arms, and we truly can't imagine calling any other place home. Shawn is now retiring here, and we proudly call ourselves Okies.

And let me tell you – the Oklahoma Standard is real. I see it and feel it every day. In the warmth of our volunteers, in the generosity of our partners, and in the way this community shows up for one another without hesitation.



...continued on back page

*Nancy's story, continued*

ing. "Everybody in that room is someone who loves the person [being recognized], and we're honoring that person. It's just so rewarding! It's a feel-good experience all the way around." Nancy said that, after a celebration or event, she often reflects on the faces and the stories of the people she has met while volunteering. "I also think of the people that miss out on these interactions," she notes.

Through RSVP of Central Oklahoma, Nancy also learned about the opportunity to volunteer at the YMCA Military Welcome Center at the airport, and she began to serve there as well, providing guidance and hospitality to U.S. troop members and veterans. She also serves with the USO (United Service Organizations) and through her church.

"The things that I [volunteer to] do are all things that I've selected," she says. "I've heard people say they don't have time to volunteer, but with volunteering, you set your own hours. You control what you do, and you determine the time. If I didn't volunteer," she says, "there would be a hole in part of who I am. [Volunteering] gives me a sense of worth and a chance to give back. It keeps me engaged in different aspects of life." ★



# The Benefits of Giving Back

Research shows what our volunteers already know:

*Volunteering is good for people and for our community!*

Here are some of the proven benefits that volunteers enjoy:

- ❖ Better mental & physical health
- ❖ Increased happiness
- ❖ Greater life satisfaction
- ❖ Stronger community bonds
- ❖ Personal empowerment
- ❖ More social inclusion
- ❖ Lower rates of mortality

If you know someone who would like to start volunteering and experience the benefits for themselves, invite them to connect with RSVP! Call (405) 605-3110 or visit [rsvpokc.org/get-involved](http://rsvpokc.org/get-involved).

## Welcome New Board Members

### MARCELLA MORGAN



Marcella Morgan is a native of San Jose, California. She moved to Oklahoma in 2011 and has found her home in Oklahoma City as a passionate community volunteer. She currently works as the Community Relations Coordinator for Infant Crisis Services. Her favorite color is purple and she loves to spend time crafting. She is excited to support RSVP of Central Oklahoma and help move the organization forward! ★

### JAY SHERRILL



Jay Sterling Sherrill is a lifelong resident of Oklahoma City with a deep commitment to public service and community engagement. He brings over 20 years of experience in Healthcare technology and operations and currently serves on a national leadership team at Quest Diagnostics, where he leads the delivery of integration and technology solutions for laboratory operations. Since 2015, Jay has served as an elected member of the Putnam City School Board, including multiple terms as President and currently as Vice President. A graduate of Putnam City High School and Oklahoma City University, he is dedicated to advancing education, driving practical solutions, and contributing meaningfully to the community that helped shape his values and career. ★



RSVP volunteer Nancy W. stands in front of a screen displaying the names of the speakers at the honorary induction of the Oklahoma State Flag at its centennial celebration.

## LETTER FROM ABBI, CONTINUED...

It means so much to serve in a city that feels like ours. And to serve in this role, with this organization, at a time when the work we do matters more than ever.

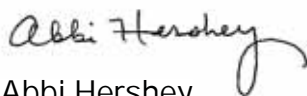
I stepped into this position during a time of transition. Federal funding is uncertain. Community needs are growing.

But one thing hasn't changed: the strength, generosity, and quiet determination of our volunteers.

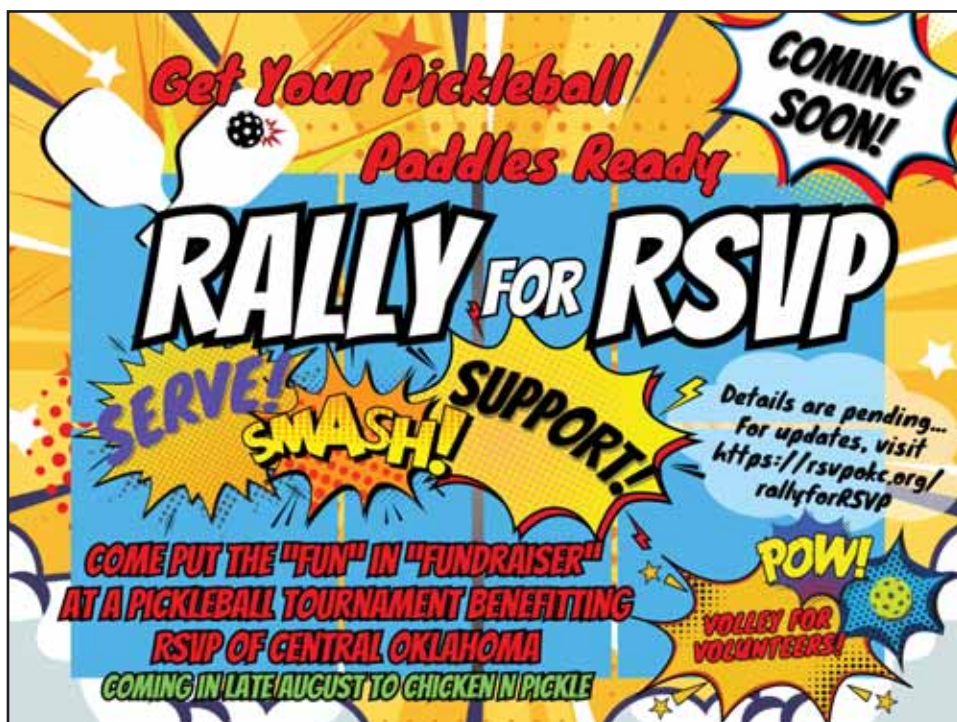
Over the last few months, I've been learning the ropes, visiting partner agencies, listening to stories, and putting together a vision for what's next. We're focused on sustainability, building strong partnerships, and doing everything we can to ensure RSVP is here for the next 50 years.

To those of you who've already been part of RSVP's legacy, thank you. And to those I haven't had the chance to meet yet, I'm really looking forward to it. My door is always open.

With gratitude,



Abbi Hershey  
Executive Director  
RSVP of Central Oklahoma  
U.S. Army Veteran



## In Fond Remembrance

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

**Joe Bales**  
**Kenneth Barnett**  
**Daniel Kolar**  
**Edna Pickard**

## Hours Drawing

Congratulations to  
*Terry Langston*  
Enjoy your gift card!

## Follow & Like Us



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We're a **Circle** participant  
and here's how you can vote for us.



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