



SENIOR VOLUNTEERS ADD VALUE TO OUR COMMUNITY

By Gene Kyle, Chair, Ludington Senior Citizens Advisory Board

Senior citizen volunteers are a cornerstone of small communities, offering invaluable experience, wisdom, and a better quality of life for people of all ages.

WHY SENIOR VOLUNTEERS MATTER

- **Wisdom and experience:** Seniors bring decades of life and professional experience, offering mentorship, guidance, and practical skills that younger generations may lack.
- **Reliability and commitment:** Many older adults have flexible schedules and a strong sense of civic duty, making them dependable and consistent volunteers.
- **Impact on the community:** Seniors often serve roles in meal delivery, transportation assistance, and tutoring, filling critical gaps in small towns.
- **Youth mentorship:** Senior volunteers can reshape youth perceptions and provide emotional support and life lessons.
- **Health and wellness promotion:** Seniors often lead wellness programs, helping others to stay active and informed about health issues.

BENEFITS FOR SENIORS THEMSELVES

- **Improved mental and physical health:** Volunteering has been shown to reduce depression, increase mobility, and even slow aging.
- **Sense of purpose:** Staying engaged gives seniors a renewed sense of identity and belonging.
- **Social connection:** Volunteering combats isolation, helping seniors build friendships and stay socially active.

HOW COMMUNITIES CAN SUPPORT SENIOR VOLUNTEERS

- **Flexible opportunities:** Offer seniors roles and schedules that suit their abilities and interests.
- **Recognition and inclusion:** Celebrate their contributions publicly to foster pride and to encourage others to become involved.

JUST THREE EXAMPLES OF THE MONETARY VALUE OF SENIOR VOLUNTEERS IN OUR COMMUNITY*

(*Calculated at the \$29.95/hr suggested by MySeniorCenter, the data-collection software used at the Ludington Senior Center.)

1. **Lakeshore Keepers** [of lighthouses] logged 560 hours worth \$16,772 in a 4-month season in 2025.
2. **Ludington Visitor Information Center** logged 769 hours worth \$23,032 in a 5-month season in 2025.
3. **Ludington Senior Center** logged 1,644 hours worth \$49,238 in 2024.

TWO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE LED BY SENIOR VOLUNTEERS*

(*The emphasis here is on dollars being generated for nonprofit organizations helping our community and its residents.)

Women Who Care of Mason County: In August of 2017 two senior women stepped up to resurrect this organization whose members could be counted on two hands. Membership increased to 180+ women, and they have since given \$265,863 to nonprofit organizations in Ludington and Mason County. (Contact Ruthann Kyle, wwcofmc@gmail.com.)

Men Who Care of Mason County: Started in 2025 by a newly retired man wanting to make a difference, this group has 60+ members; and after just its first four meetings, it gave \$12,400 to nonprofit organizations in Ludington and Mason County. (Contact Wally Cain, mwcofmc@gmail.com.)

While it is hard to put a monetary value on all that senior volunteers do for our community, it really is easy to understand that, without a doubt, they are a truly valuable resource and touch the lives of people of all ages.