

LivingWell

Spring 2018 • Volume 14 • Issue 2

A publication of



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Retiree Len Sloup takes volunteering seriously. He and others are helping to make the process easier for older adults through the Just Ask: Connecting Retirees with Causes that Matter initiative.

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Just Ask:

Connecting Retirees with Causes that Matter

Len Sloup retired in 2016 following a 48-year career with the Nebraska Department of Revenue. He then spent some of his early mornings at coffee shops chatting with other retirees. After a few months, he began to realize the skills and energy sitting across the table from him.

“I found there were so many resources and talents sitting in those coffee shops,” he said. “A lot of those talents are not being used, even though those people would volunteer if they were asked.”

For decades, Sloup has been active in the community, with organizations such as TeamMates Mentoring, Sheldon Art Association, Lux Center for the Arts, and as a founding Boys and Girls Club board member. Today, he serves on both the Boys and Girls Club Advisory Board and Lincoln Arts Council Board of Directors. He also is a Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital trustee and former volunteer, Lincoln Community Foundation trustee, and is involved with 100s of Lincoln Men Who Care. He even reads to children at Head Start and St. Teresa’s Parish School.

“I like to help people who need help,” he said. “So many things can be done by those who are retired.

Some of it is happening now, but so much more can happen.”

Just Ask Initiative

Looking for another way to be involved in the community after retirement, Sloup was accepted as a Leadership Lincoln Fellows XXXIII candidate. The program brings individuals from across the community together to help learn what makes Lincoln tick and get engaged in the community. It requires teams to select and complete a community service project. After discussing various ideas, Sloup’s committee chose to pursue how to better involve older adults in the community.

Committee members are Amanda Barker, Kyle Cech, Denine Erlemeier, Jeremy Gegg, Stacy Guevara, Martha Hakenkamp, Emily Koenig, Sloup and Scott Thayer. They have partnered with Randy Hawthorne of VolunteerLinc and Leadership Lincoln’s Mick Hale, executive director; Laura Uridil, program director; and Randy Bretz, communications specialist.

The committee circulated a survey asking local older adults what inspires them to volunteer.

“I’ve found a lot of people are reluctant to take the first step to



“ So many things can be done by those who are retired.”

– Len Sloup

volunteer for an organization,” Sloup said. “But if an organization asks them, they’d be glad to help. Conversely, we are also hoping to encourage retirees to ‘Just Ask’ organizations that they have an interest in about volunteer opportunities.”

The committee formed an initiative called Just Ask:





Leadership Lincoln Fellows XXXIII committee helping older adults volunteer through Just Ask. From left, Scott Thayer, Budget Blinds of Lincoln; Kyle Cech, Crete Carrier Corp.; Denine Erlemeier, State Farm Insurance Cos.; Len Sloup, Nebraska Department of Revenue, retired; Amanda Barker, Civic Nebraska; Emily Koenig, Lincoln Electric System; Martha Hakenkamp, Aging Partners; Jeremy Gegg, Lincoln Fire and Rescue; and Stacy Guevara, Ameritas Life Insurance Corp.

Connecting Retirees with Causes that Matter. While there are other groups in Lincoln aimed toward specific groups of older adults such as retired school personnel, the committee wanted to increase the visibility and opportunities for other retirees resulting in this partner project with VolunteerLinc.

“We wanted to broaden the group so everyone had an opportunity to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to volunteering,” Sloup said.

The committee will host a Just Ask volunteer fair May 15 from

10 a.m. to noon at Gateway Mall, 6100 “O” St., in partnership with Aging Partners, Leadership Lincoln, VolunteerLinc and Gateway Mall. A variety of nonprofits will be present with volunteer opportunities for everyone.

“This is an event designed for older adults and retirees looking to get more involved and better their community,” Sloup said.

Why Volunteer?

There are many benefits to volunteering, but Sloup believes it benefits the community much more when older adults and retirees volunteer, because it:

- Helps bridge the generation gap.
- Helps change how people think

The Just Ask volunteer fair is May 15, 10 a.m. to noon at Gateway Mall, 6100 “O” St. There will be a variety of nonprofits with volunteer opportunities for everyone.

about older adults.

- Is good for mental health and keeps the body and brain active.
- Helps prevent isolation and depression through social contact.
- Helps the community.
- Helps the volunteer feel good and valued.

When volunteering, it is important to remember that you don’t have to volunteer all your free

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Just Ask: Connecting Retirees with Causes that Matter

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time, but finding a cause may help motivate you.

“Many older adults want flexibility to volunteer,” Sloup said. “It’s good to find a place where you want to volunteer. I find reading to kids in school is an ideal hour each week for me.”

The volunteer fair is just one way to inform older adults of places and ways to volunteer.

“Sometimes people just need a start to get into volunteering,” Sloup said. “This effort is a seedling that we hope grows as the retired sector grows in the years to come.”

More Information

After the volunteer fair, VolunteerLinc will continue the “Just Ask” efforts. If you are looking for volunteer opportunities, contact VolunteerLinc at 402-435-2100 or visit VolunteerLinc.org. 

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