

CASE STUDY

Putting Civic Matchmaking to use in Springfield-Greene County, Missouri

THE GIVE 5 PROGRAM MATCHES RETIRED (OR ALMOST RETIRED) BABY BOOMERS AND OTHER RETIREES WITH STRATEGIC volunteer opportunities. It's called "civic matchmaking," and it is working even better than the community had hoped as it provides retirees with the journey to find the best individual fit between program participant and nonprofit volunteer opportunity.



CASE PROFILE

Springfield-Greene County, MO

Population: 289,805 (2017)

Square Miles: 678

How the Give 5 Program Works

Each class consists of 20-25 people who participate in five program days over five weeks (one day per week). Program days last seven hours, with lunch and snacks included.

Day 1 includes a half-day, classroom-based "orientation" that enlightens classmates about economic and social trends and challenges affecting our community. They learn the "why" – why volunteering to address these issues is important. Everyone wants to be part of a solution, and even life-long residents tell us they learn much about their own community from this orientation. After lunch, the class boards a bus and tours three nonprofit organizations.

Program days 2-5 each begin with a one-hour classroom session consisting of presentations by selected community leaders. Some provide additional insights into the community; others highlight additional volunteer opportunities. Participants then board a bus to visit five nonprofits on their home turf. Each class session is interactive, fun and social. Visits to nonprofits allow participants to "see behind the curtain" to better understand the role these organizations play in the community and the types of volunteer opportunities available? This is part of the "civic matchmaking."

During the five program days, the class visits a total of 23 nonprofits, all aligned with addressing poverty (in Springfield's case). They also learn about key volunteer opportunities within city and county government.

It is a fast-paced program that keeps the class on their feet, peeking behind the curtain of the community's selected nonprofits; and on their toes, analyzing the sometimes-challenging things they are learning about the community they may have never noticed before.

How the Give 5 Program Works in Springfield-Green County

Springfield-Greene County's version of the Give 5 program targets retirees. These are the community's most-frequent voters, and they are like sponges . . . receptive to the information about their community and eager to soak it up. But the program can target all age groups within a community.

After the final regular program day, participants are offered an opportunity to commit to a volunteer opportunity (or two or three or four) and a short “graduation” celebration wraps up the program. Those who are ready to commit may do so through a “signaling of intent” ceremony at graduation, pledging to volunteer at the nonprofit(s) of their choice at least five hours per month for the following six months. Some participants are creating their own volunteer opportunities based on their unique skills and passions. Thus far, all of the city’s graduates have signed up to volunteer, and some are volunteering at two, three, four or more nonprofits.

Upon graduation from the Give 5 program, alumni are publicly celebrated and valued. These graduates intuitively become ambassadors for the community and the nonprofits and myriad volunteer opportunities in the community. They have more “ownership” in their community now.

They become super volunteers. They’ve learned about the challenges in the community, how they interrelate, and how those challenges are being addressed. Armed with that knowledge, they are now ready to roll up their sleeves and use their expertise to make a difference. They “own” their community a little more.

The community will soon graduate its seventh Give 5 class, consisting of two retired physicians, a Rotary Club president, an engineer, a retired COO from a large hospital system, a retired executive from a Fortune 50 company, a retired communications executive, a retired registered nurse and many more! Every class has been loaded with talent, and thus far, every participant has “plugged in” and found a place to volunteer in our community following graduation.

Measuring Impact

Springfield-Greene County is currently refining its tools to measure the impact that the program is having on its community. Even a rudimentary ROI calculation with lots of assumptions tells them it is a great value for the community.

With partners and some retired university faculty, the community is working to quantify Give 5’s impact on four levels:

- the impact on the program graduates;
- the impact on the capacity of the participating nonprofits;
- the impact on neighbors in the community these nonprofits serve;
- and the impact on the community’s economy and quality of life. What is the economic value of being a community with a national reputation for attracting active retirees?

Springfield-Greene County’s version of the program is hosted by United Way of the Ozarks, and is co-funded by the Greene County Senior Citizens Services Fund and the city of Springfield. The community recently awarded a Senior Mental Health grant from Community Foundation of the Ozarks in recognition of the Give 5 program’s impact on social isolation within our senior population.

The Give 5 program is customizable, flexible and scalable, so it can be implemented in any community that needs additional oars in the water to help address one or more community challenges, as determined by community leaders. It is designed to be customized to each community, because each community is unique. It is also flexible and can be implemented in any region – urban, suburban and rural. While we tend to focus on retirees, the program can host all ages – retirees, high school students, and anyone in between. And Give 5 can be scaled to any size community, from very small to very large.

If you want more information about the Give 5 program for your community, please contact Greg Burris at GBurris@UWOzarks.com.