

# Encore encourages seniors to share wisdom to help solve community challenges

By RITA KUEBER

**E**ncore – when the first part of an individual's performance is so compelling, you ask them to share their talents again. Found most often within the context of the Fine Arts - but not always. Encore is also the name of a dynamic initiative administrated by The Cleveland Foundation. Encore encourages people at or near the end of their primary careers to share their knowledge, wisdom and expertise to solve community challenges and fill unmet needs.

"Encore is a national effort to leverage the experience of older adults," says Kathy Hallissey, the Director of Community Responsive Grant Making for The Cleveland Foundation. "We tailor Encore Cleveland to our community, and we make sure all kinds of Clevelanders have access to the initiative – people from Chagrin Falls, people from Cleveland. People with experience in manufacturing or corporations – Encore is for all people."

Since the Cleveland Foundation launched the initiative in 2013, more than 6,000 people have been placed in 500 volunteer and paid positions with 229 program sites. This population has given 47,600 hours of service throughout Northeast Ohio with the value of one hour of volunteer time estimated at \$23 per hour. As of November 2016, the Foundation has awarded more than \$4.3 million in grants to support Encore Cleveland programs.

"Usually people 50 years old and up have so many more years to give back to the community and share their experience," Hallissey says. She mentions how she and the Foundation staff are inspired by the passion that elders bring to the community, and their commitment to giving back. She describes how volunteers tutor children two or three times a week, creating a sense of extended family, not just academic achievement. She also brings up a man working with WIRE-Net. (A non-profit economic development organization that focuses on nurturing manufacturing jobs.) Because of his actions and connections, he obtained actual, job-leveraging certificates for people who then started down a career path. "These stories are inspiring to us," Hallissey says. "Embracing that talent propels us forward."

Over the past two years, Encore Cleveland has presented an annual prize to recognize individuals age 50+ for innovative work that combines personal meaning with social impact to enhance the lives of Greater Clevelanders. In 2016, The Encore Cleveland Prize went to Jack Binder, who after a 25-year career in the chemical industry helped rebrand and refocus the nonprofit Suicide Prevention Alliance, today known as LifeAct. In its premier awards year, the Foundation honored the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and Thomas Gaghan, the founder of the Cleveland Furniture Bank. Currently the Foundation is determining if the Encore Cleveland Prize will continue. In the meantime, however, grants to their partnering organizations continue.

The Cleveland Foundation website indicates how to get involved in Encore. Some positions are volunteer, some are paid. The Foundation is seeking to increase the number of paid opportunities. Some volunteers receive



**Business Volunteers Unlimited (BVU) Encore ACTS volunteers attend a group volunteer event at Fairhill Partners.**

a stipend, used for gas money or bus fare. The Foundation is also trying to expand the program into Lake and Geauga counties.

As with so many Cleveland Foundation programs, there are a number of collaborating organizations involved with Encore, including Fairhill Partners, Business Volunteers Unlimited, University Circle Inc., and the Cuyahoga County Public Library. Participants engage in teaching, tutoring, administration, leadership development, even starting their own business as part of their second act careers.

**"At Encore Cleveland, we encourage and accept people of all different abilities and incomes. This makes us different from other Encore programs across the country," Hallissey says. "This is one of our newer initiatives, and we want to be sure the doors are open to all."**

Individuals as well as organizations interested in the Encore Cleveland program can contact The Cleveland Foundation and get more information online at [ClevelandFoundation.org/Encore](http://ClevelandFoundation.org/Encore).



**Randy struggled with a hearing impediment early on in his life. He knew of his challenges and when he retired knew the time was right to assist others. He called Greater Cleveland Volunteers and for two years has been volunteering as a mentor and in the garden at GCV.**



**After his retirement Arthur McDaniel felt his days weren't productive. A friend recommended the Greater Cleveland Volunteers My Mentor My Friend lunchtime mentoring program. Art now enjoys mentoring fourth-graders in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and mentors students through College Now.**