

IMPACT HERO FINALIST



Sara Ogle

Community Manager
Westwinds Apartments | Portsmouth, Virginia

It Takes a Village

You've likely heard the expression, "It takes a village." And while this African proverb focuses on the care of children, it's a phrase that Sara Ogle, one of our 2022 Impact Hero finalists, applies to all residents in her community in a powerful and meaningful way.

Big heart. Giving spirit. Passionate. Servant leader. True hero. These are a few phrases used to describe Sara Ogle because she has transformed her Westwinds Apartments community with an overflowing spirit of philanthropy.

"If there is anyone I know who gives their time, energy, love, passion, and heart into being a hero – to let the children and adults in her community know they are cared for, thought of, and loved – it is Sara!"

For Sara, her impact journey began after watching a webinar by popular speaker Toni Blake on social responsibility, specifically Red Nose Day, which is an annual fundraising campaign to end the cycle of child poverty and ensure a healthy future for all children.

Inspired by what she heard, Sara jumped at the chance to participate in a Red Nose Day event, but she didn't stop there. Going beyond just her

multifamily community, she took the initiative to create **RHCares**, a company-wide philanthropic movement for Westwinds parent company, Ripley Heatwole Company, Inc.

While she successfully spearheaded various volunteer campaigns for RHCares, that was just the beginning for Sara. From there, her efforts and impact blossomed, driven by what she clearly recognized as a need for change in her immediate community.

"I didn't really realize the impact I had, or even the responsibility my position [brings], until the crime in our city began to be very high," said Ogle. "I just didn't have 'those problems' in my community...until I did!"

For many, it's easy to live somewhere and simply bemoan the negative shifts in society. But Sara wasn't satisfied to sit back and complain. She acted, and she did so immediately.

Awakened to the societal challenges facing her area, with safety and rising crime the most pressing, she began to understand the significance of that old African proverb. More importantly, she saw the role she could play in making a difference.

Moved to Action

Her first step was to expand already planned resident activities, such as National Night Out



block parties, fall festivals, and more, to include the larger Portsmouth community. But she didn't stop there.

Next, she actively engaged with different community organizations and activities. She joined a local civic league to be a voice for her residents and the community. She hosted "Meet and Greets" with the local police department and organized neighborhood crime watch meetings. She did all of this and more to help connect people and resources.

In fact, it was through her networking efforts with "boots on the ground" organizations that she learned about the myriad of resources available. Sara adds, "I made it my priority to meet and network with different community leaders, activists, and organizations to share resources."



The idea of social and corporate responsibility became much more than words to Sara. The more involved she became, the more she began to see a disconnect between people from different cultures, demographics, and economic backgrounds knowing how to access various forms of support.

While multiple community organizations were doing good things for people in the community, many of those in need simply didn't know about

“Sara has a heart of gold. [She is] a true leader who reflects the epitome of servant leadership. She serves the community with joy.”

them. By using social media, though, she found a way to forge a connection. She launched the **Friends of Churchland Facebook group** — what she calls her Community Engagement Initiative — to help all citizens engage in their community and be “in the know” about different resources.

What started as a spark has become a fire. Sara is passionate about serving others, building community, and raising awareness for important causes. She saw a need and began doing her part to improve it.

Transforming Residents Into Community

To residents at the Westwinds Apartments, Sara Ogle is a hero. And because of her tireless efforts, not only is their complex a more vibrant place to call home, but the city of Portsmouth also has benefited from her care.

As one person shared, “Her dedication to her community is second to none. She is engaged in all aspects of uplifting and empowering people from all walks of life. People like Sara and her leadership are exactly who transform communities into family.”

So what's her special sauce? Can charitable drives and community engagement make that big of a difference? As she reflects on her efforts and considers the transformation she's seen at Westwinds, she considers this question: What makes your apartments different from others?



And the answer is that Westwinds has become more than just an apartment complex. It's become a community in the best sense of the word. As Sara shares, "When I hear residents speaking about how they had their neighbors over for Thanksgiving or when I see neighbors (who likely would be strangers in any other setting) walking together in "walk clubs," it's clear to me that Westwinds is just that — a community."

A Heart for Service

The list of volunteer activities and events Sara has helped organize is not small. Below is merely a sampling of her unwavering commitment to her Westwinds Apartments residents and the surrounding community of Portsmouth, Virginia:

UNWAVERING COMMITMENT:

- ★ Resident-driven **community clean-ups**.
- ★ **Distributes items**, including back-to-school, to needy families in partnership with a local church.
- ★ Partnership with Mayflower Marathon for **holiday food drives**.
- ★ Annual **blood drives** for the Red Cross.
- ★ **Autism Awareness walk** in conjunction with local high school.
- ★ **Coldest Night of the Year walk** with Portsmouth volunteers, raising awareness about homelessness.
- ★ **Collaboration with Stop the Violence 757**, serving as a drop-off location for new and gently used bikes for underprivileged children in the community.
- ★ Organizes company-wide **RHCares volunteers** for various charitable events.
- ★ Sponsors the annual **Anthem LemonAid Stand**, an event that raises money to benefit Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters (CHKD) Cancer and Blood Disorders Center.
- ★ Hosts annual **Red Nose Day events**.
- ★ Participates in the **Apartments and Cops Together In Our Neighborhoods (ACTION)** program with the Portsmouth Police Department
- ★ **Mentors children** at the Westwinds Apartment complex and organizes fun activities to keep them from turning to the streets.
- ★ Created (and now moderates) the **Friends of Churchland Facebook Group** as a platform to share resources, build additional partnerships, and grow opportunities for networking within the community.





“Sara has the biggest heart and a great spirit for giving to others. I am proud to have her as one of my managers. She truly is a HERO to us.”

Some people may ask, “Why? Why work so hard for the good of others?” For Sara, that answer is simple: “I just love being able to give back. It warms my heart to hear the stories and to see strangers become neighbors, who become friends, who then become family. And honestly, I just feel a responsibility to do my part in combating crime by building community.”

Words of Wisdom

It’s one thing to read about good works; it’s another thing to do them. But Sara provides a shining example of leading the way, along with words of encouragement and advice to help follow in her footsteps.

“I hear all the time, ‘My residents never participate in stuff like that,’” says Sara. “My advice is never [to] stop trying. Keep building on each event, and always include food.” She laughingly adds, “If you cook it, they will come!”

Written by Trisha Sheffield, Grace Hill Content Marketer

About Sara:

This month, Sara will celebrate 25 years in the multifamily industry. She began her journey as a leasing consultant at age 19, but within nine years, she had assumed the role of community manager. Although she has moved roles within apartment communities — she’s worked at three different properties — she has never strayed beyond a five-mile radius!

For the past nine years, she has served the Westwinds Apartment community as their resident manager, a role she takes to heart.

Sara is a mom to four grown children, two dogs, and a turtle named Franklin; she is a proud GiGi to four precious grandchildren. When she is not at work, she enjoys riding her bike, swimming, and spending time with family. Another fun fact: Sara loves going to sports bars, but not because she loves sports. Aside from baseball — which she does love to watch when she can be there live and in person — she doesn’t consider herself a big sports fan. So why sports bars, you might ask? Well, no surprise, Sara loves the people and atmosphere. For her, the camaraderie and banter draw her in, not to mention the opportunity to dress up in her favorite team’s jersey — Go Cubs!

Grace Hill’s Impact Hero Awards Program recognizes individuals who make a difference in their local community. [Learn more.](#)