



CONNECT

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a resource for older adults and caregivers

Rockford Area News

Our Work is About You

From Marilyn Elliott, Executive Director, Senior Services



Welcome to our first issue of *Connect*. The purpose of this newsletter is to enhance our communication with you — our clients, family members and referral sources, including physicians and hospitals — regarding important issues that affect older adults and caregivers, as well as to provide updates about various Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) programs across the state. You will also read stories about the people that we serve at LSSI and the staff and volunteers who serve them.

As an agency that serves seniors throughout Illinois, we are frequently asked “What makes you unique?” Our answer is simple. In addition to providing professional, compassionate care in a friendly, wholesome environment — in a person’s home or at one of our facilities — we work from a sense of deep respect and reverence for the people that we serve. The older adults in our care are a reservoir of knowledge, experience, love and faith. They serve as an example and inspiration to all of their friends and family, and to us, as well. This perspective guides us in what we do and how we serve our clients, patients, residents and their families.

At LSSI, we strive to connect — to be responsive to the needs of the seniors we serve. I’m proud to say we’re a leader in the development of innovative services, including our new LifeBalanceSM wellness program. In fact, our vision of the future is one where both the needs and preferences of the elders we serve will increasingly be met through a tailored combination of the housing, nursing and community-based service we offer at LSSI. Our work is about you and your needs. *

OPEN ARMS

I was living by myself,
as lonesome as could be
Suddenly I realized,
That this was not for me...

My house was sold within a month,
An apartment soon was found,
Peterson Meadows had it all,
And now I'm safe and sound...

The people here are lovely,
Experienced and witty – true –
They welcomed me with open arms,
I'm sure they would you too.

—Peterson Meadows resident,
Maxine Eck

Maxine is author of a 2008 self-published collection of poems titled: *The Fifth Seat Over and The Fourth Row Back*.

Maxine is a frequently published poet in the Poet's Corner of the *Rockford Register Star*.

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Spiritual Wellness and Healthy Aging

Healthy aging encompasses a spiritual side, as well as physical, mental and social facets. In this article, Pr. Eileen Harris, chaplain at St. Matthew Center for Health in Park Ridge, and Dr. Chuck Olson, chaplain at P.A. Peterson Center for Health in Rockford, discuss spiritual wellness. The two Centers are programs of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) that offer nursing and rehabilitation services to seniors.

What is spiritual wellness?

Pr. Harris: Spiritual wellness implies a spirit that is willing to grow with life on life's terms. Because we are "spiritual beings having a human experience,"* spiritual wellness gives us an inner core of wisdom and strength to walk through the inevitable losses and challenges that occur as we age.

Pr. Olson: Spiritual wellness is placing faith and faithfulness first in one's life. It honors what is important and promotes acting accordingly in love toward others and God.

What part does spiritual wellness play in a person's life, especially an older adult?

Pr. Harris: We age in four domains: physical, emotional, social and spiritual. All are aspects of self. We have the potential of growing in these domains, and by doing so, we can make choices for developing a healthy spirit.

Pr. Olson: For older adults, faith and faithfulness are key components for the person's well-being. It's important for a person to be able to look back, and recall and relive his or her moments of faithfulness.

How can a person develop spiritual wellness?

Pr. Olson: The universal ways to develop spiritual wellness are: worship, study, prayer and action. A person can individualize the ways to do this, and this development can continue in a retirement setting. The enemy is self-centeredness.

To encourage someone to develop spiritual wellness, you need (1) a constant emphasis on the need to worship; (2) a constant emphasis on the priority of the



Pr. Eileen Harris

word of God; and (3) a constant lifting up of a mission. In our case, the mission of our Sunday morning P.A. Peterson worshiping community is to help support the Shiloh Evangelical Children's Home in Chennai, India, which is home to 19 children orphaned by the 2004 tsunami, through an offering received at each service. This offering provides a monthly donation small by American standards, but a Godsend to the Home and the orphan we provide foster care for — a 15-year-old girl named Veeba.

How does physical aging affect a person's spiritual wellness?

Pr. Harris: As we age physically, we can become more dependent; emotionally, we have to deal more with loss; socially we often become more isolated; and spiritually we may become more apathetic. But this doesn't have to be so. We can choose to meet these challenges to stay healthy in all four areas.

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Conrad Johnson Keeps on Walking

Hippocrates and President Harry S. Truman both believed in the benefits of a good, long walk. Hippocrates, who is known as the father of medicine, stated that “walking is man’s best medicine.” Truman, who was known as an early riser and a hard worker, simply stated that if anyone wished to reach his or her 80th birthday to “take a two-mile walk every morning before breakfast.” The same advice could probably be given by the oldest resident living at Peterson Meadows Retirement Community. It is not uncommon to see Conrad Johnson, 105, walking the property at Peterson Meadows or, if the weather is uncooperative, on the treadmill in the exercise room.

Many people only dream of reaching the age of 100, and Conrad is one of the privileged few who have the honor of reaching that remarkable milestone. To keep healthy and moving, he recommends “taking care of yourself, staying away from booze and smoking, eating right and exercising each day. And don’t forget hard work. I wouldn’t be here today, if it wasn’t for hard work.”

He also believes in God and that God has helped him throughout his life. Conrad lives by those principles, although he will admit that the only hard work that he does now is to “exercise for about 40 minutes every

day.” Every Thursday afternoon, you can also find him at the Peterson Meadows bowling league.

Conrad was born and spent his youth in Sweden on the large family farm. He and his family built their own home, which was quite large. Conrad recollects that there was only one house larger in the area, and that family had 18 children. He grew up in a family of 10 children, where the hard work ethic was taught to him as a child. He tells the story of having to work with one of his brothers who was four years older than him and that he “worked just as hard as him” despite their age difference. He also prides himself on the fact that even though he was the smallest kid in the one-room schoolhouse and sat on the teacher’s lap, he was smarter than kids four years ahead of him.

In the early 1920s, Conrad immigrated to America by boat. When he first came to America, he wanted to be a pastry maker. Instead, he spent the first two months in a factory and then was given the opportunity to try his hand at carpentry. He was fired numerous times, but he just wouldn’t give up. He was determined to learn the trade, and after many attempts, he became very successful at it. He started his own remodeling business and was very busy. He talks of doing business with a local lumber company that would allow him to use their equipment for free. His carpentry was done by hand with the

exception of an electric saw. When asked what he thought about today’s way of building homes, he states that “he’s glad that he doesn’t still do it today. Building the house in a factory and putting it together with a hoist on site is not carpentry.”

After several years of being in the remodeling business, Conrad turned to building cabinets. He made more money but still did most of the work himself, because he says, “you couldn’t depend on the hired help to do the job right.” His work spoke for itself, because he usually had orders for more than a year in advance.

When he was in his early 30s, Conrad thought he had cancer. He was seen by four different doctors, including one whom he fondly remembers as the “pill doctor,” because he was constantly giving pills to his patients. One doctor told him to drink water. He started to drink water and started to feel good, and it has “kept his body in order.”

The American poet Carrie Latet could have been thinking of Conrad when she stated, “Walking gets the feet moving, the blood moving, the mind moving. And movement is life.” Conrad Johnson is definitely full of life and is a fine example of what “good living” does for a person.

For more information about Peterson Meadows, call 815/229-0390 or go to www.PetersonMeadows.org. *

Joanna Coffler Wins Gold in Special Olympics



P.A. Peterson Center for Health is proud to have its own Olympic gold medal winner on staff: Joanna Coffler, who works in the dietary department and delivers all of the snacks for the facility and for P.A. Peterson's special events. She recently celebrated her one-year anniversary.

Every year, the Illinois Special Olympics are held in Bloomington. At this year's event, Joanna won a gold medal in the 100-meter relay and a bronze medal in the tennis ball throw. These two medals have been added to her collection of seven other state medals and 11 local medals that she has won since 2007. Joanna credits her success to her parents, her boyfriend and his parents.

At the moment, Joanna is practicing for the volleyball tournament, which will take place in October. After that, it is on to basketball. And all the walking around P.A. Peterson that Joanna does certainly helps with her conditioning for the Special Olympics. *

P.A. Raises \$4,000 for Memory Walk

The Alzheimer's Association's Memory Walk was held at Rock Valley College on September 26. P.A. Peterson had 10 walkers, including staff and family members, who braved the weather to participate in the 11th annual event. P.A. Peterson's team raised \$4,000, twice the amount raised last year. In addition to pledges made to walkers, staff used a variety of ways to raise money for the Alzheimer's Association, including bake sales, raffles and a silent auction, along with a generous grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans®.

On **November 10**, the Alzheimer's Association will hold "Memory Loss 101," from 10:00-11:00 a.m. at P.A. Peterson. The presentation offers a basic overview of memory and how it works, as well as information on Alzheimer's disease. To register for the free program, call 815/484-1300 or visit www.alz.org/illinois.*



Intouch Home Care Services Promotes Wellness at Peterson Meadows

The goal of Intouch Home Care Services and Medical/Medication Management is to facilitate and ensure senior adults' well-being, helping them maintain independence and self-

esteem with the support of a caregiver. This approach creates opportunities for increased longevity.

Staying at home with the support of a caregiver provides friendship, safety and security. As liaison to your family, a caregiver also provides peace of mind. For the generation that wishes to avoid nursing home care, by enabling the individual to stay at home, Intouch eliminates the anxiety of relocation.

In short, Intouch Home Care Services is an excellent, affordable option for senior adults and their families.

For more about Intouch Home Care Services, call 815/387-9170. For information about In-Home Medication Management, call 877/709-9177.

Rockin' Through the Decade



Rockin' Through the Decade was this year's theme for National Nursing Home Week at P.A. Peterson. Activities included a tea party, where residents wore tie-dyed shirts and socks; a Casino event with the "Big Band" sound; and a family night with a diner-style hamburger with all the trimmings, French fries and, of course, root beer floats.

PEARL CARLSON:

Matriarch of P.A. Peterson



What does it take to earn the title of "the Matriarch of P.A. Peterson"? You will need to ask Pearl Carlson.

Pearl has been a resident at P.A. Peterson Center for Health in Rockford since September 1979. Pearl loves to share her experience about being the first resident in the new apartments. She was able to choose her apartment and chose the one closest to Bloom School for several reasons. First, it was closest to her previous home, and secondly, she could still

watch children go to school in the morning.

Her brother, Palmer, thought she would like the apartments since a friend of his was on the building committee of the remodeling and knew a lot about the construction. Pearl lived in her own apartment for 27 years and recently moved to the Garden Hills neighborhood of P.A. Peterson.

Pearl says she was fortunate to have gone trick-or-treating at the home of Pehr August Peterson. Mr. and Mrs. Peterson always gave the children small sacks of coins and expected that the children would give their money to the children's federation, which would help the orphanages. Another philanthropic endeavor of Mr. Peterson's that Pearl knew of was that he had built P.A. Peterson for the wives of his employees who passed away. The first 18 residents of P.A. Peterson were spouses of employees of Mr. Peterson who were of Swedish descent and whose husbands Mr. Peterson had brought to the United States from Sweden.

This is a very special year for Pearl — she celebrated her 100th birthday on Aug 11. She attributes her longevity to wanting to learn something new every day, listening to the television and the radio and her strong faith. Her daily prayer is "Lord, don't move the mountain before me, rather give me the strength to climb it." Now, we can see why she has the title of "the Matriarch of P.A. Peterson." ✨



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CONNECT

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Responding to the Gospel, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois brings healing, justice and wholeness to people and communities.

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www.PetersonMeadows.org

The Day the Legacy Corps Didn't Show Up

Mary is looking at the clock anxiously and wonders why Susan, the Legacy Corps member, is late. Mary has had very little sleep at night, because her husband has Alzheimer's and has been awake and trying to leave the house. Mary is looking forward to Susan's weekly visit to give her respite. Sometimes she meets a friend for lunch or just spends time alone "recharging her batteries," but today she just wants to lock her bedroom door and take a four-hour nap. She needs the sleep. She is feeling sleep deprived and is having trouble making decisions. Her body aches, and she has a tension headache. Susan calls and says that she is sorry but she is unable to come today. Mary goes in the bathroom to have a cry, but her husband is calling for her.

John is ready, with golf bag in the car, to play a round of golf with his buddies and enjoy a stress break. He loves his wife very much and has learned to cook, clean, pay the bills, scrub the floor, and help his wife dress and do her makeup and hair. Their dreams were shattered when his wife had a massive stroke at the age of 60. John took early retirement to care for her. He looks forward to Jack's visits, the Legacy Corps member who comes weekly to give him a break. He doesn't complain about his life to anybody, but it lifts his spirits just to be with his buddies for golf or, in the winter, for lunch. He wonders why Jack didn't show up and with disappointment, takes the golf bag out of the car.

Elsie was an executive secretary for 40 years and then was an active community volunteer in her retirement years. She never married, and her niece, who calls her weekly, lives in Baltimore but feels guilty that she is so far away. Elsie is now 85 years old, and the doctor says she

"It is difficult to put a value on a volunteer's efforts."

can't drive anymore. What a blessing Louise, the Legacy Corps member, has been the past year. She calls a couple of times a week just to check on Elsie, and then weekly, they either go to lunch and shopping or stay at home and

play cards or board games to keep Elsie's mind alert. It will be a lonely day for Elsie if Louise doesn't come today, and her niece will feel stressed that her aunt is lonely.

These are just a few examples of what the Legacy Corps program is all about.

It is difficult to put a value on a volunteer's efforts, but sometimes we need to step back and see how different life



Bev Brzostek (left), a former Legacy Corps member, still assists Joe with grocery shopping.

would be if "the volunteers didn't show up."

For the past seven years, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) has been in the forefront of supporting the wellness of family caregivers in the state of Illinois. The University of Maryland Center on Aging was awarded an AmeriCorps grant in 2002, and LSSI was one of eight programs in the country to be a sub-grantee. The AmeriCorps members primarily are individuals 50+ years old. In the past six years, more than 160 Legacy Corps members have made a difference in Winnebago, Boone and McHenry Counties as respite members and volunteer generators. This year, we have expanded to more LSSI sites and have 66 trained Legacy Corps members at Intouch Home Care offices in Freeport and DeKalb; Intouch Adult Day Services in Moline; and St. Matthew Center for Health in Park Ridge, in addition to the three counties. We support and honor family caregivers who teach us about unconditional love. ✨

For example, contrast King Saul and King David in the Bible. Both men ruled Israel and both died in later life. However, King Saul's faith wavered as he aged. He became emotionally self-centered, socially isolated, fearful and hopeless. At the end, he committed suicide while losing in battle.

King David, on the other hand, chose to age differently. He remained somewhat independent physically; cared about others' welfare; continued his connections within his community; and remained spiritually hopeful.

We realize with physical aging there could be dependency on others and emotionally the need to deal with eventual losses. Yet, we can choose help in the midst of dependency or loss. Through serving, we can stay connected with others in lots of ways. Even with a smile for those who are down, we can help other people. Spiritually, we can still question God in the midst of our faith.

What is a healthy spirit?

Pr. Harris: A healthy spirit empowers us to transform ourselves as we go through life. For me, a healthy spirit engages God daily, providing the light, energy, help and perspective that only God can give us. A healthy older adult spirit favors relationships, has balance and energy, provides maturity, imagination and wisdom, is able to grieve, accepts forgiveness, and is willing to risk, even if this could mean failure.

How can a person develop a healthy spirit?

Pr. Harris: When we have a sense of purpose about God's gift of life — and especially God's cosmic, powerful, personal saving love for us — our spiritual self becomes grounded. As we mature, I find it helps to reconsider who we are, especially when facing physical and possible mental decline. We may not be able to do what we used to be able to do; so we might re-define what gives us meaning and satisfaction. We also need to be able to face loss. Telling our life stories, reflecting on successes and failures, and planning for our own death become chances to grow and strengthen our spirit.

In short, it helps both our selves and our families when we are open to new ways of self-understanding, and open to accepting the facts of our aging.

In our latter years, life becomes a process of relinquishment. How we do so also becomes a choice, sometimes right up to our last breath. I think the easiest way of understanding and facing relinquishment is

“Letting go and letting God.”

Recognizing we are a part of one source, part of God's wholeness becomes a healthy spiritual perspective about whose we are and to whom we return.**

As a chaplain, what questions do you get from nursing home residents?

Pr. Olson: The number one question that I get is: “How do I make peace with myself?” The answer is by sharing and understanding the stories of your life, and that relates back to recalling times of spiritual satisfaction and faithfulness. To help residents do that, I try to do biographies of many of the residents and work with them to define moments of faithfulness.



Pr. Chuck Olson

I start by asking four key questions: what was the setting the person was born into; what was the first job; how did the person meet his or her mate; and what do you remember about your wedding. Then, we put the person's stories in a loose-leaf notebook as the

“I believe every person has a profound need to give and have a purpose; spirituality can answer those innate needs.”

—PR. OLSON

senior remembers them, and which can be arranged chronologically later on.

I believe every person has a profound need to give and have a purpose; spirituality can answer those innate needs. Elders don't outgrow those needs. *

*From theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

**I extend thanks to Dr. Roger Weise for his ideas presented on “Spirituality As We Age” on June 19, 2009, in Elk Grove Village, Ill., which have formed, in part, my thoughts in this article. —Pastor Eileen Harris



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A Brighter Bergmark Villa

“It is so much brighter up here”; “I love the new colors”; “It looks bigger; it feels good.”

What is everyone talking about? It’s the newly redecorated Bergmark Villa neighborhood at P.A. Peterson Center for Health. These are a few of the comments family members have made.

Resident rooms have been freshly painted; new furniture and new light fixtures have been added, as well as new wallpaper and carpet. The end lobbies also have been redecorated and enjoy a “tree top” view of the surrounding neighborhoods. The lobby on the west has a masculine theme with the use of darker earth tone colors and stripes. The other lobby has a feminine theme with its lighter greens and yellow earth tones. You can often find the residents in the lobbies, enjoying the new rocking chairs.

Lori Fernando, Alzheimer’s coordinator, says, “The goal of redecorating is to make this unit comfortable, not only for the resident but also for the resident’s family because we care for [both].”

To schedule a time to see the newly remodeled Bergmark Villa neighborhood, please call Chris Hintzsche, director of marketing, or Lori Fernando at 815/399-8832. *

