A Lasting Impression

By David Stettler

For the past several years, I have been very fortunate to serve on Liberty Lutheran’s board and on several of its committees. My involvement with Liberty as a donor is based on my first-hand experience, particularly with Artman and Liberty Hospice.

As my parents entered their later years, it became clear that their needs required an increased amount of support. They were always very independent, but with my mother’s declining health and my father suffering a knee injury, we began to look for a community that could meet their needs and provide the comforts of home.

The initial visit to Artman with my parents was unique. It demonstrated the extent to which compassion and care are a hallmark of Liberty’s family of services.

As we traveled to the community, my mother experienced a minor seizure. After a few minutes she recovered and my parents insisted we continue the journey.

When we arrived we explained what happened. Although she wasn’t a resident, the caregivers immediately met and examined her to see if there were any obvious signs of distress that needed to be addressed.

This experience left a lasting impression on me. It was a demonstration of the kind of caring support my parents would receive on a daily basis. They were both quickly won over by everything and everyone.

The care my parents received was a blessing. Following my mother’s passing, my father received a tremendous amount of support. He really enjoyed being at Artman. When I think back, I can’t help smiling at some of my father’s experiences.

One of his favorite activities was bingo. At Artman the residents played for a quarter during each game. He must have been very good or very lucky, because there would be times I’d visit him or pick him up and he would have a large plastic bag full of quarters. He’d always have a smile on his face and tell me to pass the bag along to my daughter for the college laundry.

There was always plenty for Dad to do in the community and during their community outings. To this day I still have pictures of him during a trip to the shore, and another of him feeding a baby bird. These photos were taken for family members by Artman’s staff, which to me demonstrates the care and consideration they extend to everyone.

Later, during his final days, Dad was placed on hospice. Staff and residents alike would stream in to visit him. You could tell they cared. Most importantly, the comfort and dignity he received from Liberty Hospice was moving.

I give to Liberty because I know the impact its family of services makes – not just for residents, clients, and members, but for the families who place their trust in our communities.
At Liberty Lutheran, our purpose is to faithfully accompany and empower individuals and families by honoring choices and promoting well-being. This is not simply limited by the programs and services we offer. It is carried out in the daily celebration of those we serve.

For me, the importance of our mission to faithfully walk with others during their life journeys is reinforced when I have the opportunity to learn about an individual’s personal history. Having the chance to learn more about someone’s life is always rewarding. It provides a sense of fulfillment in our purpose.

What’s more, I find, is that when someone takes the time to give you a look into their life, it is done out of a connection and a bond of trust. They know that you care and are interested in them. That is the type of caring spirit we maintain, and it is the same spirit that you continue to demonstrate through the faith you place in our family of services.

Within this issue, we reflect on and celebrate the histories of some of our residents, members, and program participants. Their stories are examples that highlight the rich experiences of the more than 10,000 older adults that rely on Liberty, and they further demonstrate the value of your support.

You’ll read some truly extraordinary stories that inspire and serve as a reminder of the contributions made by the people we serve. I hope that you will find reading them just as rewarding as I have.

You make it possible for us to offer options that meet the needs of older adults living in all stages of retirement. From the vibrancy of independent living to compassionate care and bereavement ministries, the stories we present to you provide a glimpse into the lives of those you help on a daily basis.

We are committed to offering programs that heal, inspire, and invigorate the mind, body, and spirit. We are honored to share the experiences of just a few of the individuals who enjoy fulfilling lives thanks to the generosity you continue to extend to our mission and purpose. Thank you for everything you do to support Liberty Lutheran.

Luanne B. Fisher, PhD
President and CEO, Liberty Lutheran
Marion, a 102-year-old resident at Paul’s Run is still living life to the fullest. Her positive outlook on life is what drives her creativity and ability to write inspiring poems, many of which she can still recite by memory. She frequently enjoys sharing her writings with neighbors and staff. Her story, which was recently featured on the local news, is as rich as her poetry.

Growing up in Philadelphia, Marion took pride in helping others. “My mother always told me that when you help people, you will receive a blessing from God,” she said. “I used to always help the elderly, the sick, and the poor. I’d come home and say to my mother, ’I was blessed today.’”

As one of five children, Marion worked in her father’s bakery. It was there that she first met her husband, Benjamin. “I remember seeing him and saying, ’My, he’s handsome.’” she recalled. “He was a customer and we had been talking for some time. After we had been dating for a while, he asked me to marry him. We decided to elope, but he insisted I tell my mother, which I did.”

Marion and Benjamin would later open a five and dime store in the Academy Gardens neighborhood of Northeast Philadelphia. With a lot of hard work the business grew, allowing the couple to purchase a home to raise their children in.

“When my children were born, I decided to leave the business to my husband. I loved being a mother. There’s not one thing I’d change,” Marion said. “My husband was always very supportive. He told me that I needed to take time for myself, so I joined an art group. That’s where I really mastered painting and writing poetry.”

Today, the walls of Marion’s apartment are adorned with her own beautiful pastel works. She continues to write poems, many of which are inspired by her time at Paul’s Run.

“I am very lucky to live here, and to be surrounded by wonderful people,” Marion shared. “When I think about my mother telling me I’d be blessed by helping people, I think about where I am now. I’m 102, I’m independent, and I live in a wonderful community. I am blessed.”
Originally from the UK, Nellie Sharples’ eyes shined as she recounted her days in the Royal Army’s 498 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment during The Second World War. The memories that came flooding back to the 94-year-old Artman resident were a mix of sweet and bitter; from meeting her husband to seeing friends gravely wounded. Nellie’s journey is a testament to the Greatest Generation’s resilience and determination.

At 17 ½, Nellie voluntarily enlisted in the war effort. “I didn’t want to be drafted. I thought if I joined, I could go wherever I chose,” Nellie laughed. “But they tore my papers up and said I had no choice!”

Assigned to the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the women’s branch of the British Army, she trained on anti-aircraft guns as a Predictor Operator. “I looked through the scope of the big guns to locate the planes and line up the shots as they bombed England,” recalled Nellie.

For four-and-a-half years, Nellie’s squad traversed the country; packing and reassembling as fast as possible to serve as protection from the air raids. “We were mobile; we had to go wherever they were bombing,” said Nellie. “At night, we would have shrapnel fall all around us.” One night, as she took her position, the young woman on the anti-aircraft gun next to her was wounded as shrapnel tore through the compound. “She didn’t make it,” Nellie recounted sadly.

Despite the adversities, Nellie managed to find joy. She met her future husband, Harry, at the movies while they were both on leave. They tried to write regularly, but the young couple eventually lost touch. Luck and love would win out as she was assigned to assist with delivering mail, Nellie spotted Harry’s name on an envelope. She took a chance and wrote to him, rekindling their young romance.

At the end of the war, food was rationed and the country was short on basic necessities. So Harry and Nellie moved to Philadelphia to be close to Harry’s sister and brother-in-law. After being in the U.S. for four years, they became citizens and raised their family in the Greater Philadelphia region.

Ten months ago, Nellie moved to Artman; another step in her remarkable journey. “I never thought I had an amazing story,” said Nellie. “It was just the way it was.”
At Liberty

At Liberty Lutheran and the community recently lost a dear friend who leaves behind a legacy of service. On July 24th, The Reverend Dr. Thomas Edward Kadel passed at the age of 70 following a battle with glioblastoma. During his final weeks, he was under the care of Liberty Hospice, whose staff walked with Tom and his family during his end of life journey.

In the early and mid-1990s, he served as the chair of Artman’s Board of Directors. He was renowned for his selfless and giving spirit and was actively involved in his community and several organizations that provided vital services to vulnerable communities.

In an effort to strengthen Artman’s benevolent care fund, which helps residents who have outlived their financial resources, Tom helped start the annual Artman Golf Outing, which has been one of Artman’s largest events since the inaugural outing in 1985.

In addition to his dedication to Artman, Tom served with a variety of community organizations including as the creator and director of the Spiritual Care Team for Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern Pennsylvania (LDR-EPA). Under his leadership the Spiritual Care Team worked with congregational leaders in areas affected by disasters, such as helping people affected by major ice storms that hit Southeastern Pennsylvania in 2014 and working with congregations in Houston that were affected by 2017’s Hurricane Harvey.

“To me, Tom Kadel was a light in the darkness. One who shared the light and life of God’s love in presence, action, and dreams—one on one and for the sake of the whole world,” said The Reverend Dr. Jennifer Ollikainen, who worked with Tom during his time with LDR-EPA. “He was always a pastoral presence to me no matter what big natural disaster was going on. He was a disaster chaplain not just for the big stuff, but for little personal disasters, too. I will miss Tom’s seemingly endless compassion.”

We consider ourselves so fortunate to serve people like Tom and his family. During Tom’s time with Liberty Hospice his wife, Lois, shared, “I am overwhelmed by the tender care being extended to Tom, me and our family.”
Dick Kustin has always been known for his hard work. At 95-years-old, he remains actively engaged with almost all of the activities at The Village at Penn State, while also serving as the president of the community's Tailback Club, a club for fans of Penn State's athletic programs.

“The Tailback Club takes a lot of coordinating. It keeps me busy and I enjoy it,” Dick shared. “We get speakers from the football team, including the head coach and players. We also get speakers from the other athletic programs. It’s great introducing residents to people who are well-known and admired.”

The club isn’t Dick’s first experience where hard work paid off by introducing him to some famous figures. Following his graduation from Penn State with a degree in electrical engineering, he joined a construction company.

“While working for the construction company, I was able to meet a man who was bidding on a major project, the 1950 Boy Scout Jamboree in Valley Forge,” Dick said. “He asked me if I would manage the installation of the lighting for the entire event. I quickly accepted the opportunity, and since I was a former scout, they asked that I wear my uniform while working.”

It wasn’t long before Dick had an experience meant for the history books. “On my second day I was managing the project, and a big car pulled up. A man got out and started talking to me about the work I was doing,” Dick recalled. “He asked me if I was in charge, and I told him that I was. He said ‘good’ and then he called over two more cars. The first pulled up and out stepped President Truman, and from the second car, out stepped General Eisenhower. So there I was, in my Boy Scout uniform, serving as the unofficial spokesperson for the jamboree, telling them about everything that was going on.”

For Dick, retirement is just another avenue to pursue what he loves and discovering new opportunities. “You never know what you’ll be lucky enough to experience. You just have to make things happen,” Dick shared. “I really appreciate being at The Village, and everything it has to offer. There’s no competition when it comes to this community. They make retirement enjoyable because of everything going on, and everything we’re able to do ourselves.”
Rachel and Art Pottash always believed in the prominence of love and family. When they moved into The Hearth at Drexel in June, they were concerned they would miss a very important family event, the wedding of their grandson Asaf in Israel later that month, partly because of Rachel’s health. However, thanks to modern technology, they had front row seats while never leaving The Hearth. As the couple sat together and watched their grandson get married, they couldn’t help but reflect on their own loving relationship.

When the couple first met in 1968, Rachel was working at a summer camp and Art was a traveling salesman. They were introduced through a network of friends and family. While Art received her phone number in August, he didn’t end up calling Rachel to make an official date until December. However it didn’t take long for a bond to form.

With both having two children from previous marriages, creating family bonds from the start was of the utmost importance. Their first date was to support a friend who was directing a local play. “Our oldest two kids went on our first date with us,” recalled Rachel. “And then all four kids went on our honeymoon to the Catskills as well.” As each child grew older and moved across the globe, each member of the family remained close with one another through frequent phone calls and visits when possible.

Boosting over 30 trips to Israel since they were married in 1971, Rachel and Art had attended every family celebration, including weddings, birthdays, bar/bat mitzvahs. Asaf’s wedding would be the second they would not be able to see in person. “Not being there was tough,” said Art. “Rachel had a stroke last summer, so we couldn’t make the journey.”

Fortunately, Art knew of a company that could livestream the wedding from Gavna, a suburb of Jerusalem, directly to their new home. The staff at The Hearth arranged a celebration space for the festivities while Art worked on the guest list. “We started with 20 close friends and ended up with 40 guests,” said Art. “Although we only lived at The Hearth for three weeks, we had already made friends and invited them as well!”

The day of the wedding, the livestream was flawless as the family and their new friends watched. “It was wonderful to see everything happen,” said Rachel. “We heard every word, we heard the music, the prayers, everything.”

Art reflected on how the growth of technology has changed the world. “In the past, you would leave your family behind in Russia, Israel, England, and never see them again. Now you can attend a wedding halfway around the world!” said Art.
The history of West Philadelphia is as diverse as the population that has lived there. From the first wave of Irish immigrants in the early 19th century, to the building boom of the 1930s, the challenges of the 1970s and 80s, and the current revitalization of the area, the close-knit neighborhood has seen its share of change. For more than 10 years now, The West Philadelphia Senior Community Center (WPSCC) has been a proud part of the renewal of the surrounding neighborhood.

WPSCC member Calla Lily Cousar, age 89, moved into the neighborhood in 1948 with her mother and eight siblings. Through the decades, she witnessed the ever shifting nature of her community. “During the 1950s, the population in West Philadelphia was professionals, lawyers, school teachers, and business owners,” said Calla. “We didn’t have to leave the area to go downtown because there were enough stores here from 40th Street and Girard Avenue.”

Upon marrying her late husband, Robert, in 1959, the couple moved to various apartments within West Philadelphia. In 1964, they bought the home across the street from her mother. There they raised three children and provided care and comfort for over 125 foster children. “Even as the neighborhood changed, I never thought of leaving West Philadelphia because it was our home,” Calla shared. “I raised my children here; they went to school here.”

Calla, who lives just down the block from the WPSCC, became a member when it first opened in 2006. Now 12 years later, she recognizes the positive effect it has had on the community. “Before the Center, most seniors had to be bussed or take a trolley to their senior center, which could be miles away in other neighborhoods,” Calla remembered. “When this opened, the older generation finally had a place to call their own.”

Today, Calla has faith in the future of West Philadelphia, with the West Philadelphia Senior Community Center being just one shining beacon of hope and prosperity. “Between the many nutrition workshops, cooking demonstrations, grief sessions and other wellness classes, the Center puts us one step closer to helping the community,” Calla said.

If you are interested in supporting the West Philadelphia Senior Community Center and everything they do for seniors, please visit www.LibertyLutheranDonateNow.org.
Pat and Joe were making one of the most important decisions of their lives. Where should they spend their retirement?

Before retiring, Joe worked as a senior partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, where he thrived on board room interactions. Throughout his career, he enjoyed helping companies achieve success. Working in hotel management and hospitality, Pat flourished while making travelers staying at her establishments feel good while away from home.

The couple also enjoyed vacations that took them away from their hectic lifestyle. One favorite destination was Northern California wine country, where the couple relaxed with exquisite wine and food, and just the right touch of quirkiness.

Since moving to The Manor at York Town in May, they know they made the right choice for their active lifestyle.

They moved to Doylestown 13 years ago and transitioning to The Manor meant they could keep a close connection to everything they grew to love about Bucks County. “Being close to Doylestown, as well as our favorite restaurants and taverns, was a major factor for us in deciding to move here,” said Joe. “Add in the rural setting, with access to Warwick Park and that’s another bonus.”

Walking through the beautifully landscaped gardens brought reflection on the many advantages of living at The Manor. “We love the heated pool. There are so many planned activities, such as the recent group trip the Jersey Shore,” said Pat. “Being relatively new here, we are still discovering more about the community and all its activities.”

Even Pat and Joe’s family agree that moving to The Manor is the start of a wonderful retirement. “Our grandson put it all into perspective for us when he said, ‘It’s like living in a really nice hotel!’” said Pat. “With my experience in hospitality, it’s nice for things to come full circle and to be on the receiving end of such great service.”
The emotions that come with the loss of a spouse, a child, or any loved one can vary in range and intensity for each individual. No two people will ever grieve the same. Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS) offers hope and healing both in personal sessions and within our new online community.

For Maggie Julo and her husband Jack, their path through grief began with one of life’s most difficult experiences, the death of a child. In 2007, their son David passed away following a lengthy battle with Crohn’s disease. “After David’s death, our older son, Jack Jr., heard about Sylvia Havlish and the Journeys Through Grief program from a doctor he knew,” Maggie shared. “I called Sylvia and spoke at length about our loss.”

Together, Maggie, her husband Jack, and Jack Jr. attended the six week Journeys Through Grief program. “I kept questioning myself,” Maggie said. “I would ask myself, ‘What’s my job now?’ The sessions helped us to live again.”

Tragically, eighteen months later, Jack Jr. would succumb to a sudden massive coronary. Maggie once again found herself with questions she could not answer. Again she turned to Journeys Through Grief to find comfort and solace. “Holidays were the hardest without both of my boys,” she shares.

Maggie has now taken part in four Journeys Through Grief sessions. During the gatherings she acted as a mentor to the newer members. Soon, she found healing by helping others through their own bereavement journey. “The newly grieving are the most important to talk to because you share the same experience,” she said.

The Journeys Through Grief program has also helped Maggie realize that grief isn’t just about the loss of someone through death. “I heard so many other stories from people who were grieving for different reasons, such as divorce or kids distancing themselves from their parents. It helped me see that I was not alone,” said Maggie. “I am grateful that Sylvia, LCS and Journeys Through Grief were all there for my family.”

LCS’s is committed to being there for those in search of hope and solace. Our new Facebook group, Journeys Through Grief is an online resource with weekly bible verses, prayers, and coping tips for members to discuss. Members are encouraged to share their stories and interact, with each interaction being a valuable piece of self-expression and help for others.

If you or someone you know could benefit from the support of these offerings, join our group at Facebook.com/groups/journeysthroughgrief or visit LibertyLutheran.org/grief-recovery.
Reduce your 2018 taxes
Consider a gift from...

Gifts must be transferred directly to Liberty Lutheran.

For more information, contact Patty Cline by phone, 267-464-7720, or by email pcline@libertylutheran.org