

GRACE HOME NEWS

JUNE 2017

THE PURPOSE OF A CHRISTIAN HOME



What if you grew up in a Christian atmosphere with no television or radio, but once you were elderly and getting confused you were placed in a facility where bad language was common and no one was familiar with your lifestyle. You would lay in bed at night and your roommate would have the television on loud to some vulgar channel. Due to your dementia, you would get anxious and start acting out. The nurses wouldn't understand what was causing you to act out so they would medicate you. The medication would cause you to become a fall risk so you would be placed in the hallway for monitoring. Being in the hallway would cause more agitation because you wouldn't understand who all these people were and you would want to get home so you would try to get up. The nurses wouldn't want the paperwork from falls so they would medicate you further to keep you from wanting to get up which causes you to sleep most of the time. You would never get to hear Mennonite singing and most familiar things would be far removed. Thus the end of your life would be filled with anxiety and fear.

So... are we doing our best to keep our facility a Christian home? Are we loving our grandpas and grandmas, uncles and aunts as much as we should? Do we provide them with all the love that God would give us for them? Or are they just discarded humans who have nothing left to give to humanity? Is it just our duty to care for them?

SURVEY 2017

June 5, after 3 months of wondering if today was the day, state surveyors walked in the door. A man and a lady spent their next four days going through charts, talking to elders, watching the kitchen, and talking to staff, before announcing in a meeting before they left that Grace Home has zero deficiencies. There was much applause as everyone breathed a sigh of relief.



GRACE HOME GIFT DAY

A good crowd and a good day! Lots of baked goods and meal tickets.

The auction went well and the fish fryer blew up!

John Schmidt's memory was honored by Justin & Adam running the tractor ride- that was a good thing and it brought some poignant memories!

Great cinnamon rolls at breakfast- and I heard Bonnie Toews went to town making all sorts of baked cookies etc...

Nichols' made ice-cream that was "almost good" but the complaint department was rather intimidating to say the least! (Actually the ice-cream was really good- but don't say I said so!)

It appeared the Activities Booth was a smashing success from all the children around it all day long- maybe I should say a balloon busting success! I heard children talking about breaking balloons- sure sounded like they had fun.

The committee really put a lot of effort into making the day into a perfect event – my hats off to them!

All in all, I enjoyed the day and was thankful to see more than \$42k was raised at the Saturday event!

-Ron Koehn



"AND THE KING SHALL ANSWER AND SAY UNTO THEM, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME." -MATTHEW 25:40

HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES

- An elder who asks to help instead of demanding help.
- One who rises on unsteady feet to help another who cannot stand.
- One whose face lights up as you enter the room, whose mind has far fled the scene.
- One whose arms reach out to hug you as you walk by.
- One who says they are praying for you in the midst of their own battles.
- One who loves you even though you have been a little short with them.

These are a few of the highlights given to us from the elderly.



A few of the highlights on the calendar from April through June:

- Kindergarten parade
- The train set that was donated to Grace Home
- Ice cream social
- Watermelon feast
- S'mores around the fire pit
- A pet show
- Foot massages
- Orange Julius social
- Book club
- And always the dessert social!

DEMENTIA

Glen Campbell has been a major thought pattern in my mind since Activity Director class. We were shown a video of this singer performing the last song he ever recorded. This song has been a huge inspiration to me as I try to learn each resident. The words to his song are:

"I'm still here but yet I'm gone. I don't play guitar or sing my songs. They never defined who I am. The man that loves you till the end. You're the last person I will love. You're the last face I will recall, but best of all, I'm not gonna miss you. Not gonna miss you. I'm never gonna hold you like I did, or say I love you to the kids. You're never gonna see it in my eyes. It's not gonna hurt me when you cry. I'm never gonna know what you go through. All the things I say or do. All the hurt and all the pain. One thing selfishly remains. I'm not gonna miss you. I'm not gonna miss you."

This song was recorded about two years after Glen had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He was in a care facility when it was recorded for his wife and children. Julian Raymond wrote this song from things that Glen had told him. Glen wanted his wife and children to know that he would be fine and that they didn't need to worry. He wanted them to know that he realized this disease was taking his brain, but it would not hurt him. It would be his friends and family who suffered. Glen's daughter, Ashley, wrote a song in reply called "I'll Do the Remembering". The words to her song are:

"Four years old, running up the stairs to your bed. Thunder rolls and I pull the covers over my head. You say it's just a storm. Enjoy the show. You take me to the window, show me that it's beautiful. Never had to ask you to sing for me. It's just the way to put me at ease. Bone for bone, we are the same. Bones get tired and they can't carry all the weight. We can talk until you can't even remember my name. Daddy, don't you worry. I'll do the remembering. Daddy, don't you worry. I'll do the remembering. First guitar and I just wasn't getting it right. You showed me how to play it, said it doesn't happen overnight. And in a couple years, I come home and show you how I play "Blackbird". And though I miss a couple notes you still say that it was the best you've ever heard. Never had to ask you to smile for me. It's just the way you put me at ease. Bone for bone we are the same. Bones get tired and they can't carry all the weight. We can talk until you can't even remember my name. Daddy, don't you worry. I'll do the remembering. Daddy, don't you worry. I'll do the remembering. Now I have to ask you to sing for me. And I have to show you the words to sing. You're standing right in front of me and slipping away. Bone for bone we are the same. Bones get tired and they can't carry all the weight. We can talk until you can't even remember my name. Daddy, don't you worry. I'll do the remembering. Daddy, don't you worry. I'll do the remembering."

Ashley went with her father on his final tour. She played the banjo and guided him back on track whenever his brain let him down. The inspiring part of this story is that even though he is in the end stages of this disease and in a long term facility in Nashville, Glen's family still comes to see him every chance they get. They helped him with his passion for music until it was not at all possible for him to sing anymore. Then they sang for him.

The focus of this article is not Glen or Ashley Campbell. The focus is that it doesn't matter who you are or what your rank in life is, you nor your family is immune to dementia. Many of you have family with dementia. This disease is not the person. The person is still there but in pieces. It is up to us to find those pieces and connect with them. My grandma has had dementia for years but she still remembers the time she spent in Mexico even though she can't remember my dad's name. No one has to go through the pain alone. Let's all help each other with the pieces and give as much love as we can.

-Laura Koehn

FROM THE DESK OF JOHN ENSZ, DON

One of the defining characteristics that sets Grace Home apart is the quality of the Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) that care for our elders. I have been told repeatedly by family members of elders, by hospice nurses that visit, by consultants that assist us, by physicians who care for our elders, and by state surveyors who visit yearly in the recertifying process that the CNAs at Grace take care of these elders as if they were their own parents or grandparents.

Recently we hired a new social services director (who just happens to be my wife). She has a history of working in long-term care, spending nine years at the Moundridge Manor as a CNA, and then a LPN. She knows a good CNA when she sees one, and the first week of her employment at Grace she asked me, "Do you have any idea of the caliber of CNAs that you have working for you?" I answered that I did, but on reflection, I think I too often take them for granted. They just quietly go about their business, providing needed care to our elders, keeping them clean, well fed, and dressed appropriately.

However, the assistance they provided our elders with grooming and activities of daily living come second to the emotional and spiritual connection they make with our elders. From hugs to sitting quietly holding a hand, to praying with a dying elder, they provide an emotional connection that enriches the lives of our elders, their families, and themselves.

Grace Home practices what is known in long term care as "consistent assignments". This simply means that the same CNA takes care of the same elder day after day. The elders are divided into groups and one CNA takes care of the same group every day he or she comes to work. A few CNAs are "floaters" who fill in for the ones who have a day off. The elders can count on seeing the same person every day taking care of them.

Grace Home has been a leader in this, starting this practice almost twenty-five years ago. I believe Robert Isaac was an early proponent of this and his leadership on this issue set the stage for where we are today. Most nursing homes in the USA have only begun adopting this idea within the last decade. There are many who are still in the process of transitioning to this mode of scheduling.

An elder living with dementia, who's short term memory is very limited, can often recognize a caregiver if the same person enters their room every day. The elder without dementia, builds a rapport with their CNA and over time they become care partners not just care givers. They often become like family, interested in what is happening in each other's lives, encouraging each other when life becomes difficult, or one or the other is having a bad day. The strength of this bond is always evident when a CNA goes on vacation and the elder counts the days till they return.

The licensed nurses, and myself, rely heavily on the input of the CNAs. They know their elders so well, that subtle changes are immediately picked up on and reported to the nursing staff. I have learned, over time, to never ignore a report from a CNA about one of their elder's having a change in mood, or the statement that so and so is "just not right today, something is wrong".

I stand in awe of these individuals. Their job is demanding and very physical. Yet it seems they effortlessly perform the many tasks of the day, using the lifts, giving bed baths, giving tub baths or showers, assisting an elder with eating, with toileting, or cleaning up messes that could turn the strongest of stomachs. They do all of this and so much more, seldom complaining, but tirelessly advocating for their elders who they consider their family.

Probably the greatest "downside" to building these types of relationships in this setting is that, inevitably, it comes to an end. Our mission and calling at Grace Home also involves end-of-life care. Our elders come to us because they are ageing or dealing with disease processes that require more care than can be provided at home. The majority of them, at some point, are called home, and we have to say goodbye. In no way do I want to minimize the grief felt by the relatives of our elders, but I recognize the deep grief that often follows the loss of an elder that a CNA has become close to. They do their best to "move on" and continue their calling with a new elder that joins us, but too often I believe we do not acknowledge the loss and grief felt by the staff at Grace Home when one of our own dies.

One way we have addressed this is to not hide the fact that an elder has passed away. Rather, we acknowledge this openly, and the entire working staff and any residents who are able, gather in the hallway to say a last goodbye as the elder is wheeled out by the mortuary staff. Often tears fall freely as we say goodbye to this person we have come to love so deeply. This grief, often hidden in the hearts of our CNAs, speaks to me of the commitment to care and the unconditional love shown to the elders by these caregivers.

Our nation recognizes the gifts given to humanity by these unsung heroes. Every year in June, a day is set aside as National Nursing Assistants Day followed by National Nursing Assistants Week. This year it was June 9-16. The board of directors and the management of Grace Home recognize this with different activities through the week, but in reality, there is no way we can adequately provide them with the honor, thanks and respect they deserve.

If you are a CNA, I salute you for your commitment to the frailest among us. If you know a CNA, take the time to thank them for the incredible way they are doing a very difficult job. If you feel the calling in your heart to this work, contact us and we can give you information about CNA classes in the community.

I found the following poem and submit it here as a tribute to the AMAZING CNAs of Grace Home:

Who are you to refer to us as only a CNA?

We're the ones who wash and dress our elders for the day.

We're the ones who take the time to listen to them speak,

We listen 'bout their lifetime in a forty hour week.

We also give our hands to hold when someone's feeling scared.

It's not easy being an elder, you're never quite prepared,

We take the time to listen by lending both our ears,

We listen to their worries, or how they've spent their years.

Our arms were made to reach and even wrap around,

To give our elders hugs, when they are feeling down.

We help our elders do the things they used to do alone,

To comb their hair and dress them in the way that they were known.

So....

Who are you to refer to us as "only a CNA"?

We do our best to meet their needs within our working day.

We CHOSE to do this job, the job did not choose us.

We sympathize and empathize, compassion is a must.

We try to keep them comfortable and free of any fear,

We sit along beside them when "that time" is near.

We hold their hand, stroke their hair, just making sure they know,

They're not alone: "I am here, it's OK for you to go."

To all the CNAs: keep your head held high!

You're not only CNAs, you're angels in disguise.

Author Unknown

-John Enszt

LOSING MY FREEDOM

All my life, I have loved my family and taken care of them. Now my children tell me I need to go to Grace Home. I don't want to leave this farm that holds so many memories of my children as they grew up and learned to live. After they married and had their houses, the grandchildren came over and made more memories. And my husband, now that he is gone, these memories are all I have left. And I must leave. My heart breaks at the thought. I refuse to go. My children let it rest for the time and a couple weeks later as I am heading to the kitchen to get some lunch, I trip over my cat that has been keeping me company. What an awful feeling as I hit the floor. And such pain. I lay there for several hours before my son comes by to check up on me.

Fast-forward a couple days and I am ready to be released from the hospital. My children are all around my bed and they have worried looks on their faces. "Mom, it's time for you to go to Grace Home." Tears stream down my face. I know they are right, but it's so hard to let go of all that I have ever known. They tell me they will come visit every day, but I know better. They will be too busy with their own lives. Finally, I give in. They tell me that they have been talking to the administrator and that Grace Home has an opening. We are heading there now. Tears fall quickly as I realize that I will never sleep in my own bed again. The one where I have spent so many nights praying out to my Almighty Father. I will never again open the window in the morning and let the smell of the blossoms permeate my house. I will never again cook a meal for company or make my children's favorite dishes. I will never again walk by the pond and watch the children fish or swim. I will never again awake in the morning knowing that I have a full list of things to do today. I will never again have the solitude of my house.

During my rambling thoughts, we arrive at Grace Home. We enter in and before the door even shuts behind us, the questions begin. Is someone counting them? Are we at 500 questions or 1,000 by now? My mind is weary. Someone asks me if I would like to see my room. I'm scared to answer. What will it be like? They take me down the hall and into a room. The walls are a pretty color but it's so dark. I cry out to God. Why do I have to live in this little hole? No sunshine can reach my bed. I must share a room with two other ladies and through no fault of their own, they are noisy. And where am I to put my clothes? There isn't room even for a dresser! I want my lamp to go on my night stand but my nightstand isn't even by my bed! There is no room! And even if there was room, there are no plug-ins that I can use. Well! I will just try to smile and stuff everything in my closet. But wait? Where is my closet? My heart sinks a little further as I realize there is no space to store anything in the closet either! Only my clothes and very few of them even! I want to climb in bed and pull the pillow over my head before the tears start again. But no! Here comes another person with another hour of questions. That says nothing of all the curious faces peeking in to see who the new elder is. I hear someone down the hall talking loudly on the phone about a new elder. Is there no privacy here? It is late and my children must go. I only want to cry, but my nurse tells me I need to eat so I make my way to the dining room. I stand at the door as I try to figure out how this all works. Where do I sit? Everyone is busy talking to their by-sitter as I fight back tears. Later on that evening, I am about to get ready for bed. My CNA comes in and asks me if I am ready for my bath. Ah! That would feel so good and at least then I would have some privacy. Some time to think alone. She shows me where the tub room is and I wait for her to leave. She starts helping me undress and I look at her with a shocked expression on my face. I tell her I can do it by myself so she steps back. I wait again for her to leave. She asks me if something is the matter. I tell her no. I'm just waiting for her to leave. She gives me a sad smile and tells me she can't leave. She is required to stay with an elder until they are through with their bath. My face blazes with embarrassment. She has made the point clear. I must completely undress in front of her. Never before have I been so humiliated! The bath over, I slide into bed. I close my eyes, too exhausted for the good cry that I so badly needed, only to be awakened a little while later. The light flips on and the elder on the other side of the room moans as the CNAs do their rounds. They peek in on me. I want to holler at them to go away, but I just smile and close my eyes. The other elders are noisy all night long. In the morning, I am just about as tired as I was before I went to bed. The day progresses with more questions and lots of introductions. I make one friend and she shows me around during my meals and activities. I make my way to the door to enjoy the sunshine but a nurse stops me and tells me someone has to go with me. One more bar has been added to my prison! One of the other residents in my room gets visitors and I must hear what they talk about. I feel like I am eavesdropping, but there is no way to block out their conversation as they are only about 3 feet from me. The visitors stay late into the night before I realize that the one they are visiting is dying. The nurses are in and out all the time. The visitors are sitting around her bed. There are so many of them, I have to ask several of them to move so I can get to the restroom. Same thing for getting to my bed. In a few minutes, the nurses come in and move my bed out to the hall so there is room for all the family that has come to be with their mother while she is dying. So there I am, in a strange place, stuck in a hall because the rooms are too small to contain even three residents without any visitors. To be truthful, I am scared! There is a man wandering out of his room. He sees me and starts making his way to me. There are no workers in sight. I pray for safety but no one comes. At last a nurse comes out of a room and sees the wanderer. She leads him back to his room and again all is quiet. I have never wished so much to be dead. Just last week, I had my own house and now I only have two days' worth of clothes. I cry out once again for God to help me bear this! After a while, sweet sleep comes to my rescue. The next morning dawned and with it another day of challenges.

Time continued on, and soon, I had been here a month. I got used to some of the changes and made friends. There were still challenges but I learned to love it in a way. It became my new home and the elders and staff, my family. My true family didn't visit as much as they said they would but some of the loneliness was filled with activity and friendships. I found my little mission of helping others and it kept my heart satisfied while I leaned on God to help me on.

-Laura Koehn

