

Friend to Friend Newsletter

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL OF GREATER SEATTLE

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Director's Notes

Life is about relationships. If you're like me, you know a lot of people and likely they are going away, one by one.

My husband Tom, died 3 months ago, on Christmas Day. He had just turned 57. Three years ago, he was diagnosed with early-onset dementia by a neurologist whom he was referred to by Dr Bob Thompson at Valley Medical Center. Tom and Bob grew up together and Bob was the Best Man at our wedding. Whew, where did the time go and how is any of this possible? It seems like overnight we aged 30+ years.

Vera Harper was the Activity Director at Midway Manor when Friend to Friend began in 1974. This was a lady who cared deeply for her residents! My dad, Joe Rust who is considered Founder of Friend to Friend, also felt blessed to know her. She got him to visit one of her residents! Leaders are people who don't need to yell, command respect or attention, they are people to emulate, who do for others quietly and don't seek praise for their work. God bless Activity Directors like Vera, for they are treasures. Vera was a leader and in fact, up until she died in March '10, she was active on the Advisory Board of Friend to Friend, still looking for the benefits to residents throughout the Puget Sound area. Vera held other leadership positions in Des Moines and will be sorely missed. At her funeral, Barbara Vance of Kiwanis stood up (after many others) and quipped, "I haven't heard anyone mention Vera's prowess on the computer." (not!) We can imagine Vera laughing too as she looked down on the full Marcus Whitman Church and all those celebrating her life – knowing full well she doesn't have to be user-friendly to any more computers.

In closing, three things I've learned:
People who get early-onset dementia have faster metabolisms than folks 65 and older, which means their disease will likely progress faster and their life span is shorter.

With age comes wisdom. Look up wisdom in your Bible rather than taking it from Larry the Cable Guy (i.e. How many of you believe in psycho-kinesis? Raise my hand.)

We will not be remembered by our words, but by our kind deeds.

Marilyn Soderquist
Program Director



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Caregiver of the Month

Got a story that would win one of our caregivers the Caregiver of the Month award? Let us know so we can vote on them.



A four-year-old child, whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman, who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old Gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy just said, 'Nothing, I just Helped him cry.'



Chaplain's Corner

Prayer



As a chaplain I have had many opportunities to visit residents in various institutions - hospitals, nursing homes, retirement facilities, rehab centers, and so forth. During these visits I have observed lay-people and pastors who are visiting folks in these facilities as well, and I would like to make an observation concerning the approach to prayer with/for the resident.

Prayer is a wonderful thing - God intercedes for us (Rom. 8:54; et al) as we intercede for others in good times or crisis. And this is an important part of our calling as men and women of Christ.

And that brings me to the approach to prayer. First, know the faith group of your friend; ask them about their faith background - you may discover they have none. They may be offended if you start praying for them only to find that they are, for example, Buddhists, while you are Pentecostal. I've seen this happen and it may lead to hard feelings which could have been avoided.

Second, don't get wrapped up in denominations, but at the same time, don't be afraid to pray for and with your friend with the first observation in mind.

Incorporate those things that were of concern to them during your conversations while not using "fancy" words that you read in your Bible. Terms such as thee and thou can be confusing, so use them sparingly.

Third, and with respect to the above, always take it to your "prayer closet" (Matt. 6:6). Pray for them all the time regardless of whether they're Baptist or atheist. The Lord is always ready to hear your petitions for the welfare of others.

Fourth, don't attack them with *your* faith and/or the Bible. This may sound odd, but I watched in horror some years ago when an over zealous lay-person "grabbed" a patient and loudly stated "in God's name you are healed!" I know they meant well, but they scared the heck out of that person. It took some time to settle them down and the lay-person was asked not to return by the hospital staff.

These are just some guidelines and not exhaustive by any means. Use common sense and be cognizant of their feelings. I'm not being judgmental, just asking all of us to be careful - we're visiting these wonderful people to be their friend for which they are happy and honored.

God bless you all for what you do and for your compassion to others.

Pastor Mike
Chaplain, Friend-to-Friend Board

VISITING RESIDENTS WITH A HEARING LOSS

By Michael A. Bower, BA, ACC

Oh, Oh! You just got your Friend to Friend assignment and the person is hard of hearing.

How do you visit with a person who can't hear? How do you know if he understands you? What can you talk about? These are all legitimate questions. It is estimated that more than 50% of those living in care facilities have a hearing loss, so being assigned to a resident with a hearing impairment is not a remote possibility, but very likely. The following article contains suggestions to help you to communicate better and have successful visits with people who have a hearing loss.

First, it is essential to remember that your resident is a person first and hearing impaired second. Many people skip the important step of asking a resident what to do to help him to hear. Just the act of asking reassures the person that you are someone who cares about him as a person and really want to make a connection. Once he has given you suggestions, follow them. Give him permission to remind you if you forget - and you will. It takes time to establish good communication habits.

Even if the person can't or won't give you any cues, there are some basic rules for improving communication that should be followed.

-Always have light on you face. Most people "speech read" more than they realize; they need to be able to see your face clearly; always face the resident when you are talking to him.

-Make sure the person is aware of your presence – stand where she can see you, touch lightly, gain eye contact.

-If the resident has hearing aids, make sure they are in and working during your visit. A non-working hearing aid is a great ear plug! Ask the staff for assistance, if needed.

-Ask the resident or staff if an assistive listening device (ALD) is in use. If it is, ask to use it. Familiarize yourself with the equipment; ask the resident to teach you how to use it, if appropriate. A common ALD is a personal amplifier or pocket talker. (I carry a pocket talker of my own for use with residents who have a hearing loss because it is such a great tool.)

-Eliminate background noise. Turn off the TV or radio during a room visit, or take the resident to a quiet area. Many people can function in quiet environments, but cannot hear when there are competing sounds.

-Eliminate "visual clutter." People with a hearing loss need to concentrate on the speaker. When there is a lot of distraction in the environment, it is difficult for them to focus.

-Speak a little slower, but don't exaggerate. Exaggeration creates distortion, and impairs speech reading.

(Part 1 of 2) Part 2 of this article will appear in the next Newsletter issue.



Get Involved!

There are thousands of residents in our Nursing Homes and Retirement Centers—why not give some of your time to them—we think it's worth it! Thirty minutes, a couple of times a month will do wonders in someone's life.

Call 1-888-FTF-7818



Contributors

Can't visit now? You CAN make a difference! Friend to Friend relies entirely on donations for its support. Send a donation or give at the office: Designate "Friend to Friend America" which is authorized to receive funds thru United Way (King County: #10364), Boeing (#A-104997), Combined Fund Drive and Combined Federal Campaigns. You must designate every year for your funds to be directed properly. It's the next best thing to visiting!



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