

**Wesleyan Homes**

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# THE WESLEYAN WINDOW



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Spring 2017

## Living in Community



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## Seeding a Heritage

Read the story about Wesleyan Homes resident

*Al Greeberg*

(pictured on the cover)

and his proposal to grow heritage trees at  
The Wesleyan at Estrella Independent Living.

[His story is featured in a new online blog:](#)

*Mission Moments.*

To read Al's story or others, visit  
<https://wesleyanhomes.wordpress.com/>  
and join us in sharing the mission of  
Wesleyan Homes.



# Building Community

By Dr. Dale Schultz, Chairperson, Wesleyan Homes Board of Trustees



**And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I will be there.**  
— Jesus

Matthew 18:20, *The Message*

Welcome to another Wesleyan Window!

In this issue, we give you a view inside Wesleyan Homes that helps you see how we build community through residents, family members, volunteers and staff.

Community: Shared relations that empower, deepen, and strengthen faith, life, and faithful living.

Jesus modeled authentic community. He connected with persons, creating relationships. He responded to human

need with compassion, expressing genuine care. His faith was show-and-tell as he walked the walk. Jesus taught his followers to grow beyond the intellectual teacher-student learning to actively help persons to be transformed through belief in God's gift of Life.

Wesleyan Homes learns from Jesus how to build authentic community. As you read these stories about how we do this, celebrate that your prayers and generous gifts help make our community thriving and vital.

Thank you for praying! Thank you for giving!

In Christ,  
Dale

## Who We Are

Located in beautiful, historic Georgetown Texas, Wesleyan Homes is a not-for-profit established by the Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church in 1962 to create a home for senior adults. Today, Wesleyan Homes is a continuum of care provider offering affordable Retirement Living, Assisted Living, Nursing Care, Memory Care, Rehabilitation, Home Health and Hospice. As a faith-based ministry, we seek to provide comfort and care for residents and their families in a place called home.

To subscribe to *The Wesleyan Window* or request additional copies, contact us at Wesleyan Development, P.O. Box 486, Georgetown, TX 78627-0487, or call (512) 868-1205.

### *The Wesleyan Window, Spring 2017*

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Cover Photo: Resident Al Greenberg points to one of the latest "heritage" seedlings to sprout a leaf at The Wesleyan at Estrella Independent Living. To read about how Mr. Greenberg proposed that the Wesleyan community grow trees from seed, visit <http://bit.ly/seedingarheritage>.

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## The Power of Community



Lunch is a time of laughter and friendship for Independent Living residents. (From left to right: Dena Hill, Martha Steele, staff member Shannon Sansom, Beverly Bendall, Mary Lee Florschuetz, and Esther Gooderl.)

Community comes from within. It can't be imported, delivered or purchased. It is something we create together. And, every community is unique because of the individuals who belong to it, the qualities they bring, the relationships they develop and the values that are shared. At Wesleyan Homes, one of the characteristics of our community is the spirit of concern and caring that comes from those who live and work here. It is not uncommon to hear residents describe one another and the staff as neighbors or family.

Perhaps no one is in a better position to observe the unique qualities of the Wesleyan community than the irreplaceable Michelle Munk, Life Enrichment Director at The Wesleyan at Estrella Independent Living. She brings a commitment to residents along with fun and energy and those qualities are catching. She is also an award-winner for creating a multi-faceted wellness program that has garnered national attention.

With obvious pride, Michelle stated, "Wellness is one of our core values and at least 80% of our residents enjoy taking part in our activities. We have four classes a day including balance, yoga, and chair aerobics and we have around sixty

people participating daily. That's important because these regular interactions contribute to a strong sense of community.

"From the first day residents arrive, the Welcome Committee does a great job in making them feel at home. We get to know new residents while they are on the waiting list and have a good idea of their interests before they move in. We work with the Welcome Committee to make sure that each new resident is matched with someone who shares something in common, can introduce them to others and sit with them in the dining room for the first day or two. That may seem like a little thing, but it makes a big difference.

"We have so many activities for residents to choose from – from eating out, going to theatre productions or concerts, shopping excursions or just a drive to see the bluebonnets in bloom. Whatever the destination, we are building community through shared experiences. But some of the best community building comes from casual conversations in the lobby or during a meal.

"With the new addition at The Wesleyan at Estrella Independent Living, we'll have even more common community

spaces to offer: an expanded fitness center, swimming pool, a café, crafts center and a large activity room that will hold all the residents for entertainment, lectures and special events. Recently, we had a theatrical performance directed by two women who moved here from Sun City where they were actresses in the local community theater. They are talented actresses and write and direct plays, too. Their recent performance was such a success that they took it ‘on the road’ and performed for the residents at Assisted Living, too.”

There is no better way to understand the sense of community than to share a meal with a group of Wesleyan Homes residents. One group of lively Independent Living ladies sits together at meals and consider one another great friends. Their ages – which they volunteered with pride – run from 72 to 93, but with their spirit, conversation and sense of humor, they seem decades younger! When asked what brought them together, they all had something to say: “We just gravitated together.” “This is a very caring bunch.” “We’re a happy table.” “We laugh and enjoy each other.” “Sometimes we laugh so loud that other tables look at us like we’re a little crazy. We like that!”

**“The most important thing about living here is that we care about and love each other.” – Anita Nelson**

Esther Gooderl said, “I don’t have to go out of my way to welcome other people. It just comes naturally. When I see someone new, I speak to them. And soon, we’re going to have a chance to meet so many new people when our new addition opens. We’ll be one building with twice as many residents. We’re so happy to have so many people who want to move in here. And there’s still a long waiting list to get in.

“When you look at someone in the eye and – even if you don’t say anything – you can tell that they are genuinely concerned about you. You can tell that by their body language and eye contact. Most everybody, when you see them in the hall or the lobby, says, ‘How are you today?’ I don’t know of anyone who lives here who doesn’t greet other people.”

Mary Lee Florschuetz shared, “I got into this group after my husband died and they’d been caring for me for eight and a half months while I was going back and forth to The Wesleyan at Scenic. They reached out to me because they knew I was having a rough time. It meant everything to me. It felt like I was surrounded by family. That’s when I knew I was part of a community.

“Any of us who are having struggles might get a card from half the people who live here. We all sign cards to help support people who are sick or grieving or struggling. In our worship time on Wednesday nights, we pray for whoever is sick or in the hospital. It’s a very caring place.”

Anita Nelson stated, “The most important thing about living here is that we care about and love each other. People say to me, ‘How do you like it there?’ And I say, ‘How would you like to be surrounded by 140 people who care about you?’ I don’t think there’s a person here who is not cared for. The other day someone stuck their head in the door of my room and said, ‘We prayed for you tonight.’ I’d been a little under the weather that day and somebody cared enough to tell the person who was leading the service about me. It’s that kind of caring that’s just so amazing and it continues day after day.”

Martha Steele spoke quietly, “I’m legally blind and so it wasn’t easy for me when I first moved in. When Beverly Bendall moved next door, my life changed.”

Esther added, “Beverly befriended Martha and got her to come down every day and get involved. Now she’s outgoing and visits with everybody.”

Beverly said, “If Martha needed anything, I was there. And I still am. Next week is her birthday so we’re all going out to Dos Salsas to celebrate. It’s the most popular Mexican restaurant in town so we’re going at four o’clock to make sure we can get a table!”

Dena Hill observed, “The staff treats us wonderfully. If we want anything, we can ask for it and they’ll do it. I’ve never had them refuse to do something that I asked for. For example, I can signal to Shannon by holding my cup up and I’ll get a new cup of coffee. It’s like magic.”

Shannon Samson came up to the table with a big smile. Clearly, he’s a favorite of the group. He was asked how he would describe the group and quickly replied, “They are a handful!” The ladies laughed loudly and agreed with him! Shannon started working with Wesleyan Homes at the old Retirement Home on University Avenue when he was 17 years old. Thirty-two years later he has not lost his love for the mission of Wesleyan Homes.

Dena recalled, “We almost lost him a few years ago. He had kidney failure and was in a coma for six days, so we decided to have a prayer vigil for him. The idea didn’t come from the

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administrators, but from us. We told people we were going to gather in the activities room in the afternoon and the word spread. That afternoon, the room was packed with residents and staff gathered to pray for Shannon. To me, that's the definition of community.

"His mother told us that she believed our prayers made a difference. Eventually he came out of the coma, recovered and came back to work. The first day that Shannon came back, he was standing by the front door and everybody stood up and clapped for him. He is loved by everybody."

Mary Lee says, "I give a lot of credit to the administrators who choose the people who work here. They just don't hire anybody. They find people with a caring heart. We care for them and they care for us. That's true at every level from the administrators to the kitchen staff and maintenance workers."

Dena surprised the group with a story. "One of the things I like best is the chance to get to know the staff members. We have a driver who has tattoos and must cover them up while he's at work. One day he drove me to the clinic at Temple and started explaining to me why he had tattoos and made me understand why they were meaningful to him. Up until then I didn't have a good feeling about tattoos, but he

changed my mind because he took the time to talk to me. He's a very sweet boy and I'm fond of him."

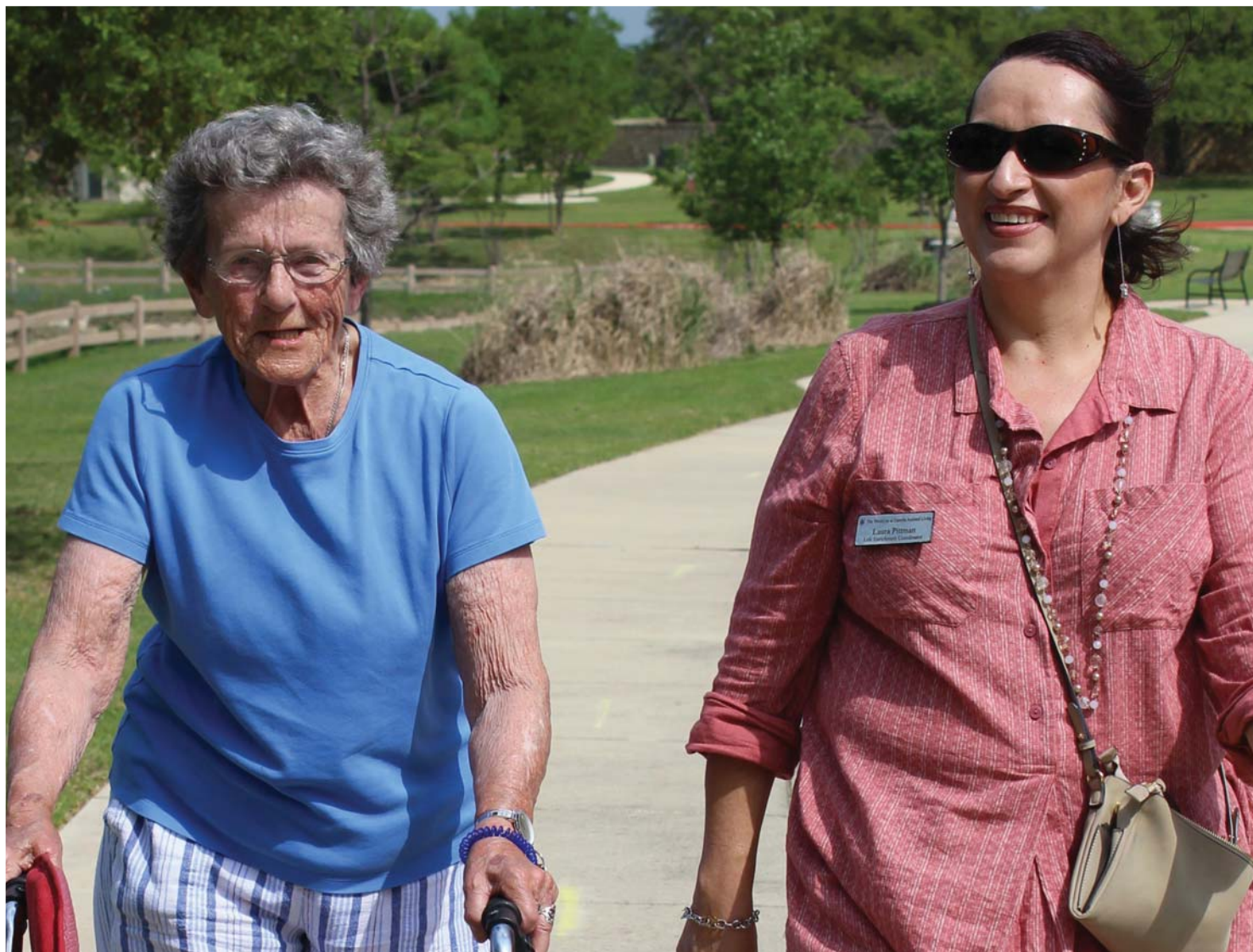
The group agreed that one of the most important reasons for the strong sense of community at Independent Living is that it is a faith community. They also appreciate the length of service of so many staff members. Some of them have been with the Wesleyan Homes for 30 years or more. They realize that you can't buy that kind of loyalty.

Anita had the last word and the last laugh: "Occasionally, I hear somebody grumble about the food and I always say, 'Oh, did you have 365 days of perfect meals at your house? That is amazing!' When people start complaining, we don't have time for that. We have more important things to do."

For this community, the "important things to do" are caring for and loving one another through both times of laughter and times of tears. A recent visitor remarked, "You can tell that this is a very special place as soon as you walk through the door. It's not just a place to live, it is a genuine community."



## Transitions in Aging: Moving to Assisted Living



**Resident Anne Wise enjoys a walk outdoors with Assisted Living Life Enrichment Director Laura Pittman.**

Moving is always stressful, but moving because you need more assistance with daily activities is a decision many of us dread. Making the transition from living independently to living with assistance requires an acceptance of our limitations, support from family and staff members, and the courage to make a major change. On The Wesleyan at Estrella campus, our Independent Living and Assisted Living communities are only 500 yards apart. But, for the resident needing a higher level of care, the psychological and emotional distance can be vast.

Anne Wise, a resident of The Wesleyan at Estrella Assisted Living, made that transition two years ago. She explained, “I lived in Independent Living for four years and loved it. I was on the Resident Council, used the putting green and was active in a knitting group. I had a lot of good friends and didn’t feel that I was old because I was having such a good time. “Then I began to have some falls and that worried me. I also

had to take a number of pills every morning and one day I took two of the same pills and got really sick. Within a week, we were talking about me moving to Assisted Living.”

Anne’s daughter, Dotty Culig, who lives locally, treated the move to Assisted Living much as she and her siblings had an earlier move to Independent Living. Dotty recalls the initial decision to move to The Wesleyan at Estrella, “Mother was living in Conroe. We took advantage of a visit my sister, who lives in Florida, made to Texas to take a tour of the Independent Living community. Even though Mother had been on the waiting list, when we brought up the tour, she hesitated and said, ‘ I’m not ready for this.’

“My siblings and I told her that it was just a tour, and she did not have to make a commitment.” The tour is important because often seniors have a misconception of what today’s senior living communities are like. After Anne visited Inde-

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pendent Living, she saw that it was friendly and welcoming. There were many activities and opportunities. Dotty urges everyone to get on the waiting list. She said, “Things can change so quickly.” Securing options in advance is always helpful.

Dotty also admits that these conversations with parents are hard. “Expect that there will be resistance,” she says. Even though Anne had realized she needed more help, she was hesitant to leave her Independent Living friends and move to a new community. Though it was nearby, she had never toured Assisted Living and didn’t really know what it was like. Once she visited the community, she saw people she knew and realized how nice it was. Once again, the tour helped her make the decision to move.

Dotty advises family members to tell their parent, “Here is a possibility. Nothing has to happen immediately.” She also suggests working with doctors, and the staff members at Independent Living and Assisted Living, to help with the assessment. Have a couple of family members participate in the conversation. However, she tells families, “Give your parent as much voice as possible in this decision.”

**“Making the move was one of the best decisions I ever made.” - Anne Wise**

There is a pragmatic piece and then there is the emotional piece. Dotty said, “We had to acknowledge that it is hard. It feels like you are losing your independence.” She recommends, “Listen and be understanding. Say that it’s okay to be sad.” She and her siblings told Anne, “We just want you to be safe and live your life the best you can.”

Anne said, “I made the decision myself, but I knew that my children were very concerned about my safety. And they had a point. My biggest fear in moving to Assisted Living was that I would turn into a little old lady. I’m glad to say that I was mistaken. I’ve made wonderful new friends and the staff really cares about me. I don’t feel like they’re helping me because they have to, but because they want to.

“The biggest surprise was that a staff member stands outside my bathroom door when I’m taking a shower so that they’ll know I haven’t had a fall. They also watch me take my pills and make sure that I don’t take any of them twice! I had trouble getting used to that at first, but then I realized that I needed the help and started to appreciate all that was being done for me.

“I went from a one-bedroom to a studio. It’s about as small as you can get, but I love it. Some people would say that I downsized, but I feel that I upsized because I like it so much. I don’t have to worry about getting two rooms messy, just one!

“I’ve also kept up with my friends from Independent Living. They come to visit me here and I go over and visit them. Once a month we host a tea at Assisted Living and invite everyone from Independent Living to join us. I haven’t lost my old friends, but added a whole new group of people I enjoy.

“One day I saw Pete Mireles, the head of maintenance at Independent Living, and told him that I missed seeing him. The very next morning he came over to Assisted Living and I knew he was responding to me. I feel like the staff are my buddies.

“I don’t need anyone to walk with me in the building, but if I’m going outside I have someone with me. And I love to walk! Sometimes I take two walks a day because it makes you feel so good. I’m not much on sitting around doing nothing. We do a lot of crafts here and if I get stuck the staff will help me finish it and then I can say, ‘Look what we did!’

“My family is thrilled that I’m here and being taken care of so well, and they don’t have to worry about me. They know that I’m safe.” Dotty added, “We are so grateful for Mom’s positive attitude. She’s been that way her whole life.

Not everyone has that attitude and it makes adapting to change easier.”

Anne has become an advocate for those who need Assisted Living, but can’t bring themselves to move. “I’ve told a lot of my friends at Independent Living that I love it here and that they will love it if they decide to come. I’ve been here for two years now and making the move was one of the best decisions I ever made. I made a decision to be happy and I intend to keep it that way.”

## Ease Your Transition

- Take a tour of the facility
- Enjoy a meal, join in an activity, and meet the residents and staff
- Add your name to the waiting list. Get your family members on the same page
- Work with doctors and staff members to make an assessment
- Listen to one another’s concerns
- Recognize that it is a hard decision
- Acknowledge sense of loss
- Celebrate the benefits

## Nurturing Spiritual Community: Wesleyan Chaplains Bring Comfort, Hope and Peace

Wesleyan Chaplains Bring Comfort, Hope and Peace If there is one quality that sets Wesleyan Homes apart, it is the Christian values that led the Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church to establish it in 1962. Those values still guide us today. Beautiful buildings and great amenities certainly help create a comfortable home-like environment, but the heart of our work is ministering to older adults – body, mind and spirit. Our entire staff is involved, but Wesleyan Homes’ four chaplains lead efforts to support the spiritual life of our communities. Here’s how:

### **Dr. Gary Whitbeck** The Wesleyan at Estrella Independent Living



“The worship experience sets the tone for my ministry. I spend a lot of time in preparing two sermons each week because I want to talk about something that will be meaningful to the residents and challenge their thinking. I believe they deserve the best I can give them. The personal conversations I have with them are often spurred by the sermons.

“One of the best ways to build community is one conversation at a time. I did my doctorate in Pastoral Counseling and that training has been invaluable. Our residents know that they can talk to me about anything and that it will remain confidential.

“If you take an active interest in people, it makes all the difference in the world. Most people could care less what you did in the past, but I love finding out about people’s experiences. We have a resident who worked on Broadway for much of her life and another who was a judge and did briefs for the U.S. Supreme Court. One resident worked for NASA and helped train Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin when they were becoming astronauts.

“I want to help residents see that faith is the one place in life that they can find meaning no matter what is going on. God

is their anchor. I want them to leave worship or a pastoral conversation knowing that if they go to the hospital or face bad news from the doctor, it’s their faith that gets them through it. God is with them in each situation. They get that through worship, music and personal counseling. It all ties together.”

### **The Reverend Mary Powell** The Wesleyan at Estrella Assisted Living



(Rev. Mary Powell is the newest chaplain to join the staff.)

“When I retired from Methodist ministry, I moved to Independent Living. I enjoy volunteering and substituting for Gary Whitbeck as needed. I keep trying to retire, but God has other plans for me. At Assisted Living, I’ll preach, serve as a counselor and spiritual director, do hospital

visits, teach Bible studies and organize volunteers to help us in our services.

“I believe strongly that God is a resident here, too, and try to help residents be aware of God’s presence in all that we do. Wesleyan Homes is a Christian community and the chaplains build on that foundation. Recently, I was visiting a resident in the hospital, and his son said, ‘Be sure and tell everybody all the details.’ He knew that this is a praying community and we value the support that each resident gives to other residents through prayer.

“At Independent Living, we have several Bible study groups that are open to everyone. We share when we have felt closest to Christ during the week and when we have not done our best. Then we talk about prayers and concerns, and what our plans are for study and spiritual growth in the coming week.

“Nothing is more important than getting to know our residents. When I have a meal with someone and learn about their life, I almost always ask them to tell me about their spiritual journey. What’s been good? What’s been a struggle? Is

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# Mother's Day

Sunday, May 14, 2017

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there something I can help you with? In those informal conversations, we meet on a common path toward living a richer, deeper faith.”

 **The Reverend Inell Claypool**  
 The Wesleyan at Scenic



“One of the main ways we build community at Scenic is through our worship services on Thursdays and on Sundays. I have an opportunity to preach and remind people who they are. Some feel that they have outlived their usefulness and have nothing to offer others. I tell them that they still have opportunities to be instruments of God’s peace, love and mercy. It’s not about what you do but who you are in God’s sight. Whatever God put in you is still here.

“Serving others can be as simple as sharing a smile or listening to another person. One resident who had just recovered from a serious illness told me, ‘Chaplain, I just invited a new resident to come to our service. And you’ll never believe what she said to me. ‘Does this mean that I’m now a part of your community?’ I told her, ‘Yes, it does.’ Now that’s God’s spirit in action.

“As chaplains, we must remember that there’s a big difference between curing and healing. Community is about being sensitive to where people are. If someone says, ‘I never thought I’d be here. My body is betraying me.’ As they are coming to grips with that, my job is simply to be there with them. I can’t fix it or undo what has happened. What I can do is listen and respond. I might say, ‘That’s really hard. What are you feeling?’ Community is paying attention and letting people know that they are not alone.

“One day a resident came looking for me because she was in some pain. She said, ‘I know if you’ll just pray for me I’ll be better.’ That was her faith tradition and, as I prayed, she started to relax. She sat here in the chapel for 45 minutes and I held her hand. Eventually, she went to sleep. I couldn’t change things, but I could be with her at a tough time. For

me, that was one of those pivotal moments when I realized this is why God has me here.”

 **The Reverend Larry Zabcik**  
 Wesleyan Hospice



“As a hospice chaplain, I work one-on-one with patients and family members. More than 80% of our patients are residents at Scenic and most have come from Independent Living or Assisted Living.

“I depend entirely on the Holy Spirit for everything I do. As I go through the day, I pray that whoever I see, wherever I go; I take God’s peace with me and

carry that spirit into every conversation. When I ask, ‘What can I do for you?’ residents and families almost always ask me to pray for them. And I don’t say, ‘I’ll keep you in my prayers.’ I ask, ‘Why don’t we say a prayer right now?’ I never want to miss an opportunity for prayer.

“If they are not people of faith, I might say, ‘I’m happy just to be here with you. If there’s ever something spiritual you’d like to visit about, I’m willing to listen.’ Working with family members is essential. When the patient has decided that they want to be on hospice and want no further treatment, there may be family members who need some comfort and encouragement to accept that decision. Most of the time they agree that hospice is the right choice, but that doesn’t always make it easy.

“Sometimes just being there with them is the most important thing I can do. That’s called a ministry of presence and may not require words. Just being by a bedside, holding a hand, sitting in silence may be exactly what’s called for. Patients know that there’s someone by their side, someone who cares. That’s one of the keys to building community as a hospice chaplain. I meet people where they are.”

# Thank You

With Phase III development of The Wesleyan at Estrella campus coming to a close, we are feeling immensely grateful to all who contributed to the Building Community, Enriching Lives capital campaign. This three-year campaign led by co-chairs Bill and Becky Booth and George and Barbara Brightwell, and implemented by Vice President Emeritus for Development Dr. Dan Bonner, raised \$886,008.87 for new apartments, community spaces and amenities. Gifts to this campaign came in many forms and from many places. No matter the size, each gift has helped us fulfill our mission to create home.

**For the seniors who will benefit from comfortable, caring living at The Wesleyan at Estrella for years to come, we thank the following donors:**

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