



TO YOUR HEALTH



Carleton-Willard Village Out-Patient Clinic - 100 Old Billerica Rd., Bedford, MA

Volume 19, Number 2

February 2014

What Legacy Will We Leave? by Marcia Feldman, Palliative Care Coordinator

Chances are that by the time most of us reach midlife we have given some thought to whom we would like to leave our earthly goods. Hopefully we have developed a will. This allows our heirs to know our wishes clearly and have less trouble splitting up our possessions when the time comes. What about the other less tangible legacies we leave behind, such as our memories, experiences, oral histories, family origins, photographs, career achievements, and the things we were proud to have accomplished in our lifetimes? Are we leaving them in order for our loved ones to inherit?

Because this can be an overwhelming task, Carleton Willard has offered lectures and workshops in recent years giving instruction and support in writing one's Ethical Will. "Ethical Wills are a tool for preserving and passing on your values, beliefs, life lessons, hopes for the future, love, and forgiveness to your family and community," (*The Ethical Will Writing Guide Workbook* by Barry K. Baines).

This document is different from a legal will in that it does not refer to our possessions. It can be an account of what our childhood was like, our family history, what it was like growing up in the time of our youth, and more. We can document our experience of being a parent or what we were most proud to have accomplished in our lives. It is a chance to step back from day

to day living and take an overarching look at where we have come from, what we did with what we were given, and take stock of our lives. It may give us a sense of contentment to reflect on times when we were able to overcome adversity or point us towards goals we still have yet to accomplish.

One interesting tool for organizing our personal legacy is to construct a timeline of our lives. By drawing a horizontal line on a piece of paper, you can make note of the years along the timeline when you experienced different high or low points in your life, such as meeting your spouse, having your first child, moving to a new city, or making a career change. This can give you a visual reminder of pivotal life-changing events and how you coped with them at the time. From that you can create a personalized roadmap of your life.

Another powerful way to leave a legacy is to participate in the Legacy Project through the *Living Fully, Dying Well* program at Carleton Willard. Similar to the World War II project in which some Residents recorded videos about their experiences during the war, the Legacy Project is a chance to document our broader life experiences and pass them on to our loved ones. Several people have completed Legacy videos since we started this pilot project a few years ago.

We are able to record 5 – 6 videos per year. A professional videographer records



the Resident being interviewed by a family member, friend or staff member. To prepare for the interview, the Resident and interviewer meet several times in advance and determine the topics to cover as well as questions that will lead to important highlights. A guideline we use is the www.storycorps.org website through National Public Radio (NPR). They have lists of topics to discuss and sample questions that will lead to recounting the events of our lives.

Our experience is that often the process of preparing for and completing the Legacy videos can be therapeutic for Residents and their loved ones. One Legacy video was recorded just prior to the physical decline of the Resident. Photos from the person's childhood were edited into the video as their illness progressed. The video was completed 5 days before the Resident's death, and she was able to view it in her room in the Nursing Center. After her death, the video was given to her family to have as a cherished remembrance of her life.

If you are interested in learning more about the Legacy Project and would like to participate, please contact Marcia Feldman in the Clinic.

HEALTH EDUCATION LECTURE

February 20, 2014

2:00—3:00 pm

Center Auditorium

Please join us for a presentation on “What Everyone Should Know about Depression and Dementia” by Dr. Charles Welch.

Dr. Welch is the Past President of the Massachusetts Medical Society and a Staff Psychiatrist at McLean Hospital. No stranger to Carleton-Willard, Dr. Welch is a member of the Board of Trustees. Please join us for what is certain to be an interesting discussion from 2:00 to 3:00 pm in Center Auditorium.

BEDFORD DRUG PICK-UP

The Bedford Police will again pick-up expired and unused medications on Friday, February 14, 2014. You can drop off any prescription or over-the-counter unused/expired medications at the Clinic between 8:30 am and 12 noon on Friday, February 14th. Unfortunately, we can only accept the medicines during these times and on the date of pick-up.

Please join us for the last two lectures in our Grief Workshop Series.

Anticipatory Loss and Supporting a Friend Who's Sick

February 28, 2014

A Checklist of Practical Matters After a Death

March 28, 2014

