

Village Insights

The Newsletter of Carleton-Willard Village

Summer 2013

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A Special
Thank You

Carleton-Willard Village is a not-for-profit continuing care retirement community accredited by CARF-CCAC. Carleton-Willard is a teaching affiliate of the Boston University School of Medicine.

Village Performance Groups: Creative, Social, and Plenty of Fun



Village Thespians (L to R) Paul Drouilhet, Barbara Mercer, Anne Larkin, Tom Larkin, Natalie Brierley and Bill Paul gather on set at the Village Auditorium, performance home for the actors' troupe.

Some do it as a way to channel artistic energy. For others, it's pure recreation. But whatever the reasons, structured creative activities can be a game-changer for retirees.

An ever-widening pool of medical research – some reaching back through nearly 20 years of study – is showing that creative play has as profound an effect on older adults as it does on child development.

In fact, the emerging clinical view is that our retirement years should be viewed as a new period of evolution, one of *senior development*.

“People have greater expectations for retirement now,” says Peter Spiers, senior vice president of Road Scholar in Boston and author of *Master Class: Living Longer, Stronger and Happier*.

“This new stage of life presents opportunities for retirees to pursue dreams and enjoy experiences that may have been deferred for much of their lives.”

According to Peter, enriching our retirement years can be found through four simple steps: *moving*, regular exercise that helps maintain both physical and cognitive health; *thinking*, engaging the mind in structured activities; *socializing*, staying connected with people and forming new friendships; and *creativity*, or

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A Noble Mission: Saving Our WWII Stories

Esther Braun had something on her mind, and she just had to talk to someone about it. So at the end of one of the Village's monthly French dinners, she struck up a conversation with fellow resident Allan Sloan.



On a mission – Esther Braun spearheaded the documenting of WWII-era stories from her fellow Village residents.

"I said, 'Isn't it a shame?'" recalls Esther. "We have all these veterans and other people who lived through WWII...all those stories, one day they'll be gone.' He agreed we should do something about it, but we didn't know what."

By chance, resident Derek Till – an RAF bomber pilot during the war – was giving a lecture in the Auditorium the next day. Esther and Allan, now joined by resident Mary Welch, approached Derek about how they might preserve the war stories. "None of us had any idea how we would get this done," says Esther. "We just

knew we were going to make it happen."

It would take well over a year of meetings and interviews – and overcoming a mountain of technical issues – before the project was complete: a series of 33 interviews captured forever on DVD.

"Young people need to see and hear these stories," explains Esther.

"There were people who fought in the war –and many of those stories are thrilling, of course. But there were others here at home, too, working for the war effort or raising families while the men were away. The women's stories are so surprising, so unusual. And no two stories are the same."



Wartime memorabilia from residents' personal collections was used to illustrate WWII Memory Project stories.

A different war-era story from the collection is featured twice a month in the Auditorium. An accompanying set of written WWII experiences has also been assembled from contributing residents. A copy of the final project was donated to Bedford TV on June 27, and there are plans for additional donations, including to the Library of Congress.

Esther is quick to point out that the project could not have been

Around The Village

Ken Burns Visits Documentarians

Academy- and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Ken Burns paid a visit to The Village on October 1 and met with our very own WWII Committee. Mr. Burns' 2007 documentary, *The War*, inspired the Committee to document Villagers' WWII stories as a series of video interviews. "We knew there were so many other books about the war," notes Esther Braun, co-founder of the Committee. "But then we saw Ken Burns' documentary. That's when we decided we should record these remembrances on video." Mr. Burns also gave a talk in the Auditorium on his work, including his most recent PBS documentary, *The Dust Bowl*.



The WWII Committee – (standing, L to R) Ward Chamberlin, Tom Larkin, Ken Burns, Don Manion, Allan Sloan; (seated, L to R) Mary Welch, Esther Braun, Mary Hastings, Erasmus Belden.

realized without the hard work of many, including the Bedford Historical Society and Bedford TV, who video-graphed the interviews; local video editor Leslie Wittman; CWV's own Stephanie Smith; the members of the *WWII Memory Project*; and the generosity of an anonymous donor.

Esther has been especially moved by those who shared their personal stories. "I am so proud of what we accomplished," she says. "It's been a very gratifying experience."

Village Performance Groups: Creative, Social, Fun

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using imagination and developing new skills.

The evidence strongly suggests that creative activities reduce stress, pain and medication usage, slow cognitive impairment, and create an overall sense of physical and mental well-being. The social connections created through these activities also help maintain a crucial sense of identity, especially at a time when that identity might be in flux. Of course, participants are quick to point out: *it's also a lot of fun!*

One such group of spirited seniors are our own Village Thespians. The Village Thespians was formed when two distinct theater groups merged – *The Readers*, who would get together to read plays aloud, and *The Thespians*, who would occasionally stage theatrical performances.

The group primarily performs one-act plays, according to their coordinator/director, Patricia Till, herself a former professional stage actress. “We do plays by [George Bernard] Shaw, Noël Coward, Shakespeare, and cut them down to about an hour,” she explains.

Actors hold their scripts on stage during Village Thespian performances. “There’s a feeling that people over 65 can’t memorize their lines,” Patricia notes, “But that’s just not true! We do it this way for fun!”

The acting group is as social as it is theatrical. “You form such close bonds with people you perform with,” says Patricia. “We’ll go to see plays at other local theaters – we learn a lot from other people’s productions. We also get together every Friday at the Victoria Café.”

The group recently put on a production of *Over the River and Through the Woods*, but with an interesting twist. The play, which centers around an Italian family from New Jersey, uses food as a central theme. Instead of editing the play to one act, Patricia kept both acts, and during intermission, the Village dining staff put on a special buffet for the audience and cast. “It was so special!” recalls Patricia. “We had all kinds of Italian food...we even had a tenor singing Italian love songs.”

Personal enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment from participation in groups like the Village Thespians is infectious – the more one is engaged, even in a single activity, the greater the potential for increasing the quality of all aspects of life. Our aging brains, as they mature, begin to accrue what researchers call *developmental intelligence* – the synthesis and integration of a lifetime of learning. Developmental intelligence generates more creative thinking, but also requires creativity to flourish.

“We all have the power to dramatically improve our retirement years,” says Peter Spiers. “It’s a conscious choice. You can take charge of your life [in this way] and experience happiness, optimism, health, and the sense that you’re in control.”

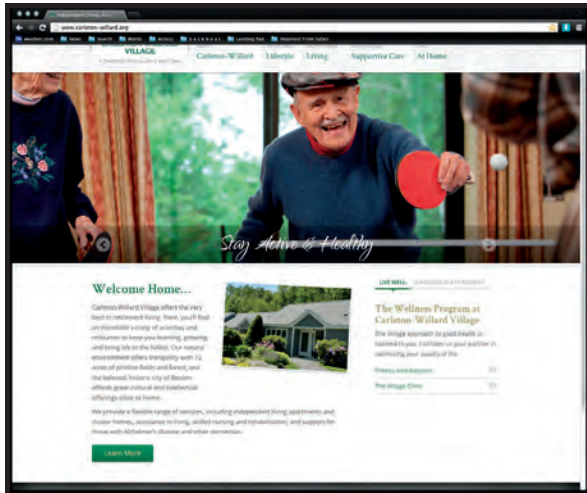
Peter, who wrote the forward to The Village’s self-published book of remembrances, *The Experience of Our Years*, speaks favorably of our residents in his own book. “Many retirees like those at Carleton-Willard are waking up to the possibilities,” says Peter. “For them, now is the time.”

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Keeping It Creative – (top left) Village Thespians Coordinator Patricia Till; (top right) detail of set designer Tim Martin’s whimsical scenery; (bottom left, L to R) Shakespearean Thespians Mary Waters Shepley, Mary Lou Wildasin, Paulett Taggart (back), Gene Odell, Bill Paul (back), Erasmus Belden, GiGi Temple (back) and Barbara Mercer; (bottom right) instructor, speaker and author Peter Spiers.

CWV Launches Revamped Website



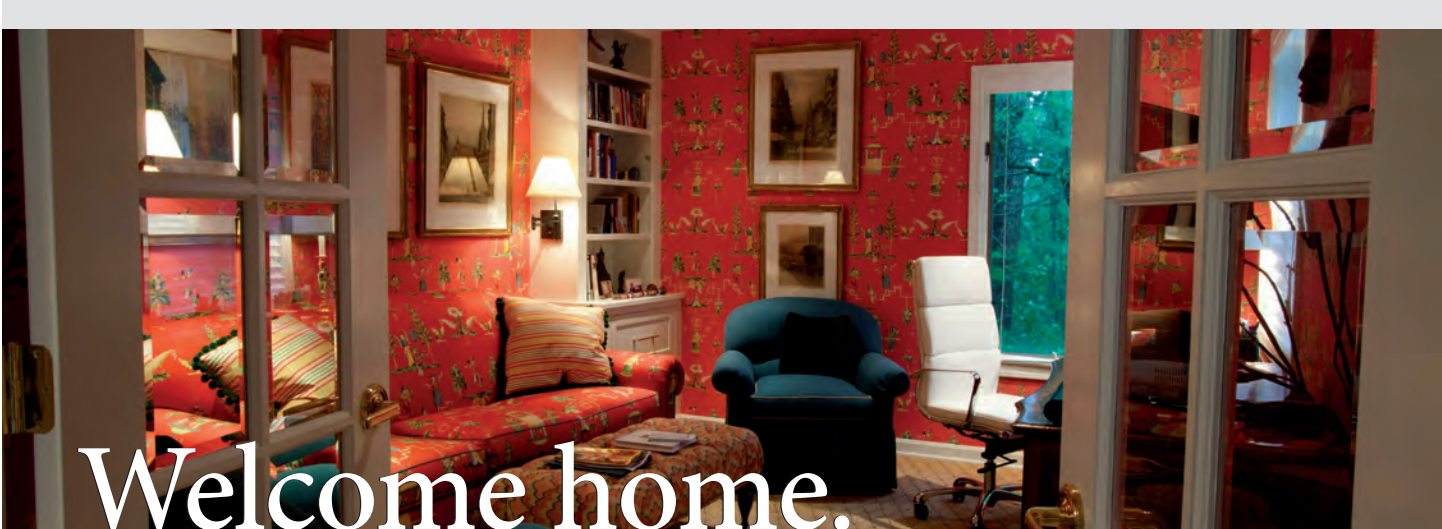
The Village Website has a brand new look and feel, with new interactive features, beautiful photography and a wealth of information. And we think it looks *sharp!* We invite you to go to www.carleton-willard.org and take our new site for a test-drive...we think you'll agree it really captures the spirit of life at Carleton-Willard Village. We'd also like to hear what you think! Email us at ssmith@cwvillage.org.

Village Performance Groups

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There's a genuine passion among the Village Thespians. "We are quite an enthusiastic bunch," observes Patricia Till. "So is our audience! I think they love to see their friends on stage, even with the occasional miscue. In fact, if someone misses a line or forgets to come in...well, that can be so wonderfully entertaining!"

"Performing with friends is what we enjoy the most," she adds. "And in this group, everyone just *loves* to act!"



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Treasure Seekers Find Gold, Raise Money



Happy People All-Around! Buyers and sellers converged on May 3 to raise over \$23,000 for local non-profits. (Top row, L) Resident Peggy Engel poses with shopper Marie Roache as resident Joe Weber looks on; (R) resident Tom Larkin shares a laugh with shopper Constance Marina. (Middle row, L) resident Chantal Sloan works the table as crowds fill the Village's Auditorium and Rotunda; (R) facilities staffers Joe Patta and Brian Dowling help move a prize sale item. (Bottom row, L) resident Ardelle Janes admires a happy Sonia Beaushjour with her new-found treasure; (R) residents Kay Graff, Ruth McDade and Bill Paul were on hand to assist visitors.

2013 Excess Baggage Sale a Big Hit

The much-anticipated 2013 Excess Baggage Sale was held on Friday May 3 at the Village, and co-chairs (and residents) Alice Morrish and Joan Kaufman report that the event was a huge success! Each year, residents donate unwanted items to the Sale, which are then offered to the public. This year's event raised over \$23,000 for various local non-profit organizations. More than 140 volunteers – including CWV's Director of Resources, Gary Sawin; Gail Hatfield, Director of Learning in Retirement; assistant Carol Goller; and the Dining Services staff – made the day a fun-filled and gratifying occasion. Thanks to all for your hard work and support!

A Very Special Thank You from Carleton-Willard Village

One of the things that makes The Village such a strong community is the ongoing support from our “extended family.”

Carleton-Willard is privileged to have partnerships with some of the best service providers in the region, many of whom helped celebrate our 30th Anniversary with a generous donation to our Outreach Fund.



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