

Living at Home Park of the Park Rapids Area

218-732-3137

PO Box 465 Park Rapids, MN 56470

www.parkrapidslivingathome.org



WOW, What an amazing year we have had!

I am continually amazed and in awe of the generosity in our community. This year alone, Living at Home's 58 volunteers have provided over 3100 hours and driven over 22,000 miles in service to almost 200 elders in our community. When I think about our faithful volunteers, board members, contributors, and staff (Regina and Tara) at Living at Home and how much they give of their hearts, time and talents to our elders, my heart is in a perpetual state of happiness and thankfulness.

Now, more than ever, we see the goodness that comes from volunteering and helping our neighbors. We recently received a letter from one of our care recipients. She says "I am so thankful for Living at Home. I can live in my house and in the woods that I love." The very next week Living at Home received a wonderful note and a donation from her sister, who lives in Illinois, in her honor. They too are so thankful for what our volunteers do so that she can remain in her home. They come from a large family but they all live in Illinois and cannot help her from so far away. This is just one example of so many that keep us going able to continue our mission of serving our elders.

We hear from our volunteers what volunteering does for them as well. One volunteer put it this way, "It keeps me young and keeps me active and socializing too." Most of our volunteers are retired and even those who are still working find the time to volunteer on days off or after work hours. "It is the most rewarding part of my day, helping others and bringing joy every day."

I hear and tell these stories all year long but now at the holidays it is especially important, as we are all surrounded by love and family, to remember those that may need an extra phone call or visit. The holidays can be a lonely time for many. Let's all make that little extra effort to bring a smile to an elder in our community.

From all of us here at Living at Home, have a wonderful season of gathering with family and friends, great conversations, thankfulness and of course lots of **JOY!**

Connie



Kim Donahue of Park Rapids and Board Member of Living at Home is a recipient of this year's 3Mgives Volunteer Award.

"The award has been given annually for 32 years, celebrating 3M personnel whose volunteerism "improved lives in the areas of education, community or the environment."

Gifts for this Holiday Season

The gift of time is what elders appreciate the most. Here are some tips for elders to request when asked what they want or for those who want to know what to give:

- ◇ Play a game or work on a puzzle together.
- ◇ Sit down or go somewhere to have coffee or tea and reminisce.
- ◇ Go for a drive or offer /ask to go visit a friend.
- ◇ Help make and/or send cards or write a letter.
- ◇ Is your favorite elder far away? Write them a real letter. Old fashioned mail is not out of style.
- ◇ Sing Christmas carols together. Better yet, go caroling.

Try it— your gift will fulfill you as much or more than the person you give to!



Studies show that having good social relationships keeps you more mentally alert. Those with active, regular friendships also seem to eat better, have stronger immune systems and are happier in general.



Epiphany

"I'm doing the best I can. Getting old is hard, someday you'll see." Those were my mother's words to me this morning during our phone conversation when I scolded her for not remembering to pack her eye drops for her trip. Unfortunately, this is not an unusual scenario. Mom confesses what I perceive as her shortcomings and I proceed to try to set her straight with my bantering. I know better but I can't seem to help myself.

My mom is 87. She is an elder with many things on her mind, most importantly, maintaining a space in her family's lives. Family history and dynamics aside, she is attempting to do what she is supposed to be doing at her age, enjoying her family and sharing a life time of memories. She is working on her legacy. So why do I proceed with my banter? I know all the things I should be saying and I usually engage with elders relatively well. But with my mother, I get stuck.

I know I'm not alone in this because I've had many conversations with adult children of elders. Even though I have invested a fair amount of time learning about the last developmental stage, I just don't do well with my mom at this age. I feel angry and I am realizing that my anger is the shield for the many other emotions I'm feeling, sadness being at the forefront. I want my mom! I'm sad that the super woman who juggled multiple tasks while raising a family and teaching, who loved learning about new things, who was super caregiver her whole life for her children, my dad's dad, my dad, my grandma, is now an elder. I love elders and the experience and wisdom they can bring to things. But I don't want my mom to be an elder; I still want my mom from years gone by.

I ponder this quite a bit, not just that mom is aging but the reality that I am on that same road. I don't want to think about either, but it's unavoidable because I talk to mom regularly and I see and hear the changes. I start feeling frustrated or closing myself off because, honestly, it makes me deeply sad and I've been afraid to fess up to what is really going on.

I've done my best to help my mother in these years but my best is my mind set of keeping her young and energetic. Maybe I was thinking if she doesn't get old, then I won't either. The reason doesn't really matter. Life is ever changing as are each of us. Aging is the natural course of life. We've been changing since we were born. I think of my kids and how I would grieve the last stage they were in but I also celebrated the new stage they entered. I've come to realize; I need to celebrate my mom in this stage of her development. No one wants to lose the people they love and I certainly don't want to lose her while she's still living.

So this morning when mom said those words, "I'm doing the best I can. Getting old is hard." I made a conscious pause and I told her honestly that I knew it was hard. I continued on, daring to share and I said, "I'm having a hard time too. I miss my old mom." She replied calmly, "I know you do. It's hard for everyone." It was that simple yet such an epiphany. It is hard for everyone.

This doesn't mean I'm going to quit pestering mom about exercising or inquiring if she's remembering to take her medicine. I am still me, but I do think I can move forward without anger and frustration to give mom the unconditional love she's given me her whole life.



Meet Tara Huber

Eldercare Services Coordinator

I knew early on that my professional life would be most meaningful if I was able to help people. I graduated from Saint Cloud State University with a Social Work Degree in 1999. My years after college included working at our small businesses with my husband Dave and raising our three children, Joe, Nora and Maggie. Throughout those years I always made time to be a volunteer and a leader of volunteer groups. I am now excited to be in a position of enlisting volunteers to help elders with services they need through Living at Home. My husband Dave and I keep busy by raising our children who are students in the Park Rapids schools. Moving to the area has provided us with so many new outdoor adventures. I find myself loving the beauty of the landscape here and feel blessed to be part of the Park Rapids and Living at Home community.

Merry Christmas from the Living at Home Staff and Board!

