

Remember when you were little how Christmas took forever to show up? It seemed there was a real possibility you just might grow up while biding your time.

Now that I have traveled nearly six decades down life's road, Christmas whips around so fast I'm wondering if Janet and I shouldn't maybe leave the lights permanently draped on our shrubs out front. I guess it would make sense to turn them off at least. Leaving them lit through summer would probably be a bit much.

If time isn't speeding up as I grow older, I certainly could testify to a realistic illusion. And I don't much like it. I know that each Christmas is purchased with another year of my life. Who knows how many December 25ths are left in my holiday stockroom. What I do know is that my stare-down with cancer three

It's Christmas!

by

Larry Harris, CEO

Christmases back hammered home the irrefutable fact that the number is finite.

Before I get rumors started, I'm fine. Every six

months a CT scan tells me so. But even if the next zillion scans all come back clear, each still is a reminder that none of us has a moment to squander.

I refuse to while away evenings in front of a blabbering TV screen, unless I'm watching something that will inform, instruct, or inspire. And if you are peddling truth

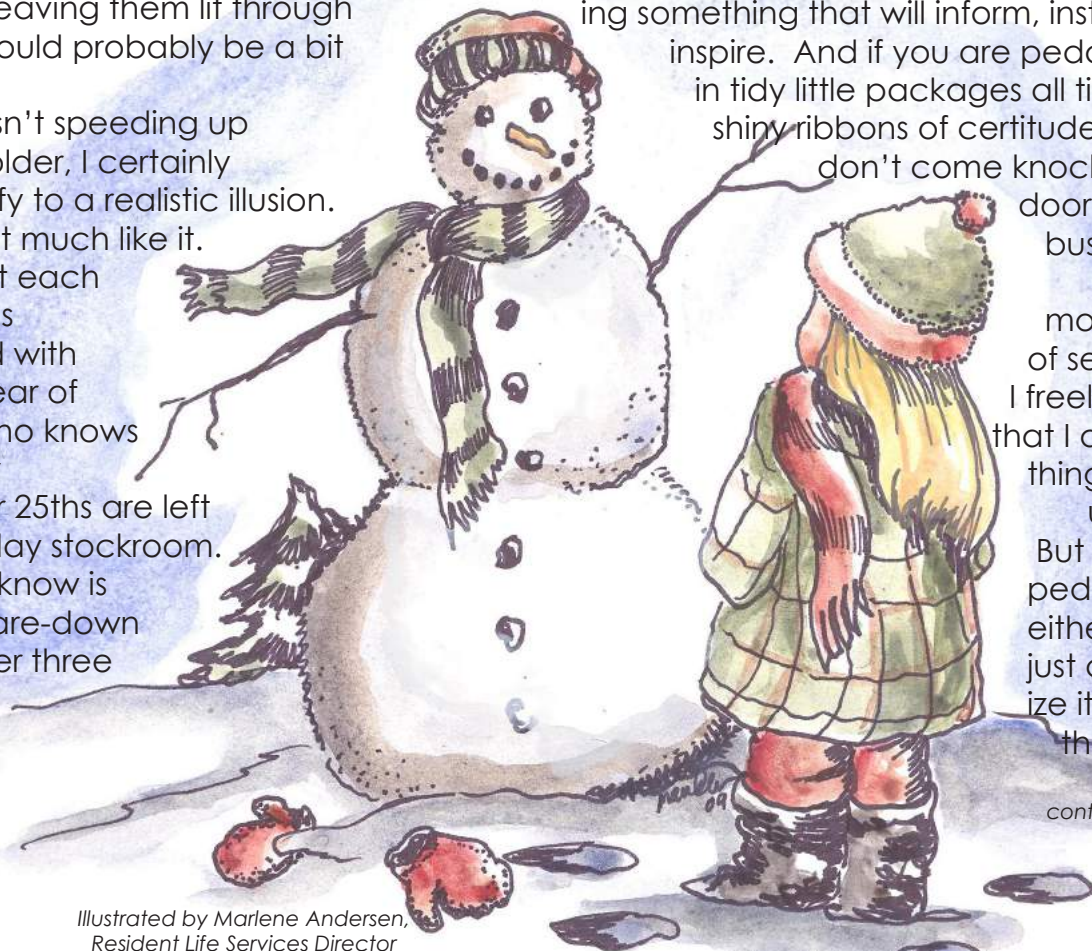
in tidy little packages all tied up with shiny ribbons of certitude, please

don't come knocking on my door. Sorry, I'm busy.

I am the most humble of seekers, and I freely admit that I don't have things all figured out.

But the truth peddlers don't either; they just don't realize it. Rather than dribble

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Illustrated by Marlene Andersen,
Resident Life Services Director

away irretrievable hours in pointless debate, I prefer to search out the company of fellow pilgrims who will welcome me on their journey.

Christmas invites us to excavate through layers of daily amusements, distractions, irrelevancies, rivalries, and soul-sapping rules to get at life's core. Give an ear to the old yuletide songs. They sing of family and friends, and warm memories, of children and dreams, of stars to wish upon, and an old drafty barn in the ancient village of Bethlehem, with a livestock feeding crib that cradled the last and only hope for a dying world. Now what's more essential than that?

This year I started playing Christmas music on my car stereo in early November. Go ahead, laugh at old Harris, sentimental fool that he is. But there is no shorter path to my heart than through those old songs. And anyway, every year I need to be writing my Christmas essay before Thanksgiving to meet the *Reflections* deadline. The music sets the mood. Truth be told, I think I could write a respectable Christmas piece in July, with snow and everything, if you'd only let me play my music.

And at Christmastime, it has become my tradition to set up a primitive studio at each of the Willow Brooks to photograph my beloved residents. We use their images in a musical slide show at the staff

No one knows what tomorrow will bring or take away. All we have is the moment. And this moment now is Christmas.

Christmas party announcing the recipients of our Second Mile Award, the homage reserved for a staff member from each campus whose service is beyond the ordinary. A few of the pictures sometimes find their way, mounted and framed, into the Hall of Memories, the entry corridor at Willow Brook Christian Home where we honor those who have lived with us over the decades.

One time a few years back, a counterpart from another retirement community saw the photos and exclaimed, "What a great marketing idea!" My head snapped around, ruby lasers shot from my eyes, and he instantly realized he had stepped on a landmine. I fired my retort, "Marketing! These pictures have nothing whatsoever to do with marketing! They are tributes to some of the dear souls who once lived among us in this place."

Their Christmas photos, now hung in that silent hall, summon them back from across the years, so we can recall the love that was here.

It's Christmas. For me, this is a season for Janet and the kids, and quiet reflection. I always take a little time off around the holiday. There is all the shopping and preparations for the kids' homecoming. And there are always quiet wintry mornings at Starbucks with my Janet.

No one knows what tomorrow will bring or take away. All we have is the moment. And this moment now is Christmas. So ladle up some cider, light up the candles, tie a ribbon on the cat, and gather around you all those you hold dear.

It's Christmas!



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- Passages Alzheimer's Care
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Willow Brook at Delaware Run

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- Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation
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REFLECTIONS

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Delaware Run assisted living and memory care center manager Heidi Reed (center) was among the Call 4 experts at WCMH-TV's November Alzheimer's special "I want to go Home." Willow Brook was a sponsor of the show hosted by the station's Colleen Marshall. Heidi also participated in the live blog conducted during the hour-long program.

Therapy Enhancements Foster Healing and Hasten Return from our Home to Yours

Updates, refurbishments, enhancements and other additions have resulted in an upgraded and upscale rehabilitation therapy program at



Home resident Phyllis Trianfo receives Wii instructions from therapist Amber Powelson

Willow Brook Christian Home in Worthington.

Thanks to generous donors and creative staff, people entering into the therapy program have a spiffed-up bedroom and a real-life kitchen and bath in which to practice and regain their living-at-home-alone skills. They even use Wii games to help them build muscles and increase range of motion.

All will make it possible for rehabbers to soon leave our home and head back to their own.

Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Barber
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Joseph Biedel
Gayle A. Moe
Hazel B. Blöse
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who have Passed
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Margaret R. Wylie
Eugene & Terry Martini
Clarence Young
Thomas & Rena Brown
Faye Young
Thomas & Rena Brown

Other Gifts

Among the blessings for which we give thanks this year is Willow Brook's financial health. All around us we see retirement communities being forced to sell properties and even declaring bankruptcy. We are grateful for the sound financial advice we have received over the past few years that led us to make significant changes in our investments before the financial crisis hit. In addition, if you define success as the number of independent homes and apartments "sold," this has been our best year ever. Add the opening of our Village Square apartments and healthcare center, the high scores from state inspectors, and the low turnover of staff, and this is becoming a year for the record books! Thank you all for your part in making that happen, especially in these challenging times.

Gifts were also made in honor of

Carolyn Abels
Arthur Tatman
My Children
Rose E. Berner
Lila Ellzey
Dan & Elizabeth Conant
Opal J. Hardin
Rebecca Sheets
Larry Harris
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Amanda O. "Weeder" Thompson
Ouida Siler
Willow Brook Accounting Office
ECS Billing & Consulting

Honored by their Peers (but we think they're peerless)

Willow Brook is proud to be a member of the Association of Ohio Philanthropic Homes and Services for the Aging (AOPHA), the advocate for nonprofit senior care organizations in this state. This union of fine organizations that are both our competitors and our colleagues meets annually to educate, enlighten and support one another in our shared commitment to service without profit.

It makes us especially proud, therefore, when members of our communities are recognized by their peers for being the best at something.

This fall several residents and staff members received AOPHA awards, and their stories are on this page.



Susie Fleak, RN, manager of Willow Brook Christian Village's Centrum assisted living center, was recognized for her commitment and service to older Ohioans while engaging as a role model and mentor. "A 25-year perfect attendance record is just one highlight . . . whether rescuing a cherished blouse from the laundry chute or walking the halls for 24 hours on fire watch during a power outage, tales of her energetic dedication abound at Willow Brook," said the AOPHA judges.



Dianne Almendinger's "Beneath the Sea" took first place in the Fine Art II category. Dianne is a retired professor of art from The Ohio State University and lives at Delaware Run.

Earl Condit, a resident of Willow Brook Christian Village's Centrum, took home the blue ribbon in the Special Fine Art division for his dog portrait. Earl paints only in winter. As soon as it warms up outside he's back on the golf course.



Scholarship winner, too!

Nursing assistant Jessica Hughes, at Willow Brook Christian Village, won a Nursing Scholarship awarded by AOPHA's Foundation.



Delaware Run resident Dee Seebode took home second place honors in not one, but two categories, Fine Art I and Fine Art II, for her watercolor "Mapleton's Glory" (right) and her pen and ink "Of Times Past" (above).



An Artists' Colony?

You may have noticed in the last couple issues of Reflections that we are highlighting many artists among our residents: Ebb Haycock's sculpture in our Delaware Run lobby was highlighted last issue, and in this one Dianne Almendinger, Dee Seebode, and Earl Condit are recognized for winning top honors in the AOPHA art contest.

They aren't the only talented ones; we have many, many more. But we also have people who only appreciate art. They are ministers, librarians, nurses, teachers, and mailcarriers, and they all call Willow Brook their home.

We like to think it's because Willow Brook Christian Communities are welcoming places no matter what it is you do or did for a living.



Willow Brook Christian Home resident Ruth Deitch models a buckeye necklace and pin.

Volunteer Gifts Live On

Thirty-five years ago a buckeye tree was planted in the courtyard of Willow Brook Christian Home in memory of a volunteer who passed away.

Now, after all these years, Cookie Rogers is still remembered and in a way is still giving – because of the fruits of her memorial tree.

Back in September, residents began making necklaces from the courtyard buckeye tree. The necklaces were so well made that folks would pass by the activity area and say "Oh, I'd like to buy a necklace for myself!" They began selling the necklaces for \$2.00 each, and added pins to their inventory.

The group decided to use the proceeds from their sales to help pay for tickets to a Bill Gaither concert at Nationwide Arena on December 18, and hoped to be able to cover about half the cost. They knew that some of their number, particularly those who depend on Medicaid to pay their bills, would have a difficult time purchasing the tickets.

Over the course of the next three months they gathered every week to make necklaces. In the end they sold enough to pay the *full* cost of the tickets. They even had a little extra to start a "kitty" for future events.

Now they are making jewelry out of puzzle pieces to sell. When an appealing concert or play comes up they will have their ticket money ready.

And Cookie Rogers' giving spirit continues to live on, thanks to the gifts of that memorial tree.



REFLECTIONS

Reflections

is published quarterly by:
Willow Brook Christian Communities

Send change of address to:
100 Delaware Crossing West
Delaware, Ohio 43015

Return service requested

*If you wish to remove your name from the
Reflections mailing list, please call
740-201-5688.*

Nonprofit
organization
US postage
paid
Permit #102
Delaware,
Ohio



Lighting Christmas Hearts and Faces

Any five-year-old can tell you the truth: the calendar is wrong in counting only thirty days from Thanksgiving to Christmas! Between those holidays are really a gazillion of the longest days of the year! Yet while children try to find a way to push gazillion down to now-it's-time, grownups hurry, scurry, hasten, wrap and hide, to prepare the gifts that bring the Christmas glow to little faces on the magic morning.

As they hurry around making Christmas happen for others, however, adults will be hoping the children learn that trinkets and tinsel are not the true meaning of Christmas. Rather, the holiday glow emanates from the understanding that the great gift of Christmas is the love brought to the world by Christ. Even the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of that first Christmas were but valuable trinkets offered in those days to secular royalty. The Magi weren't wise enough to understand. Within a few days this king and his parents would be immigrant aliens seeking asylum in Egypt. Fancy gifts would never soften his life; but his love would comfort thousands of other lives.

Christmas falls in the coldest, darkest season; yet twenty centuries later we still see that great gift, love with its power, lighting Christmas hearts and faces.

by Ruth Bauerle

Pat Foley
Centrum Resident

Resident of Willow Brook Christian Village