



This winter we put out a call to residents for “spring-themed” photos, writings, and artwork. This issue of *Reflections* features five selections. Willow Brook Village resident Joyce Stambaugh has two photos – this one of her cat Maggie and a squirrel friend engaged in animated conversation across a window of her home, and, on the back page, a deer and raccoon from her backyard that illustrate Tom MacLaughlin’s short-short story, *The Visitor*. (MacLaughlin lives at Delaware Run.) Two poems are featured on page 5 – *Roses in Spring* by John Dickman (from our Delaware Run campus) and *Wild Asparagus* by Tom Ebbert (from Willow Brook Christian Village). Stambaugh, MacLaughlin, and Ebbert all have had pieces featured in previous issues of *Reflections*.

# Timeless

by Larry Harris, CEO

Happy birthday, dear Willow Brook. We turned the big four-oh on March 15th. If Willow Brook were a person, we would be rounding the corner into our middle years. But Willow Brook is Willow Brook, and we've only just begun to work up a good head of steam.

The Ides of March 1972. That's when it all began. And so the natural question comes: "What has changed for Willow Brook in the past 40 years?" And the happy answer pops back: "Absolutely everything!" (Well, almost everything, but I'll get to that in a minute.)

Back then, we were hardly a shadow of our present-day selves. We were a miniature 6,500 square-foot nursing home serving 25 people. Today, we have 642,611 square feet under roof on three sprawling campuses.

That's an average of 16,000 feet added each year! And, on any given day, we are serving 560 dear friends.

Forty years ago, that little nursing home had tile floors and no air conditioning. One in four residents was tied to a chair or bed to "keep them safe from falls." (Hey, that was state of the art back then.)

Mushy meals were dished up on compartmentalized turquoise trays. Fluorescent tubes lit the single hallway with harsh institutional glare. Beds were hand-cranked, nurses wore caps, doctors thought they were gods, and it was lights out at seven.

Activities director? Social worker? We had never heard of them.

And the administrator (yours truly) was known to mop the floors, trim the bushes out front, and keep the books with a mechanical pencil and green ledger pad.



Then we got to work. Today, Willow Brook enjoys a national reputation as a leader

Larry Harris, CEO  
[lharris@willow-brook.org](mailto:lharris@willow-brook.org)

in the field of senior services.

The little nursing home of our salad days has been expanded and reinvented twice, now with all private rooms, shady courtyards, and two full-service restaurants.

And in our spare time, we assembled a pair of grand retirement communities with homes and apartments, restaurants, walking trails, fitness centers, and a gazillion trees.

Walk around and you'll find carpet everywhere – even in the nursing homes. There is soft lighting and the feel of a nice hotel – yes, even in the nursing homes.

The beautiful flower that is Willow Brook has been 40 years unfolding.

But far more than our pretty communities, Willow Brook has held true to its timeless mission of service that was there from the start. Everything we do is for the good of the people living within our walls.

No one earns a nickel from our endeavors. Every bit of "profit" is plowed back into the ministry to benefit our people.

The three Willow Brooks are teeming with energy and life, but never forget that we have escorted many an old friend on the final mile of life's journey. We can't walk for them, but we surely do walk with them.

In their closing still hours, each approaches the exit at his or her own pace. We move toward the door together. When the time is right, a gnarled and trembling hand reaches for the knob. We place our hand over theirs, and together, hand-on-hand, with great reluctance and sorrow, we give it a slow turn. As the door falls open, we hand them off in silence to the angels waiting at the other side.

I am proud to have been leading this great ministry for 37 of its 40 years. Much good has been accomplished. Much good remains to be done.

And I thank you for the role you have played. If you have done nothing more than read these words, you have participated in our story. And for that, I thank you.



**Bob & Lois Johnson:**

## Hands On

Bob Johnson is a hands-on kind of guy. The moment you walk into the Johnson apartment at Delaware Run you see his handiwork: a grandfather clock made from cherry. An inlaid walnut lap desk. Gracefully curved and lovingly waxed jewelry boxes with perfectly matched drawers. Massive bedposts of lodgepole pine. An electrified dollhouse.

Bob first saw his wife of 64 years when they were in high school. “It was love at first sight,” he says with a chuckle.

“He was polite and good looking, and he was awfully nice to me,” states Lois.

They married when he returned home from the Coast Guard after World War II. Lois was just 19. Bob soon realized that with the war over, his original plan to become a tool and die maker was not in his future. Instead, at his father’s urging, he became an apprentice to a goldsmith who taught him the trade. He learned a different, more intricate way to work with his hands.

As the years passed, Bob bought out his employer and expanded his business, moving into space in the basement of Federal Savings and Loan, in Columbus, Ohio. He named his new shop The Diamond Cellar.

Lois raised their four children, doing the company’s books at home. All four children helped out during their school years. Jeff made it clear to his parents after just a few months of college that he intended to quit school and learn the goldsmithing trade—if not with his father, then with someone else. Andy joined the

*continued on page 6*

*Above left: This past winter Bob has focused his craftsmanship on leather pieces, pounding in ornate embellishments on wallets and belts.*

*Above right: This gold wreath was hand crafted as the third in a series of Christmas ornaments made for Lois. It contains 133 individually die-struck holly leaves, 28 round carnelian beads, a 5.50-carat caramel African tourmaline candle flame, and 378 round brilliant diamonds (more than 26 carats) in the bow. The Johnsons gave their neighbors a unique opportunity to view the three gifts at a holiday gathering.*



*The romance continues. Every day their neighbors see the Johnsons stroll down the hallway, hand in hand.*



# To Honor and Remember

## Memorial Contributions

through February 16, 2012

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## New Officers Lead Willow Brook Board

*Three new officers presided over their first Board of Trustees meeting on March 9. Vice President Phillip Barth (l), is a resident of Dublin, Ohio. Carl Ward, of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, is the new president, and Corinna Owens, of Columbus, is the new secretary/treasurer. Frank Chappell (r), is the immediate past president.*

## Three Honored with Second Mile Awards



Please join us in congratulating staff members (from left to right), John Regalsky (Delaware Run), Kandy Cox (The Village), and Claudia Wells (The Home), winners of the 2011 Second Mile Award. They were nominated by residents, staff, and family members, and selected because they have so consistently gone the second mile on behalf of the folks under their care. We're awfully proud of them!

## Willow Brook Residents Celebrate Spring with Poetry . . .

### Roses in Spring

Behold, a bud! First bud of Spring  
That warmth and water's kisses bring.

What beauty 'neath the sepals hides,  
What latent grandeur there resides?

What colors – subtle, bright, and bold–  
Will eager waiting eyes behold?

With swirl and flair the flower uncurls,  
Out petals pour, the bloom unfurls.

As sepals split are downward rolled,  
Revealed, the petals form unfold.

Clouds of fragrance, scents abound,  
Would deafen were aroma sound.

The bee assaults with soft attack  
Our eyes and butterflies attract.

On stately stem with foliage green,  
She gently bows as fits a queen.

Such regal splendor proudly borne,  
One cannot but ignore the thorn.

by John T. Dickman  
Delaware Run

### Wild Asparagus

Along a back-road ditch green  
fronds grow,  
feathery in a light spring breeze.  
Harvest only enough for our  
evening meal.  
Serve steamed and crisp, with  
butter and lemon  
a delicate treat of emerald green.

by Tom Ebbert  
Village

made to honor:

**Patti Marrah**  
Richard & Patti Marrah  
**Kathi Paullin**  
Dr. Joan E. McLean  
**Pauline R. Shively**  
Randy & Stacie Shively  
**Lois M. Ward**  
Eric A. Radcliff  
**The wonderful Willow Brook Residents**  
Jeffrey & Brigitte Chase  
**Claire Young**  
LouAnn Giedlinski



## Mother's Day Cards Help Willow Brook Moms

The Mother's Day card you send this year can have special meaning for another mom (or dad) who could really use your help.

Medicaid funds that enable Willow Brook to continue caring for folks even after their personal resources have been depleted are in jeopardy. We've never turned someone out because they were unable to pay, and we hope never to be in that situation.

Here's an opportunity to support our efforts while doing something you'd planned on doing anyway. Make a gift to Willow Brook in honor or memory of a mother and we'll send a Mother's Day card to a special mom in your life.

It will be beautiful and of high quality, with the sentiments expressed here to the right. You tell us who it goes to and how you want the card to be signed, and we'll take care of the rest. Your gift will then be directed toward providing care to people whose personal funds have run out.

Go to our web site at [www.willow-brook.org](http://www.willow-brook.org) or call the Willow Brook development office at 740-201-5688 to request an order form.



"You have always been a wonderful mom, the role model everyone could follow. Your warmth, your generosity of spirit, and your willingness to wrap your arms around and pull close to you a person who really needs your love have set the standard for me. That's why on this Mother's Day I have made a gift in your honor. It will support Willow Brook Christian Communities as they care for mothers who can no longer care for themselves. You're a great role model, and I thank you. Willow Brook thanks you, too."

### Hands on . . . *(continued from page 3)*

company to focus on the business end of the enterprise.

Today, Jean is a teacher in Wake Forrest, North Carolina, and Laura is development director at the University of Cincinnati. The "boys" are readying for retirement and making room for the third generation of the Johnson family of jewelers.

Seventeen years after his retirement, Bob continues working with his hands. "Our children grew up and had children of their own. I soon found I needed to make 17 of everything," Johnson laughs. "Cutting boards, jewelry boxes, and I made eight hope chests!"

Meanwhile, the love Bob and Lois share is a source of delight for everyone around them.

"It's great! We still hold hands," exclaims Lois. "He's still my sweetie and always will be." Bob agrees. "We fell in love and we never fell out of love. A commitment is a commitment."

The Johnsons moved into Willow Brook at Delaware Run in the autumn of 2009. "We walked in here and immediately felt comfortable," says Bob. "By the time we got to the fish tank (between the front lobby and the restaurant) we knew this was it. We were home.

"Our opinion of Willow Brook has not changed. We are still delighted and think it's the best thing that has happened to us in a long time."

*“Cruise Director” Jim Bartha . . .*

## Enriching Residents’ Lives

A quick look at our website’s many monthly calendars demonstrates that no matter where one lives at Willow Brook, a lot is going on.

For independent residents the credit goes to “cruise director” Jim Bartha.

Jim demurs, saying the residents tell him what they’d like to do and he just helps them get the ball rolling. But if you know Jim, as most people in Delaware do, you know he is responsible for making many things in Central Ohio happen.

A graduate of the College of Wooster, Jim attended the Princeton Theological Seminary with a dream of ministering to families through outdoor education. He and his wife, Nance, spent the summer after his year in the seminary doing just that, when he got a call from his mother asking him to return to central Ohio to help her run the family business, Bartha Audio-Visual, in Columbus. He remained with the company for thirty years.

A few years back, Jim helped lead a successful levy campaign for the Delaware Public Schools. Motivated by his own excitement about life-long learning and encouraged by his mother-in-law, Willow



*Jim Bartha drives the Willow Brook bus for volunteer tutors, taking them to near-by Schultz Elementary School for one-on-one connection with youngsters who need a little help. Pictured above are Belvadell Sindlinger, Frank Kender, Jim Roesch, Jim, and Cal Knight.*

Brook Christian Village resident Jane Rutan, Jim contacted Willow Brook CEO Larry Harris and pitched his idea to expand the learning and doing opportunities for folks at Willow Brook. It has been a match made in heaven.

Jim is proudest of the two-day Summer Extravaganza, an intramural competition among the three Willow Brook campuses. “They are competitions and opportunities for camaraderie. Most important, they are fun!”

“By broadening programs in music, sports, and other extra-curricular activities we are enriching lives. People are experiencing and trying new things.” he says, “and our lives are richer for it.”

Typical Monthly Calendars at Willow Brook’s retirement communities include:

- five art classes each week
- three lecture series
- book discussions and bookmobiles
- antiques and gardening
- health programs
- four support groups
- community service programs
- more than a dozen exercise classes
- card groups
- church services
- musical programs: sing-alongs, the monthly Music at the Summit concert series, and two busloads to Central Ohio Symphony concerts
- intramural pocket billiards competitions



# Reflections

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## The Visitor

*photograph by Joyce Stambaugh, Willow Brook Christian Village*

He had to balance on three legs to ring the doorbell. When I opened the door, I was appalled. “Well, aren’t you the brazen one!” I exclaimed. “What are you doing here, and what do you want?” I had seen deer—lots of them—out toward the Delaware Run, but never expected one might come to visit.

“May I sit down?” he asked, as he walked into the living room.

My eyes widened and my face displayed an expression of incredulousness. After all, I wasn’t sure how house-broken this fellow was.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” he said, and walked to my favorite chair, sat down, crossed his hind legs, and threw one foreleg over the back of the chair. Like he owned the place. Before I could protest, he continued. “Willow Brook at Delaware Run is a very nice place. But it lacks one important feature.”

“And what might that be?” I inquired.

“You need a mascot. And I am imminently qualified to fill the position.”

“Well - why have you approached *me*? I am not authorized to -”

He rudely interrupted. “Because I happen to know you like watching us roaming around. And you can put in a good word on my behalf to Larry Harris.”

“You must approach him yourself,” I said bluntly. His office is—

“I know where his office is. Your refusal to support me will make your shrubs very tasty this spring.”

And with that he was out the door.

*by Tom MacLaughlin, Willow Brook at Delaware Run*