



2015 Board President Phil Barth presenting CEO Larry and Janet Harris a plaque commemorating their 40 years of service to Willow Brook.

In 1975, Willow Brook was a 25-bed nursing home in the countryside north of Columbus, Ohio. It had been founded three years before by a group of volunteers from Ohio Churches of Christ, and they needed someone to come in and run it. They hired a 25-year old furniture salesman for the job.

Larry Harris has been the leader and visionary for forty-one years now. He presides over homes and health centers for 630 people, spread over 86 acres on three campuses that provide award-winning services in central Ohio. He is a leader in the state, a teacher, and mentor. But he often says, "If someone had dropped me down 41 years ago and told me to run all this, I would have

been an utter failure within a month. Willow Brook and I just sort of grew up together. It occurred naturally."

Board and staff members honored Larry in December as 2015 board president, Phil Barth, presented Larry and Janet with a book, called *Reflections*, that depicts in images the people and places that Larry has touched. Most of the photos are of residents, present and past. Appropriate. As

Larry always says, "It's all about the residents." His love for the people who live and work at Willow Brook are what makes this ministry what it is.

"It's all about the residents." Our mantra, our mission, Larry's vision.

CEO Larry Harris Honored for 40 Years of Service

*Lay down your tired and weary head my friend.
We have wept too long, night is falling,
And you are only sleeping.*

José N. Harris, *Mi Vida*
1962-

I am partial to old cemeteries. I'm talking about the graveyards of bygone times, with their weatherworn rows of granite markers and obelisks. Each monument was chiseled from a single monolithic stone, and, like the people buried beneath them, no two are alike. All now are gritty and gray, and could use a good power washing. Thanks to these imposing stones, old cemeteries can't be mowed in wide efficient swaths, and they eat up weed whack cord by the yard.

I am drawn to these old disorderly places of the dead. Their sheltering oaks and chestnuts, with trunks the girth of an SUV tire, invite a lingering visit from one who recognizes none of the names carved in their stones.

You don't come across many flowers in these old cemeteries. Few mortals are still around who remember their long-departed guests. There comes a time when no one remembers. In a century or two, our fate, like theirs, will be to ply the vast waters of eternity, nameless and forgotten. God alone, as the permanent keeper of all souls, will remember. But here on this earth, every last word of our biographies, every last stitch of our lives, will lie buried forever beneath an ever-accumulating avalanche of days. There will come a time when no one will know or care that we ever lived. Only a rare Plato, Confucius, or Cleopatra ever transcends their assigned era and presents humanity with a name that survives through the ages.

That's tragic, for I would wish that everyone had flowers on their grave. For all time.

Recent iterations of these old burial parks lack soul, in my humble opinion. Their cookie cutter cast-bronze markers are all squared and laid out in fixed soldier rows installed level with the turf for fast and easy mowing. They offer no sense of place. Trees usually are lacking. A lake or pond takes up valuable revenue-producing real estate, so they too are rare. For sure, the dead are entombed just the same, and

And That is the Truth

by Larry Harris, CEO

**...every last stitch of our lives
will lie buried forever beneath
an ever-accumulating ava-
lanche of days.**

the ambiance of their resting place is of no concern to them. But for us, their survivors, these soulless burial fields are iconic of our utilitarian society, where efficiency is honed, and profit is king.

Each morning on my drive to work, I pass one of these antiseptic cemeteries. It is of a sparse and tidy genre, almost totally devoid of trees. With inlaid grave markers that can't be seen from the road, it could plausibly be mistaken for a soccer field. I pass it each workday in a 55 mph blur.

One morning last fall as I was racing past, I caught sight of a man I judged to be in his 40s sitting cross-legged at one of the graves. It was uncomfortably chilly and gray, yet there he sat.

He remained in my field of view for only three seconds, but I don't think he was tending a fresh grave. Grass appeared to be well established, so I'm guessing he was communing with someone who had been interred for a while.

A spouse? A child? A friend? Someone had his heart.

For a fleeting moment, I was tempted to turn around, approach him respectfully, and ask his story. But that would have been callous and rude. I would have been trespassing on what I am sure was a very private moment. Had I been him, I don't believe I would have welcomed an

intrusion on my intimate conversation with someone I had lost, so I drove on.

That cold November morning, a grieving man in a cemetery was maybe just then stepping out on the first leg of his own personal eternal journey. He was sitting there perched on the precipice of forever, peering with great wonder and abiding sorrow into the immense abyss that yawns before us all. Someone dear to him was gone, they were never coming back, and that was the truth.

As I now look back upon that morning, I believe I have some idea of what he may have been thinking: It's all just so very incomprehensible and sad. And that is the truth.

*Larry Harris, CEO
lharris@willow-brook.org*





Nurses Judy Black and Bill Miracle, and Assistant Director of Nursing Theresa Agyepong, are members of the team at Willow Brook Christian Home.

Feds Believe Willow Brook is Among the Best!

We learned recently that both of Willow Brook's skilled nursing and rehab centers have once again earned 5-star ratings from the US government's Medicare Compare listing on Medicare.gov. This top designation is a point of pride on both the Home and Village campuses, as it confirms to the world that concentrating on making the best lives possible for the people who visit and live at our centers really works!

This multi-year string of five-star ratings joins a series of other quality indicators, including:

- Top scores in **resident/patient satisfaction** surveys conducted by the Ohio Department of Aging.
- Top scores also in the **satisfaction of families** in the care their loved ones receive, also from surveys conducted by the Ohio Department of Aging.
- Named **best retirement community** in *Delaware Gazette* reader poll.
- Named **best nursing home** in *Delaware Gazette* reader poll
- Named **best assisted living** in *Delaware Gazette* reader poll (yes, the trifecta!)
- An average **census** in all categories of more than 90 percent
- Named in *U.S. News & World Report* as two of the **Best Nursing Homes in America**.

The Tombstone

by Joy Lackey
Personal Care Attendant
Willow Brook at Delaware Run



Upon the path where mortal journeys cease
You walk between the graves with searching eyes
Among the dead what do you seek?
On pillars of stone like rigid sentries rise

Tread softly near with whispered feet
For someday your dust will mirror mine
You bow your head my tombstone to greet
Covered now by moss and time

Trace with your finger my name etched in stone
Wonder awhile at a story of old
Rest on the grass that covers my bones
There's much I can teach though my lips may be cold

Learn life's truths in this quiet place
Shrouded with mystery at eternity's door
Ponder your choices and Jesus's grace
Be still and let your spirit soar

I lived and died by God's good plan
Do not mourn the end of my days
In Heaven's arms my life began
I live on still His name be praised!

A note from the poet...

I wrote The Tombstone on a sunny day walking through a cemetery, listening to Debussy's Clair de Lune. I saw a name and dates on a tombstone and was suddenly curious about the life that person had led and the rich history he left behind. I then imagined the reverse, wondering who it might be someday staring at my grave, and what I would tell them about life if I could.



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were made to honor
the living

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Grace Lackey

Lucretia Wellman
Frederick & Susan Vierow



This page of Reflections is in memory of Emily Jansma, a long-time resident of Willow Brook Christian Home.

Spring at Willow Brook:

Construction Begins on all Three Campuses

The sounds of hammers, drills, and workers shouting across the beams of Willow Brook has already begun. By autumn Willow Brook Christian Home and Willow Brook Christian Village will have whole new looks, and by this time next year Willow Brook at Delaware Run will have three stories of apartments and suites ready to welcome new neighbors:

The entrance to **The Home**, just off Lazelle Road and US 23 north of Worthington, will be expanded to welcome visitors and residents alike in a more access-friendly configuration.

Walls are being removed and pushed out into the courtyards at The Courtyard Restaurant in **The Village**, and a new fireplace will rise in the center, soaring to the top of the octagonal roof. A wood-fired oven in the Chef's courtyard will offer pizzas and grilled foods to residents and guests year around.

Delaware Run will add a new wing to reduce the waiting list with six more transitional living apartments, and the assisted living center will acquire 26 more rooms and suites. Café 100, the assisted living restaurant, will be expanded once again to accommodate the people moving in.

Nine named LeadingAge Stars



Nine staff members were honored as 2016 Stars by LeadingAge Ohio, the trade association for not-for-profit organizations that provide senior housing and services.

They were feted at a luncheon on March 30, along with other non-supervisory staff in member facilities — quite an honor.

Above front row are Charity Roush (transitional aide, Delaware Run), Tiarra Washington (housekeeper, Home), Sharon Brown (culinary team, Delaware Run), Regina Somerville (personal care attendant, Home).

In the back row are Tiffany Gilletly (culinary team, Village), Caitlyn Collins (personal care attendant, Home), Glory Lewis (personal care attendant, Delaware Run), Nathan Bonofiglio (restaurant server, Village). Barbara Thompson (nursing assistant, Village) is not pictured.

Save the Date:

Senior Sharing Time When Opportunity Knocks Open the Door

October 11, 2016

Willow Brook Christian Village
Delaware, Ohio

Second Mile Award Honors Staff



*Courtney Wandling
Willow Brook
Christian Village*



*Kelly Frentsos
Willow Brook at
Delaware Run*



*Katherine Miller
Willow Brook
Christian Home*

Three Willow Brook employees, one from each campus, were honored with the Second Mile Award at the annual Christmas party in December.

Floor leader Courtney Wandling was described as being keenly aware of the residents' needs and respectfully anticipating them. Her great service and attention to detail were lauded by a nominator.

Kelly Frentsos goes beyond her duties as an activities director at Delaware Run to forge relations between independent and assisted living residents, and provides many opportunities for them to intermingle across the community to create one cohesive neighborhood. Her vision of a campus united is coming to life.

Home housekeeper Katherine Miller has a great attitude about her job, said one nominator. "She enjoys keeping everything clean. She always has a smile for everyone. The residents know they can count on her to help with earrings, sweaters, whatever little extras she can do. She makes them smile."

Willow Brook presents the Second Mile Award to one person on each campus annually, based on nominations and committee selection. The name comes from Christ's admonition in Matthew 5:41 "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."

John and Miriam Wagner moved to Willow Brook's Delaware Run community in 2012, capping many decades of social advocacy and brave protest for causes they fervently espoused.

John died last July, finally succumbing to the effects of a polio attack suffered 69 years before at age 14. He was sentenced to a lifelong reliance on crutches and later, a motorized wheelchair. The disease relentlessly took its toll on his muscles, his mobility, and finally his breathing, but he never wavered in using his voice to advocate love and justice. Miriam lives on in the apartment they shared. "The disease left John with significant paralysis," she says, "but his brain worked great."

Great indeed. He studied philosophy at Haverford College and the Sorbonne in Paris, theology at Yale Divinity School and Drew Theological Seminary, and completed his Ph.D. in education at The Ohio State University. In 1996, John retired from his teaching position at United Theological Seminary in Dayton. Prior to his 23-year teaching career, he served as minister for two United Methodist churches in Ohio.

Miriam and John met in 1952 at a retreat in the Finger Lakes region of New York. "We were about the only young people there," recalls Miriam, "so we were bound to meet." They married the next year.

As a minister and later an educator, John picked up the baton of justice in the causes of civil rights and peace. In 1963, on a civil rights mission to the South, he was nearly arrested with fellow protestors in Mississippi. They escaped only because it was the weekend President Kennedy was assassinated and "the whole world was in turmoil," Miriam recalls.

Asked if she worried about his confrontations with the Ku Klux Klan on that trip, Miriam answered, "Yes, of course. People were being killed. We had three young children, but John was doing what he was called to do."

In the 1960s, John and fellow protestors kept frequent vigils at the entrance to the segregated Athletic Club in downtown Columbus. "They allowed blacks in the club only one day a year – when they hosted the Ohio State football team," says Miriam.



Delaware Run resident Miriam Wagner, cradling a photo of her late husband, John.



John [Wagner] picked up the baton of justice in the causes of civil rights and peace.

They persistently passed out literature to patrons, and groups began to refuse to go there, which led to the club's eventual desegregation.

John was an advocate for world peace, and he put his own safety on the line to press the issue. In the 1980s, he was arrested for civil disobedience at the Federal Building in Dayton, protesting American involvement in the war in Nicaragua. Says Miriam,

"John and his fellow protestors would intentionally cross police lines to get arrested. They felt this was necessary to gain the attention of the press for the causes they were protesting."

Miriam, a nurse, committed to serve "the least of these" by working 27 years at inner-city clinics in Columbus and Dayton that attended to the homeless and poorest citizens of those communi-

ties. And she often accompanied John in his protest activities, including a time in 2003 when they joined 3,000 others to protest President Bush's speech in Cincinnati declaring his intention to invade Iraq.

Their three children, Patricia, John, and David, have continued Mom and Dad's activist ways. Patricia, in the 1980s, served as a missionary in The Philippines, and documented human rights abuses of the Ferdinand Marcos regime. She wrapped the documents in Christmas paper so Miriam and John could smuggle them out after a visit.

Those papers were used in the trial of the Philippine president.

Son John was arrested in 1981 with other protestors at the launching of the nuclear-armed submarine *Corpus Christi*, Latin for "Body of Christ," because they objected to naming an

implement of death after Jesus. (Editor's note: Talk about using the Lord's name in vain!)

Son David is a CBS news anchor for KIRO-7 in Seattle.

"I am proud of my John, and I am proud of our children," says Miriam. "They have responded as a matter of conscience to the causes to which they have been called. They have made a difference."

Reflections

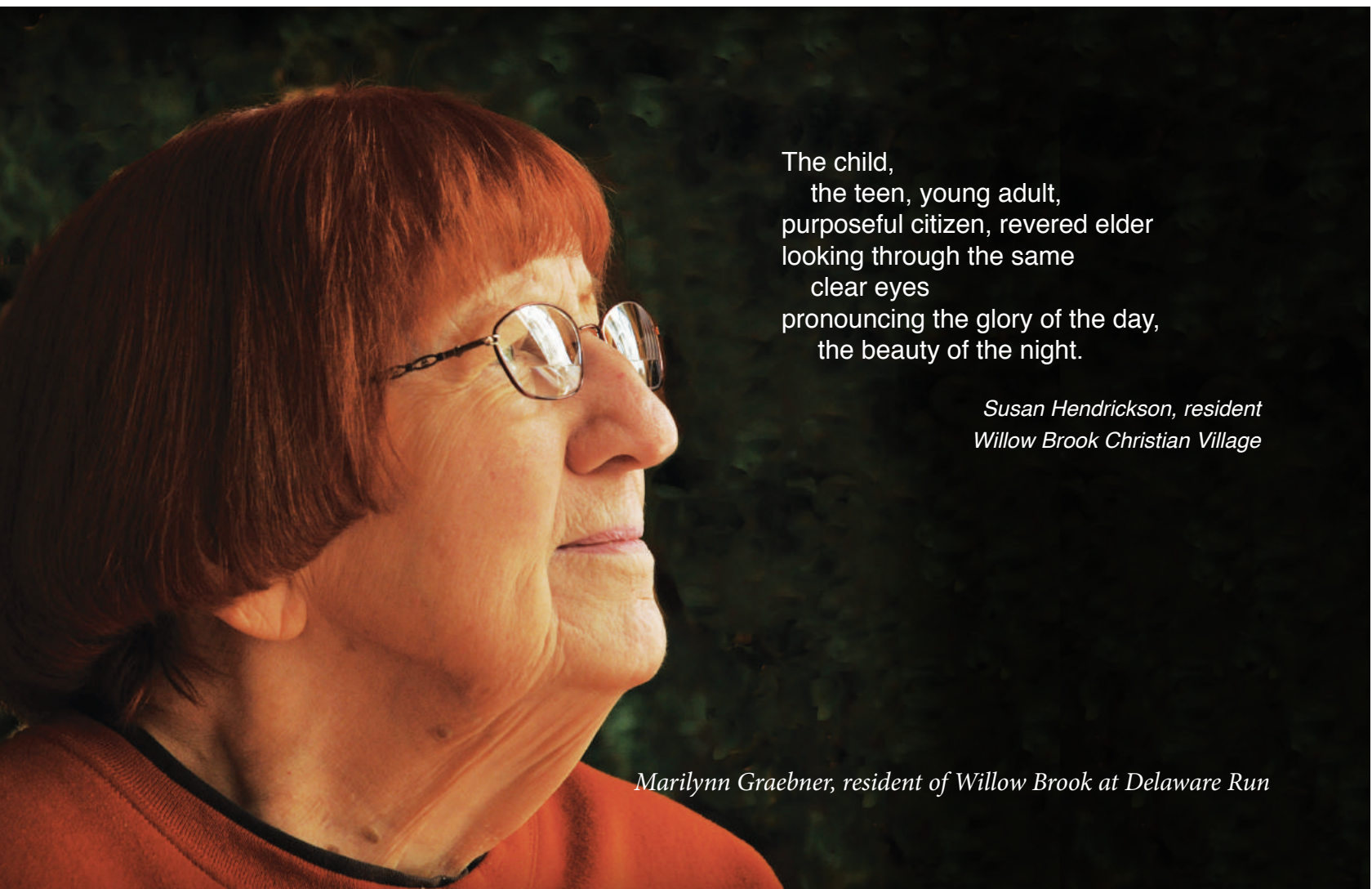
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The child,
the teen, young adult,
purposeful citizen, revered elder
looking through the same
clear eyes
pronouncing the glory of the day,
the beauty of the night.

*Susan Hendrickson, resident
Willow Brook Christian Village*

Marilynn Graebner, resident of Willow Brook at Delaware Run