

REFLECTIONS

VOLUME 45 NUMBER 4 | WINTER 2023 | HOPE



WILLOW BROOK CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

CONTENTS

THE HOPE IN CHANGE

By Troy McKnight CEO, WBCC
There is hope in change, even when it is not easy. Read what Troy has to say about hope in times of transition.

DISCOVERING HOPE IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

By JoEllen Smith, resident at Willow Brook at Delaware Run
Hear how one resident's journey with grief, loss, and despair has transformed into hope.

HOLDING ON TO HOPE

By Cathy Courtice, Director of Community Relations, WBCC
& Kristen Waby, Director of Culinary Services, WBCH
Read Willow Brook Christian Home's Director of Culinary Services, Kristen Waby's cancer journey and read some advice from her for those who are struggling.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Gentle readers,
Hope is defined as "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen." Hope is so many things: the birth of a baby 2000+ years ago. Candles and lights shining in the darkness. The anticipation of a visit from a loved one or friend. A phone call with good news. Faith and optimism in the face of change. The prospect of peace. Thank you to longtime reader, Karen, for suggesting this theme. Our prayer is that this winter issue, which we have packed with stories and images of hope, will bolster, inspire, and sustain you throughout the season and perhaps long after. We'll see you again in the spring. Until then, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

3

WILLOW BROOK CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Three campuses • Not-for-profit • Churches of Christ

Willow Brook Christian Home Willow Brook Christian Village
55 Lazelle Road 100 Willow Brook Way South
Columbus, Ohio 43235 Delaware, Ohio 43015
Phone: 614-885-3300 Phone: 740-369-0048

Willow Brook at Delaware Run
100 Delaware Crossing West
Delaware, Ohio 43015
Phone: 740-201-5640

Independent Living • Skilled Rehab
Transitional Living • Respite
Assisted Living • Memory Care
Long-Term Care • Adult Day Program

Reflections is published quarterly by
Willow Brook Christian Communities
Cathy Courtice, Editor
Christina Dresdow, Designer



willow-brook.org



TRIBUTE GIFTS

To Honor the Living

Linda Bill

Dave & Julie Duff

Donna French

C. Lee Bracken

James Hynek

Lori & Donald Bentley

Dorothy "Dottie" Knight

Elizabeth Bedinghaus

Helen Nally

Faith Reidenbach & Beverly Caley

The Regalsky Family

David & Carol Camp

Eleanor Singer

Janet Stevens

Barbara Wells

Elizabeth Bedinghaus

Willow Brook by Day Staff

Jonathan & Jane Pierce

Harvey "Warren" Zachman

Mark Zachman

TRIBUTE GIFTS

Memorial Contributions
Sept. 28 – Nov. 27, 2023

George Alexander

Alice Baker

Lois Dale

John & Sue Dickman

Joe Evans & Frances Veverka

Robert & Mary Holm

Corinne Lyman

Joan Maxwell

William McCartney

Robert & Nancy Rietz

Richard F. Seebode

Ann N. Tyler

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Margaret Alexander

Lois Dale

Richard C. Atkinson

Carol A. Roden

Betty H. Baker

Dennis & Katherine Mills

Helen C. Baker

Frank & Deanna Shirley

Sara Beaber

Vonda Spearman

Judy Bear

Dan Bear

JoAnn Bill

Linda Bill

John Bill

Linda Bill

Marion & Anita

Blaszkowiak

Irene C. Blaszkowiak

Harriet M. Bracken

C. Lee Bracken

Edythe "Edie" Breithaupt

Mark Breithaupt

Virginia & Robert Gongaware

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Roy Broker

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Margery D. Burkhart

David & Carol Camp

Paul Busche

Janet Busche

Paul Busche continued

William & Patricia Busche

Verila "Virgie" Bussman

Mark & Christine Bussman

Frances Carlton

April L. Jackson

Mary Ellen Cerato

William & Marianne Burke

S. Frank & Betty Chappell

Karen Susenna

James "Jim" Chidester

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Marilyn B. Cope

William & Julie Aldrich

Don Davis

Glenn Beaber

Irene C. Blaszkowiak

Larry & Delphia Clark

Patricia F. Crowley

Delaware Eyes

John & Sue Dickman

Robert & Linda Gaffey

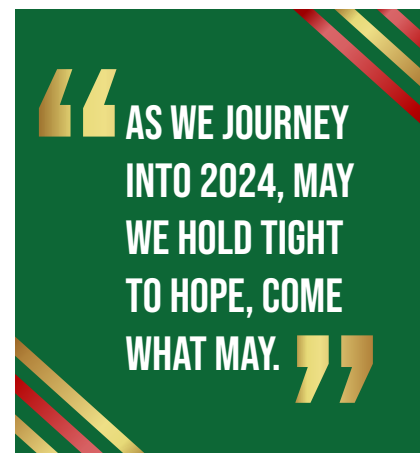
James & Pauline Kossow

William McCartney

Bonnie McCoy



FIRESIDE CHATS WITH CEO TROY MCKNIGHT



Troy McKnight, CEO of Willow Brook Christian Communities.

Photo by Christina Dresdow

THE HOPE IN CHANGE

The decision to change jobs marries a multitude of emotions: excitement, uncertainty, and most importantly, hope. Hope becomes the guiding force, the light along the path, the sustainer of the journey.

And what a year of change 2023 has been, not only for me and my family, but for Willow Brook. In January, the legendary Willow Brook leader of 48 years honorably retired and welcomed me to my new role. It was a new beginning in a new state, with new residents and new teammates. Excitement abounded, uncertainty was held at a distance, and hope-filled aspirations loomed large.

My family joined me mid-year as we moved from our Texas home of 22 years to Ohio. The planning was mentally exhausting. The sorting, culling, and physical moving of years of accumulation was laborious. Luckily, Willow Brook residents and teammates encircled me with arms of love. Excitement morphed into the reality of this huge step. But while uncertainty weighed heavy, hope anchored the future.

The wheel of the year turned to autumn. Settling in was a daily task. Many new

decisions needed made as we navigated each day, many of which overflowed into the next day as night fell. It became overwhelming. Willow Brook residents and teammates exuded grace. The excitement became a burnt-out flame and uncertainty staked its (sizable) claim. Still, hope drifted on the breeze.

Then, the holiday season arrived. Event planning, parties, and memories filled each hour. Family and friends reunited to both tell and hear stories of the year's journey. The joy of forging new relationships and creating memories with residents and teammates infused me with holiday spirit. Excitement budded anew, uncertainty started to take a back seat, and hope shined bright, like the star so long ago.

There is hope in change, even when it is not easy; even when uncertainty exerts its hold. The change I experienced in 2023 led me to reflect on a verse in scripture, Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and future." It is a reminder that there is always a Greater Power at work.

Thank you to my new friends who presented this reminder to me through God's timing and spirit. Our life journeys are full of highs and lows, twists and turns, excitement and uncertainty, but hope is there through it all if we only reach out and grasp it. Hope gives us strength and urges us to persevere in the face of adversity. It is an anchor in turbulent times.


Perhaps most importantly, hope is foundational to the future. As we journey into 2024, may we hold tight to hope, come what may. 



Photo by Shane Tucker

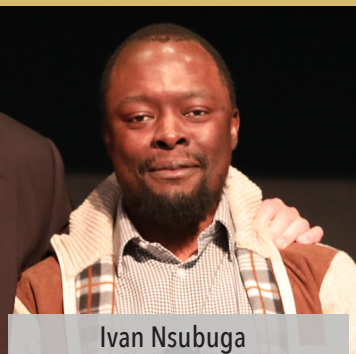
Troy at the Willow Brook Teammate Christmas Party 2023. The first Christmas party in person since 2019.

2023 SECOND MILE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Each year around Christmas, at all three Willow Brook campuses, staff and residents nominate staff members for The Second Mile Award - an award which recognizes the staff member's dedication and hard work and their willingness to "go the extra mile." This year the awards were presented in person at our Willow Brook Teammate Christmas Party! Congratulations to our 2023 recipients; we are so thankful for all you do for Willow Brook!



Arlene Bernalles
The Home



Ivan Nsubuga
Delaware Run



Lori Lewis
The Village

Photos by Shane Tucker

DISCOVERING HOPE IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

by Willow Brook at Delaware Run resident, JoEllen Smith

I first discovered hope in unexpected places when my husband and I first moved into our dream home at Willow Brook. After we had settled into the community, the reality of loss left me feeling hopeless and withdrawn: people I had grown to know and love were passing. Dwelling on my grief led to my own physical decline. In my isolation I noticed my neighbors had also lost dear friends, yet they were out visiting with one another and enjoying life. That was the moment I realized an attitude adjustment was needed. I set out to search for **hope**. I slid into my sneakers and bravely opened my front door.

I was greeted by my roof mate, John, who was excited about his new bird feeder. John and his wife Verna were going on with life after several family losses. I learned from John to keep hoping for tomorrow. Later that year, John and Verna were blessed with their first great-grandchild.

The next thing I knew, a ball of white fluff yipped at my feet to play. Joan's new little pup cocked his head waiting to chase a ball. Joan had lost her previous sweet dog and now little Toby brought joy to all he kissed. Joan's cheeks flushed with joy. And I laughed at her cute companion, my first laugh in a long time. Joan and Toby taught me hope can be comforting puppy kisses and can help us laugh today.



Toby nearly knocked down George as he made his daily excursion up our street, pushing his walker ahead of him. George always had grace and peace about him even after he lost his sweet bride. He was always a joy to greet. George taught me his hope did not die with Margaret. His hope only grew stronger. George knew for certain he would be with her again. I learned hope can be a strong bond.

I continued my quest for more hope right up to the front door of the main building. A lovely floral arrangement graced a small memorial table in honor of

Margaret. At the office window a cheerful "hello" greeted me. The receptionist's bright smile from the front desk shined hope into my soul. A nurse's kindness to a distressed resident soothed fears of my future care. The staff also mourned the passing of familiar residents they knew well, and they taught me hope must be shared.


I left the main building with a bounce in my step and a peaceful smile. The world seemed brighter, and the birds sang sweeter. I had learned that hope lives wherever we seek it - even in unexpected places. 

Illustration:
Two Things At Once an original charcoal on paper artwork by Willow Brook Christian Village Director of Nursing Heather Christopher.
"When I think of 'hope' I think of light in the darkness. It's a gentle, whispering light that battles the dark, heavy space of despair."

Don Davis continued

Thomas Moore
Curt & Ruth Morrow
Helen J. Reppart
Robert & Nancy Rietz
Richard F. Seebode
Donald Skinn & Carol Nack
Brenda Spradling
Mitchell & Dyana Welch
Linda Wilson

Nancy DeTray

Lisa Mack

Charles "Chuck" Dickman

Glenn Beaber
John & Sue Dickman
Robert & Linda Gaffey
Joan Maxwell
William McCartney
Thomas Moore
Vonda Spearman
Brenda Spradling
Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Reuben & Eleanor Dickman

John & Sue Dickman

Vivian DiLillo

William McCartney
Thomas Moore

Curtis Dunham

Melissa Ashley

Joan Eckhardt

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Bob & Barbara England

Michael & Judith England

Davie Esau

William & Rebecca Chaffin
Rosemary Coe
Michael & Judith England
Joe Evans & Frances Veverka
Julia A. Foster
Theodore Gach
Peter & Mary Grace
Elinor Heingartner
Colleen J. Huckabee
Larry & Carol Humes
Douglas & Elaine Palmer
Philip & Mary Rees
Helen J. Reppart
Martha J. Seelenbinder
Christopher & Davee Setzer
Eleanor Singer
Sarah Smith
Amy Jo Sommers
Shirley Taylor
Marilyn J. Terry
William Warner

Davie Esau continued

Evelyn Winter
June Wright

Donna Featherstone

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Climer

Ed & Jean Flahive

Michael & Judith England

Tim Flahive

Michael & Judith England

Betty Griffith

Gary & Sherrie Andrus

John T. Hayes

Karen S. Hayes

Bonnie Higgins

William Eberst
Peter & Mary Grace
William & Darlene Leshnock

Harry & Mary Jo Humes

Bradley Humes

James & Peggy Hynek

Lori & Donald Bentley

Johanna "Joedy" Jenkins

Joyce Barker

Edna Klotz

The Klotz Family

Robert "Bob" Krumlauf

John & Sue Dickman
Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Thomas J. Lasley

Thomas & Kathryn Brod
Thomas & Janet Lasley

Donald Loverde

John & Sue Dickman

Vincent & Evelyn Loverde

John & Sue Dickman

Jane Lucas

Vonda Spearman

Beth Mansperger

Vonda Spearman

LaVonne Moore

Mary Anderson
David & Jane Brause
Nancy Burdsall
Kim Cogswell
First Federal Community Bank
Robert & Linda Gaffey
Gary & Randy Garrett
Virginia & Robert Gongaware
Robert & Mary Holm
Dorothy M. Knight
Stanley & Mary Krider
Joan Larson
Nancy A. Levanduski
Joan Maxwell
William McCartney

LaVonne Moore continued

Thomas Moore
Robert & Nancy Rietz
Dean & Lois Sather
Kay Sather
Richard F. Seebode
Vonda Spearman
Lenny Sutandar
The Eppley Group
Ann N. Tyler
Joyce Wagner
Mitchell & Dyana Welch
C. Sue & Doug Wilson

Raymond Nally

Faith Reidenbach & Beverly Caley

David Nelson

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Twila Orians

Michael & Judith England

Arlene Palenshus

Rosemary Coe
Julia A. Foster
Peter & Mary Grace
Douglas & Elaine Palmer
Helen J. Reppart
Nancy Robinson
Helen Sferra
Sarah Smith
Shirley Taylor
Marilyn J. Terry
William Warner
Evelyn Winter
June Wright

Galena Phillips

Rose Blackburn
Florence Shinkle

Florence Poulson

Thomas & Sara Poulson

Gene & Maude Prince

Rebecca L. Harris

Joann Reidenbach

Delaware Women's Club
Virginia & Robert Gongaware
Robin Herrington-Bowen
Dorothy M. Knight
William McCartney
Emily Reidenbach
Faith Reidenbach & Beverly Caley
Unitarian Universalist
Congregation East
Mitchell & Dyana Welch

William Reidenbach

Faith Reidenbach & Beverly Caley

Mary C. Roden

Carol A. Roden

James "Jim" Roesch

Virginia & Robert Gongaware
Dorothy M. Knight
Martin & Sonja Roesch
Richard F. Seebode

Don Rost

Thomas & Sara Poulson

Beverly Rundio

Virginia & Robert Gongaware
Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Julia Slonecker

Stanley & Mary Krider
Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Richard Spearman

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Eileen Stimpert

Rosemary Coe
James & Pauline Kossow

Corrine Synder-Poulson

Thomas & Sue Poulson

Mary Thomas

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Nova Weller

Virginia & Robert Gongaware
Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Helen Williams

John & Sue Dickman

Phyllis Wood

C. Lee Bracken

Nicki Zanetos

Lisa Mack



Two family members hang a photo ornament of their loved on the tree at the Willow Brook Christian Village Memory Tree ceremony – to honor residents who have passed away.


HOLDING ON TO HOPE

Two days before Christmas in 2021, Kristen Waby, Director of Culinary Services at Willow Brook Christian Home, got the worst kind of life-changing news: she had Metastatic Breast Cancer. As you might guess, the news was devastating and made for a very tough holiday. Yet with characteristic positivity and aplomb, Kristen took the news, and what she had to do next, in stride. "I'm a fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants kind of person," Kristen says. "I try to roll with whatever comes and find the good and funny along the way."

Kristen was blessed to begin treatment at The Stefanie Spielman Comprehensive Breast Center at The Ohio State University soon after her diagnosis and started Chemotherapy in early January

2022. That summer, Kristen underwent a double mastectomy and had 30 lymph nodes removed, soon followed by a breast restructuring and radiation. She did 25 forty-minute rounds of radiation every other day after she got off work.

"For sure, 2022 was a year of lessons for me," Kristen says. "I'm not good at asking for help, but I learned I couldn't do everything by myself. I'm a person who can't sit still, but I often had to sit still. I knitted nine blankets that year! Also, I'm a chef, and Chemo made me lose my sense of taste. Your limitations are made very clear to you."

In January 2023, Kristen received a clean bill of health and is currently in remission. "My prayer is that all people battling cancer have the support and treatment they need," says Kristen. "But hope is also strong medicine. Hold tight to it, no matter what." 



“ When I was in Ft. Lauderdale on a little trip away after my last chemo treatment, I was in a restaurant with my girlfriends eating dinner on a patio overlooking the beach. A gentleman tapped me on the shoulder, told me I looked great, and to hang in there.

He shared his own story with me. He wasn't supposed to be alive, his diagnosis was terminal. He beat the odds and won his battle, and I teared up because the kindness and compassion was overwhelming. He gave me hope in that moment that I, too, would beat it! He appeared and disappeared very quickly, and I believe that was a moment of divine intervention. **”**

Kristen Waby with her treatment infusion pump, who she named Chuck, because as she says, you have to "find the funny."

ADVICE FROM KRISTEN

We know the issue of cancer hits home for many people. If folks have not battled it themselves, they know someone who has. In fitting with the giving spirit of the season, Kristen has the following advice for people who are newly diagnosed with cancer or who need some support as they continue their fight.

Jesus Take the Wheel

Give it to God when it is too much. There will be some very bad days physically, emotionally and mentally. When it's too much, you have to put it somewhere, so let Jesus take the wheel.

Journal the Journey

Keep a journal of your treatments or your loved one's treatment. Medications, side effects, how long it took for side effects to kick in, how long they last, what medications helped to relieve the side effects. All of this helps SO much because it makes it easier to plan your life around your treatments and helps your medical team know what to prescribe to help ease any suffering. It also gives you just a tiny measure of control and reminds you that the symptoms will subside.

Find Your Tribe

Seek out and talk with others that have "been there, done that" and have seven different 'I Hate Cancer' t-shirts! There is no one who can empathize more than someone who has already been through it. Find your cancer tribe!

Find a Buddy

Find a treatment buddy! My mom was mine and drove from Minnesota to Ohio every few weeks so she could be at every single chemo session. She was there after both surgeries, as well. Make sure your buddy is someone you can rely on, someone who you don't have to entertain. There were some days towards the end of chemo when I slept a lot during treatment and sometimes we just sat in silence. I would knit and she would do her embroidery, and it was calm and quiet. Just knowing she was there helped me more than she will ever know.

Ask for Help

Ask for help when you need it and accept help when it is offered. People don't always know what to say or do for you. It can be a very small gesture or a large one. Ask and accept because it brings people joy and comfort to know that they have helped you, and it can make all the difference in your day.

Mindset is Everything

This is probably the most important piece of advice I can give: Mindset is everything and plays such a major role in a battle like cancer. I went into treatment thinking not that I was going to die. I was determined to get through treatment and then genuinely live. Cancer is humbling and sometimes extremely frustrating. As a person who never sits still, facing mental and physical limitations was really hard for me. My advice is to always find the funny and the good! That is what kept me going forward every day. I named my (treatment) infusion pump Chuck and I dressed up Chuck several times. He wore a Chuck Norris face mask. Find the funny and have fun with it.

All in all, there can be some very tough days, and on those days, sometimes all you will have to hold on to is hope! Hope that you will make it to the end, hope that you won't break, hope that eventually you can heal and move on, and hope that you can be grateful and find the good and the funny stuff.


Whatever you do throughout your journey, **Do Not Ever Give Up Hope!** 

Photo by Christina Dresdow

Kristen Waby, in full chef garb at Willow Brook Christian Home, shares about her cancer journey.



REFLECTIONS

Willow Brook Christian Communities
100 Delaware Crossing West
Delaware, Ohio 43015

Address service requested

*Please call 740-201-5688 when
you have an address update.*



NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DELAWARE, OH
PERMIT #102



Robin in the snow at Willow
Brook at Delaware Run. Photo
by resident Irene Blaszkowiak