

## “Where Two or Three Gather in My Name...”

A letter to Larry, Willow Brook’s CEO, from Mike Lohre

I know that my wife, Irene, is doing the Lord’s work, and I don’t believe in care for the elderly as a business. I see it as a ministry, to do unto others as we would have done unto us, to care for the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the poor — for all those who the Lord calls us to serve.

So I was praying on Sunday, and the Lord gave me a phrase: If you want revival in this country, you’d better be willing to be a fool — not cool — for Jesus Christ.

So what we did Sunday night was come to the parking lot of The Home at 8:30, just three average Christians, and we praised God for an hour. We read His word: Psalms 100, Psalms 91, and Psalms 118, all of them out loud. We thanked the Lord for each one of you in the facility and everyone involved. We prayed protection and asked for mercy on all the elderly and care workers, the maintenance and administration and for you, Larry, and your family.

We lifted holy hands, and we may have looked foolish. We don’t care. Faith without works is dead. We want to support you, and this is just to say we love you, and Christ loves you more than we can comprehend...

It was only three of us, and we don’t want attention, thanks or recognition. Give all the glory to God who set us free from fear in Jesus Christ. Thank you, Jesus, and God bless Willow Brook.



*Irene and Mike Lohre. Irene is a personal care attendant at Willow Brook Christian Home. Husband Mike is a professor of English at The Ohio State University. He wrote his letter just as COVID-19 was starting its invasion of The Home.*

### A Message from the CEO

The coronavirus found us. This spring at Willow Brook Christian Home, our nursing home/assisted living in Columbus, the deadly microbes crept in under our radar, despite our best defensive measures. Like so many other nursing homes in the nation at this time of the Great Pandemic, people died. Eleven of them.

Make no mistake, by most every benchmark, The Home is one of the very best nursing homes/assisted livings in Ohio. Residents and their families love us.

But the virus is no respecter of accolades. The COVID blitzkrieg roared through, inflicting heartbreak and wreckage, and bringing great sadness to this humble ministry.

Calm now has returned, leaving us to quietly mourn the eleven. I am grateful to all who have offered support and sent up prayers on our behalf at this dark hour.

*Larry Harris, CEO*

*When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."*

Fred Rogers ("Mr. Rogers")  
1928-2003

Everyone on the planet is suffering losses in this Age of The Great Pandemic. At the three Willow Brooks, we have been pretty much buttoned up since March. No visitors. (Almost) no activities. No bus trips. No worship services. Our restaurants are shut up like clams. TVs in our common places have fallen dark as midnight.

In my own life, I am denied an extortionist-priced hotdog with my sons at a Cleveland Indians game, a Saturday mocha with Janet and daughter Becky at Starbucks, and, most hurtful of all, a summer trip to our beloved Vermont.

Most of us have been saddled with a burden of boredom by these menacing bugs.

Losses. So many losses. We all are missing our families, if we are minding the virus rules. (If you aren't, please keep your distance from me and mine.) Janet and I have had some "distance visits" with our son and his wife, and our unborn grandchild – us on the porch, they 20 feet out in the grass. Better than nothing, I suppose.

And just think of all the death. Ohio Stadium, the autumn venue for Buckeye football, could be filled one and a third times with all the Americans who have succumbed. And you can't even properly grieve the fallen at a funeral.

These microbial thieves have snatched so much from us.

One morning in April while driving in to the office, I was thinking about the students. Spring is the season of proms and graduations, and graduation open houses, and tearful reunions with grandma and grandpa when they fly in for the commencement. I thought about the young brides and grooms who are missing their own weddings. All these happy times now are nothing more than sad dreams of what might have been.

These COVID losses in one respect are minor in the whole of a life, even downright trivial when measured against the pain that could come from not minding the virus rules. But in another sense, they

are huge. Each loss will forever leave a gaping hole in someone's life. One day we surely will wake up from this nightmare and return to some semblance of normal, but the memories of all the things we are missing won't even be there.

This coronavirus monster has grabbed Willow Brook by the lapels, slammed us against the wall, and clubbed us without mercy. Willow Brook Christian Home, our nursing home/assisted living in Columbus, has been crushed by this raging beast. This spring, despite our best defensive efforts, 11 residents died there. Some 50 others – both residents and staff – were smitten.

I humbly contend that Willow Brook Christian Home is one of the best facilities in Ohio.

But these heartless pathogens pay no mind to perfect inspections, a five-star rating by the feds, gushing praise from families and colleagues. Once the microbes crept in, they were determined to have their way.

Things now are calming, thank you dear God. I don't know if we are moving into the predicted summer slump, or the virus brute simply got tired of toying with us and lumbered away. Either way, we gladly accept the deliverance.

I was deeply moved during the six-week siege by the selfless devotion of the Home's staffers who day after day walked straight into the fight with

their eyes open. Some of their coworkers fled when the bugs invaded, and I am trying to not draw judgments. But those who held fast ranked their own safety beneath their love for our residents, and they have my eternal thanks. Many fell sick. Thank God none died. All now have recovered.

I considered listing the names of these precious souls, but decided not to for fear of leaving someone out. So let me just say, I pray that God has reserved a special place in heaven for you angels. You know who you are. Your coworkers know, as do your families. I think I know everyone. And our God certainly knows. We have taken to calling you our heroes. Understand, that term is not used lightly. You are our heroes, and we love you.

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







*Volunteers Rick and Lisa Gawronski sang songs and wrote a message to Village resident Marcella Helgeson. The couple made window visits to lift residents' spirits.*

## “We saw giants rise up.”

By Erin MacLellan, Community Relations Director

**T**here's no doubt that the coronavirus wreaked havoc on the world, especially for the elderly. At Willow Brook, we watched our friends suffer and our communities close to visitors and loved ones.

Yet in all the adversity, we saw a silver lining. Many positive things happened at Willow Brook. We found creative ways to solve thorny problems and to connect meaningfully with our residents, staff and family members. Here are just a few examples of the ways Willow Brook pulled together.

One of the biggest challenges was finding personal protective equipment (PPE) like masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and gowns to keep residents and staff safe. Traditional supply chains dried up, no matter the source. Suddenly, employees at Willow Brook who didn't know an N95 mask from a handkerchief were calling everyone they knew who might help.

At Delaware Run, the accounting team hunted down supplies from all around the world, from China

to Amish country, and they turned into detectives to avoid scamsters. At The Home, staff went to a distillery, bought alcohol, and made their own hand sanitizer. At The Village, employees ordered extra-large garbage bags in case gowns couldn't be found (luckily, the Amish sent some).

Residents and employees at all three campuses started sewing masks and collecting donations from the local community and from as far away as Taiwan.

Knowing that residents would be lonely when our campuses closed to visitors, family members came for window, patio or balcony visits, all conducted at a six-foot distance or by cell phone. And staff helped residents connect with their families

*continued on page 7*

**...we found the courage to go on  
and to care for each other**



**Kaden Horn, LPN (front) with Lori Lewis, Director of Nursing at The Village. These brave staff members suited up to work in the COVID isolation unit at The Village. The Village closed its adult day care center and converted it into the special unit.**

# *Tribute Gifts*

## Memorial Contributions

February 24, 2020 – June 2, 2020

**Ray Andrews**

Alice Andrews

**Richard C. Atkinson**

Carol A. Roden

**William Baskwill**

John & Sue Dickman

**Lennora “Lynn” Brown**

James & Carol Jaeger

Kelsey Malone

Randal & Deborah Mandt

**Dana Brush**

Jim & Elaine Blosser

Marilyn Brown

Martha Brush & Beverly Clark

Raymond Clark

Mariella C. Dunnan

Corinne D. Esau

Theodore & Judy Gach

James & Pauline Kossow

Helen Nally

Jerry & Joy Norris

Arlene Palenshus

Douglas & Elaine Palmer

Helen J. Reppart

Sarah Smith

Donald & Amy Jo Sommers

Lucretia M. Wellman

WBCV Residents Advisory Council

Evelyn Winter

**Barbara Campana**

Jennifer Kutz

**Frances Carlton**

April L. Jackson

**S. Frank & Betty Chappell**

Larry & Janet Harris

Karen Susenna

Randy & Jill Yates

**Nancy DeTray**

Lisa Mack

**Dora Devers**

Mariella C. Dunnan

Corinne D. Esau

Anna F. Lasley

Helen Nally

Arlene Palenshus

Helen J. Reppart

*Dora Devers, continued*

WBCV Residents Advisory Council

Evelyn Winter

**Reuben & Eleanor Dickman**

John & Sue Dickman

**Roy R. Estep**

Gary & Betty Baker

Perry & Jennifer Coate

Northland Church of Christ

Francis & Nancy Rynearson

Rick & Barbara Travis

Wayne Church of Christ

Randy & Jill Yates

**Waneta Estep**

Rick & Barbara Travis

Randy & Jill Yates

**Ardina Guglielmo**

John & Cecelia Arlia

DeMaris & Richard Davis

Carol McClure

Matthew Micci

**Audrey & Alberta Harris**

Larry & Janet Harris

**John T. Hayes**

Karen S. Hayes

**James E. Jackson**

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

**Norma Linville**

Harry & Sandy Shaw

**C. Norman Lisle**

Everett & Rebecca Krueger

Helen J. Reppart

**Donald Loverde**

John & Sue Dickman

**Vincent & Evelyn Loverde**

John & Sue Dickman

**Myles Nelson**

Jill Vrona

**Florence Poulson**

Thomas & Sara Poulson

**Patricia Powell**

Patricia Powell Family

**Gene & Emma “Maude” Prince**

Larry & Janet Harris

Rebecca L. Harris

Sharon Mathias

**Theresa Ritzman**

Arlene Palenshus

Donald & Amy Jo Sommers

**Mary C. Roden**

Carol A. Roden

**Don Rost**

Thomas & Sara Poulson

**Carolyn “Carrie” Schild**

American Legion Auxiliary, Attica, OH

Judith Blackford

Dorothy Robey

Mary Rogers

**William “Bill” Schulz**

Dianne L. Almendinger

**Ann Simons**

Arlene Palenshus

**Lawrence “Larry” Smith**

Donald & Amy Jo Sommers

**David & Patricia Staley**

Lloyd & Alice Baker

**Charles & Leah Stanley**

James & Pauline Kossow

**Joann Stash**

Elaine Stash

United States District Court Southern

District of Ohio

**Joan Strohl**

Robert & Linda Gaffey

Margaret Roberts

**Corrine Snyder-Poulson**

Thomas & Sara Poulson

**Mildred Thorne**

Arthur & Billie Thorne

**George F. Wellman**

Lucretia M. Wellman

**Max Wildermuth**

Jayne W. MacKay

**Helen Williams**

John & Sue Dickman

**Elaine S. Williamson**

James & Pauline Kossow

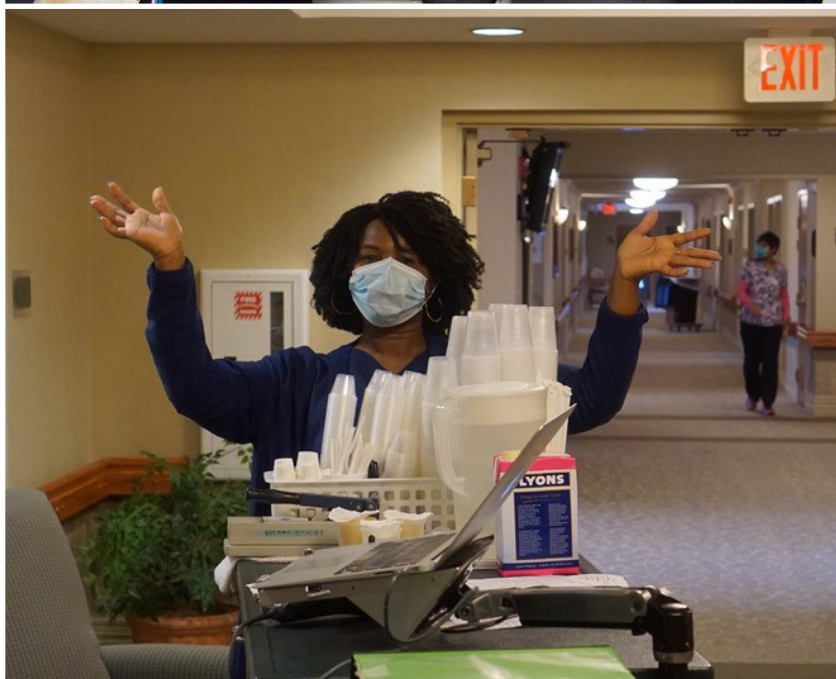
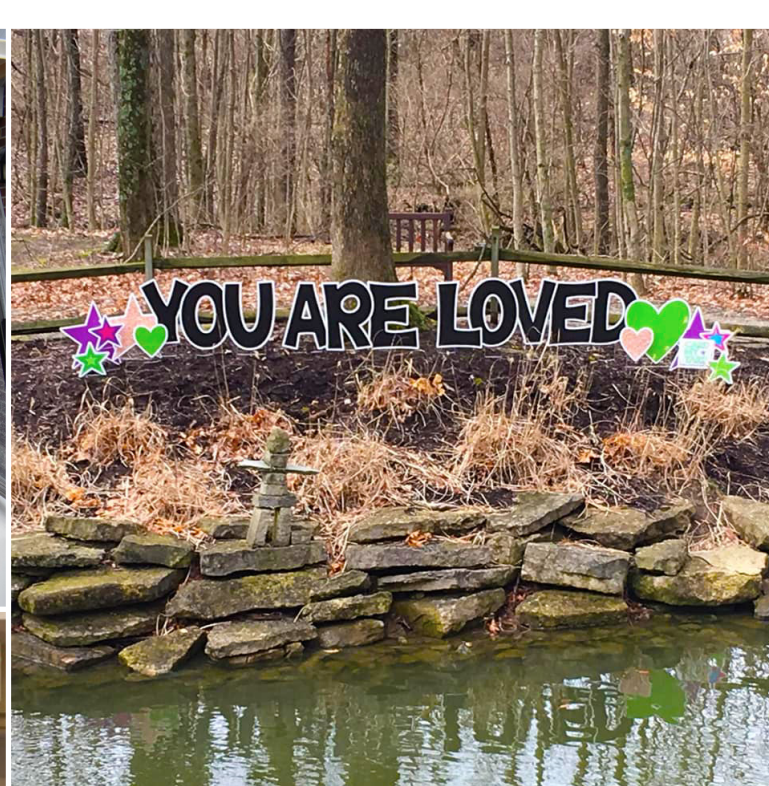
**Harry E. & Mary Williamson**

James & Pauline Kossow

**Nicki V. Zanetos**

Lisa Mack





Clockwise from left: Delaware Run servers Mary Ulicny and Jacob Coy delivering meals to residents' homes and rooms, a service provided on all campuses; local business Card My Yard shows its love for Willow Brook by putting up this display at The Village; Kristen Waby, culinary director at The Home, sewing masks to help protect residents and staff; resident Ila Phillips, 104, learning to FaceTime with her family; Emah Kaloko, LPN at The Home, with her nursing cart.





# Crowd on a Sunny Afternoon

By John Brinkerhoff, resident at Delaware Run

Trays filled with pinpoints of vivid color  
as tightly packed as sunflower seeds  
embrace the playing field.

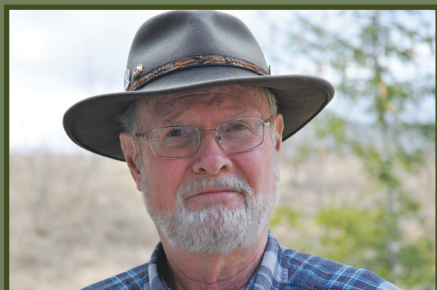
How many? Five thousand? Ten? More?  
But counting doesn't matter—  
every soul is here for happiness.

Look closer and you see fathers and their kids,  
old friends, new friends, boyfriends and girlfriends,  
neatly overdressed business guests,  
and a grandpa, maybe there for one last game  
with his good-hearted son, smiling serenely  
as he recalls the time The Mick stopped and said hello.

The rows are peppered with team colors on hats and shirts.  
Early on, people traipse up and down wide-stepped aisles  
carrying giant plastic cups and boxes or plates of food,  
which will be balanced on their laps before ending up  
under the seat for cleaning crews to clear away.  
And then a contented idleness assimilates the sunlight.

But there are sudden, small whirlpools of motion  
when the TV camera comes around.  
Young women clap hands and sway like hula dancers,  
or young men burst into manic activity,  
furiously wagging fingers, eyes bugged in contorted faces,  
shouting madness before settling back into their seats.

The home boys score; the crowd rises in a storm of sound—  
hands beat together, every voice soars, and every face smiles.  
Whether or not they ever remember it,  
they have this day. They will always have this day—  
no matter what new joys may arrive,  
or what horrors patiently wait.



*John Brinkerhoff is a resident of  
Willow Brook at Delaware Run.  
He is an award-winning author  
who has published numerous  
poems and a novel.*

## WILLOW BROOK CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Worthington, Ohio

### Willow Brook Christian Home

55 Lazelle Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43235  
Phone: (614) 885-3300

- Rehabilitation
- Skilled nursing
- Long-term care
- Assisted living

Delaware, Ohio

### Willow Brook Christian Village

100 Willow Brook Way South  
Delaware, Ohio 43015  
Phone: (740) 369-0048

- Retirement living
- Assisted living
- Rehabilitation
- Skilled nursing
- Memory care
- Long-term care
- Adult day services

### Willow Brook at Delaware Run

100 Delaware Crossing West  
Delaware, Ohio 43015  
Phone: (740) 201-5640

- Retirement living
- Transitional living
- Assisted living
- Memory care
- Medical offices

*Reflections is published quarterly by*

### Willow Brook Christian Communities

with offices at:

100 Delaware Crossing West  
Delaware, Ohio 43015  
Phone: (740) 201-5640

Erin MacLellan, Editor  
Joel Hornsby, Designer

*not for profit • Church of Christ*  
[www.willow-brook.org](http://www.willow-brook.org)



Larry,

*We don't know if we have any pull with God. If we do, we want you to know that every night, we pray for all of Willow Brook, from top to bottom, from start to finish.*

*God bless you all.*

*Jim and Polly Kossow*

---

**Jim and Polly Kossow are long-time Willow Brook supporters and volunteers. Over the past 30 years Polly's father and mother as well as her sister were cared for at Willow Brook healthcare centers. The Kossows have long been Willow Brook cheerleaders. As with so many friends, they have lent their moral and financial support during the Willow Brook coronavirus crisis.**

*continued from page 3*

using electronic devices and apps like Zoom, FaceTime and Skype.

Activity directors got creative. At The Home, there were wheelchair races. At The Village, a weekly talent show featuring residents and staff. At Delaware Run, a staff member created Tuesday Tea time and brought residents fresh-brewed tea, which she served in china cups as she settled in for a chat.

This is not to say that times were merry and bright. Heartache ensued, and residents often felt pushed to the limit. There were only so many times you could purge files and clean. There were only so many letters to write, and only so many times you could try to style your own hair.

Luckily, tender mercies abounded. A nurse at The Village, once a hair stylist, found time to curl the ladies' hair. The grateful ladies said the curls helped more than any pill. At The Home, when the darkest hours came, when residents were so sick and staff exhausted, employees from The Village and Delaware Run arrived to give relief, and family members came to pray.

And so it was, every day, we found the courage to go on and to care for each other. As CEO Larry Harris noted, "We saw giants rise up."



*Arlene Bernales (left) and Sally Russell, aides at The Home, send peace and love to everyone.*



Thank You, Delaware, for voting Willow Brook

**#1 Retirement Facility,  
#1 Assisted Living, and #1 Nursing Home**



Year after year, readers of *The Delaware Gazette* have voted Willow Brook Christian Communities as the best in the county.



# Reflections

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

Address service requested

Please call 740-201-5688  
with address updates.



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



*Hope for better times*

A rainbow of hope over Willow Brook at Delaware Run.  
Photo by Katelyn Hamman, personal care attendant.

