Thriving, Not Just Surviving, with a Little Help from Volunteers

Patricia Grillot’s home is an artist’s palette of vibrant color splashes. A purple quilt made by a friend adorns her couch; the small sunporch is hued in orange and blue; vibrant glassware adorns tables and shelves.

The self-labeled “Queen of Thrift” is not an interior designer. Instead, she has a knack for finding bargains in colors she loves. “Considering I have to live on a small, very fixed income, it’s good that I can find treasures among other people’s stuff!” she says with a laugh.

Simple delights balance the serious health issues Patricia faces daily. Due to a brain injury, she has problems with balance, mobility and coordination. She also struggles with organization and memory loss.

For the last 20 years, Patricia has relied on the kind assistance of volunteers through Independent Living, Inc. to help her manage small household tasks and outdoor responsibilities like shoveling snow.

“Volunteers have been important. They can do for me what I cannot, like standing on a step stool to change a light bulb,” Patricia explains. “Volunteers have been good for me, too. They become friends. And I’ve learned so much from everyone. I had a volunteer who shared a lot about her culture in India. Now I have a volunteer whose background is Polish. Grazyna is retired, and she knows exactly how to take charge of getting me organized!”

Grazyna Szylow retired after 18 years of working with developmentally disabled persons in Madison, and realized she didn’t want to “play bridge all day long.” That led to an interest in volunteering, and through an internet search, she found Independent Living’s volunteer program. She was matched with Patricia in the summer of 2016. “Now I feel useful,” Grazyna says with a beautiful accent. A native of Poland, Grazyna describes herself as an overly organized person, and is helping Patricia sort through things. “We started in the basement. Oh, there were so much, and I would ask Patricia, ‘do you really need it?’ We got it all ready for a big garage sale. It was very good.”

Patricia chuckles, saying, “Some of it didn’t sell,” to which Grazyna replied, “Then I said if it goes back to the basement, I am not coming back to help!” With both of them laughing, Grazyna redirects Patricia back to the task at hand that day, working in the garage.

In addition to brain injury, Patricia has post-traumatic stress disorder. Until recently, she struggled to walk. It’s a very different lifestyle than she anticipated. Decades ago, she was a nurse practitioner who enjoyed the outdoors. Hiking, rock climbing and scaling mountains were her passions when she lived in Portland, Oregon. Her husband at the time accepted a position in Madison, and Patricia accepted work at Group Health Cooperative.

Then horror. In 1985, on a work-related conference trip to Arlington, Va., Patricia was raped and badly beaten.
NOTES FROM JOYCE

The rapidly rising number of seniors in our population is well known. The most frequently cited statistic is 10,000 adults turning age 65 every day. They are numerous and living longer than ever before. How to meet their needs is being discussed by everyone from economists to caregivers.

Serving this growing population is what we do at Independent Living, Inc. For more than 40 years, we’ve been creating solutions for senior living. By taking care of concerns, we make it possible for our elders to put their energy where it matters: on just being themselves. We also take the strain off the adult children who want to help and may be perceived as simply interfering.

Taking care of the house, providing meals, and helping with personal care are just some of the ways we can help. Grab bars, bath benches, and ramps can be installed by our home safety modifications department. Volunteers serve as friendly visitors, or deliver evening meals, or make reminder calls through our telephone reassurance program. We also have nurses and physical therapists to provide skilled home care through our Medicare-certified home health agency, Independent Health Care.

We support an easier life, whether it’s in the home where an elder has lived for more than 50 years, or at one of our senior communities. The Gardens in Madison, McKee Park Apartments in Fitchburg, and Olympic Village in Sun Prairie feature independence with options to add services. If a greater level of care is needed, our cozy Segoe Gardens assisted living is available in Madison. Soon we hope to break ground for Tennyson Senior Living Community, to be built on Madison’s northeast side.

Independent Living, Inc. is unique as a nonprofit that can provide all these options for seniors. Inquiries about Tennyson Senior Living Community or any aspect of Independent Living, Inc. are welcome, as are donations. We are grateful for everyone’s support.

I want to acknowledge one donor in particular: John Frautschi. It was with great sadness that we learned about his passing. Mr. Frautschi was an exemplary civic and business leader and philanthropist. We count ourselves among the many who benefited from his generosity. He quietly supported our telephone reassurance and other programs for 19 years, ensuring that elders received social calls, medication reminder calls and just about any other support that can be provided by phone. We all have lost a friend, and our condolences go out to his extended family.

If you have any inquiries about our telephone reassurance program or other volunteer opportunities like delivering evening meals, please feel free to contact our new coordinator for volunteer services, Addie Endreson, at 608-268-9641 or aendreson@independentlivinginc.org. Likewise, feel free to contact us about Tennyson Senior Living Community or any service or housing option we have. Reach out to Sue Berg, marketing director, at 608-268-9628 or sberg@independentlivinginc.org. For donor inquiries, please contact Arlen Moss, fund development director, at 608-268-9631 or amoss@independentlivinginc.org.
Piano Man

From memory, Bob Auerbach coaxes music from the Steinway grand piano. Wonderful sounds fill the great room at The Gardens, Independent Living’s retirement community on Segoe Road.

Bob is a guest and volunteer at The Gardens. Also a longtime band member, he shares his musical talent at several senior centers and retirement communities in the area. “Why play at home when there are people who like to hear this?” he asks, playing “As Time Goes By.”

At 82, Bob enjoys volunteering. It is a retirement goal that he pursued with his wife, Wanda, who sadly passed away in 2012. Bob retired from the University of Wisconsin in Madison where he had a research lab. He is emeritus professor of zoology, member of the Institute on Aging, and associate member of the Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center.

Music found Bob early in life. He learned to play piano as a young child in Berlin. However, being Jewish “had its consequences,” he says, a master at understatement. During World War II, he and his family eventually made their way to New York. When it was time to attend college, Bob elected to study biology at Berea College, and played in bands to earn money. At Berea, he met Wanda, an independent thinker from Appalachia. They married, had two children, and kept earning college degrees. In the late 1950s, they arrived in Madison, where Wanda earned a second master’s degree and collaborated with her husband’s research.

He kept playing music. “I played every weekend at some bar or other while working my way as an assistant professor,” he says. He still plays in a local dance band with another well-known musician, Jim Latimer.

At Independent Living’s retirement community on Segoe Road, Auerbach’s fingers glide across the Steinway piano keys, effortlessly playing “Over the Rainbow.” More requests come from the audience. When asked why he chose to include The Gardens as one of his performance stops, he says with a grin, “Not everyone has a Steinway. It is a beautiful piano.”

It might also have something to do with having an appreciative audience.
Helping a Senior Maintain Health through Meals

Malnutrition is widespread in the United States, including the elderly. Meals on Wheels America (MOWA) reports that in the United States, about 10 million or nearly one in six older adults face the threat of hunger.

The causes of malnutrition vary. It may be due to lack of funds or an inability to prepare a meal due to disability or frailty. With poor nutrition comes health complications including slower healing and a weaker immune system.

According to reports from MOWA, seniors who are food insecure are

• 50 percent more likely to have diabetes
• 3 times more likely to suffer from depression
• 60 percent more likely to have congestive heart failure or a heart attack.

Programs like Independent Living’s Evening Meals on Wheels are crucial as a resource for healthy, nutritionally balanced meals delivered right to the door. The Independent Living program offers a varied menu reviewed by a registered dietitian, and an experienced chef who oversees all preparation, ensuring freshness. The quality of the program earned Magnet Accreditation at the Exemplary Level, the highest possible designation from MOWA.

Keeping the program running, literally, are volunteers. They deliver meals and check on the well-being of their clients. Also keeping the program going are charitable donors. Among notable donors during the annual March for Meals campaign are UW Health and WPS Foundation.

“Support from donors and volunteers is crucial, and we welcome all inquiries,” says Arlen Moss, director of fund development at Independent Living. For information, contact Moss at 608-268-9631 or amoss@independentlivinginc.org. For information about Evening Meals on Wheels, call 608-204-0923 or write to meals@independentlivinginc.org.

Cultivating a ‘Conversation’ at Meal Times

Remember the saying, you are what you eat?

What we eat starts a powerful conversation inside the body. Food communicates through the nutrients it provides, affecting both wellness and illnesses like diabetes or congestive heart failure.

Translating the language of food is the forte of dietitians and nutritionists like Cassie Vanderwall. She is a clinical nutritionist and program manager of UW Health Dietetic Internship program. It is her expertise that assures seniors they are receiving nutritionally appropriate meals through Independent Living’s Evening Meals on Wheels program. Access to her expertise was made possible through the UW Health Community Partnership program.

“The Evening Meals on Wheels program is fantastic,” Cassie says. “Our goals for this program go beyond nutritionally adequate meals. For one, we want to adhere to the accreditation standards of Meals on Wheels America,” she says. “For another, we want to use high quality foods, natural foods like whole grains, fruits and vegetables.”

(continued on next page)
Reviewing the menu is an elaborate process made easier by computers and a database of nutrient analysis. Each meal is analyzed for calorie requirements. Nutrients are measured, too. Lower sodium – commonly called salt – is better for a heart healthy diet, while higher potassium levels can help lower high blood pressure. Calcium, protein and fat contents are monitored, too. Vanderwall has a keen interest in the power of nutrition and food, and how it can influence the body. From a young age, she was aware of the power of food as it related to chronic disease and witnessed family members whose food choices affected their overall quality of life.

“It’s all about using food as medicine. Especially among seniors, food is a primary resource for healthy living,” she says. “Just like UW Health, we want to make the healthy choice the easy choice,” she says.

**Donor Profile: UW Health**

The Evening Meals on Wheels program at Independent Living, Inc. is fortunate to have support from UW Health that includes menu evaluation services from Cassie Vanderwalle, a registered dietitian with UW Hospitals and Clinics. When asked about their philanthropic practices, Annie Bockhop from UW Health replied:

*At UW Health, our mission includes a strong commitment to improve the health of the communities we serve. Our community support aims to address health factors where we live, work and play. This population health perspective focuses our community support on programs and services that address social determinants of health. This includes areas such as education, employment and income, health behaviors like diet and exercise, and access to quality health care. By targeting these priorities, we can improve the health of all our community members.*

*UW Health develops strong relationships with our partner organizations. This may include financial donations, in-kind contributions, health education resources or other support.*

*In addition to our corporate philanthropy, our employees further the UW Health mission of social responsibility by personally donating toward many of the organizations we support. Each year thousands of our employees donate toward our charitable campaigns, volunteer their time and participate in community events.*

*Details on our giving and a list of the charities we support is listed on our website.*

**Young Volunteers Create Paper Bag Art for Meals on Wheels Clients**

Madison’s Glendale Elementary School hosted their fourth annual “Day of Service” that encourages students to help others. It’s also their fourth year of choosing Evening Meals on Wheels as one of the nonprofits to support! In February, three kindergarten classes volunteered to decorate the paper bags that are used for Evening Meals on Wheels, and two first grade classes volunteered to make decorative bag clips shaped like butterflies, for the meal bags.

In all, about 75 students learned about the Evening Meals on Wheels program, and why it is important. They learned that the program serves older people like grandparents, who might have difficulty getting or making a meal. They asked questions like “do they get pizza or ice cream?” Many thanks go to the wonderful students and their teachers Melissa Ganshert, Angela Gema Tortosa Luque, Kristina Chiles, Melissa Emmel, Mia Hicks and Shi N Neesam, as well as Sara Milewski who coordinated the opportunity.
in her hotel room. Insensitive police, medical examinations, and endless specialist visits drained her. She had brain damage and multiple organ injuries, leading to permanent disability. Patricia’s upbeat personality faded. Her career ended. However, her resilience buoyed her. She fought back, looking for help, for answers, for justice. In 1991, she began the first traumatic brain injury support group in Madison. She continues today as an advocate for people with disabilities.

It took 10 years to come to grips with the trauma and unkind treatment that followed. Healing included visiting the place where the razed hotel stood. In the forlorn empty lot, Patricia saw a thistle bush growing and adopted it symbolically. “Out of that dark time, here is this green, living plant with thorns to protect the beautiful blossoms,” she said. “I adopted it for myself.”

Then she began speaking out. She is now a member of the National Rape Crisis Center speakers bureau. For a time, she gave joint presentations with a Native American woman raped while in foster care.

Due to her brain injury, memory and mobility became more and more challenging for Patricia, as did managing emotions. Patricia started to go out less; she needed walking sticks, later a walker.

Then, in 2015, she became aware of a national study on brain injury being conducted at UW Madison. She qualified, and in 2016, she became participant number 25. The study involved exercises and unique electrical stimulation, thought to develop new neuro pathways to overcome damaged areas. For six months, she had 3 sessions a day, six days a week. She was able to give up her walker and walking sticks. She noticed her mood improved; she felt more upbeat. The end result was significant improvement in her balance, coordination and cognition.

In celebration, Patricia took herself on a solo roadtrip to Pigeon Forge, Tenn., in October. She hiked a portion of the Appalachian Trail, flew along a zip line, visited the arts and crafts community, and rode a giant Ferris wheel, among many activities.

The zip line adventure was particularly fulfilling, Patricia says, because it balanced the disaster of her first zip line experience years ago when her damaged memory failed her, and she couldn’t remember instructions. Guides had to ask her to stop because it wasn’t safe for her.

“You can imagine how important it was to me, to overcome that experience,” she says. “Now just look what I did!”

Testing New Skills in a Senior Setting

Independent Living’s senior living community on Segoe Road, The Gardens, has experienced a lot of construction sounds lately. Most notably, it’s been the noise of drills and hammers, with an occasional clank or thud from tiles and carpet being ripped out.

New storage units for residents have been constructed, and now renovations are underway for a handful of apartments. Taking charge of the work is Operation Fresh Start’s Graduate Crew. Led by supervisor and contractor Chris Brown, the five members of “Grad Crew” apply the skills they’ve acquired for careers in the construction trades. Independent Living has hired Grad Crew for several projects in the last few years, many involving tear-outs for renovations.

Robert Sanders, one of the Grad Crew members, says being in the program and learning skills has kept him focused. “This is a tough program and a fun program. It gets you ready to be in the workforce. Chris (Brown) is a great teacher. Step-by-step, he helps you learn a lot.”

Jordan Knight agrees. “This program teaches skills. You find out you can do something. I have more options now and people who can help me like being references for me. And being here (at The Gardens), you find out that what you can do really helps people.”

Grad Crew is a coveted opportunity, representing success achieved in other Operation Fresh Start programs. “It’s a path to independence and a successful career,” says Jill Pfeiffer, development director.
Introducing Addie, Our New Volunteer Services Coordinator

Independent Living is pleased to introduce Addie Endreson, the new volunteer services coordinator. She shares a little of her story here:

I am originally from a small town in western Colorado, and relocated to Madison for my husband’s employment. In Colorado, I worked for a nonprofit where I oversaw a community health initiative that provided cooking and nutrition education to low-income families. Much of my work entailed volunteer coordination, program management, and data analysis. I am thrilled to join the team at Independent Living, as your new Volunteer Services Coordinator. I also volunteer on the Communications and Events Committee at a small nonprofit, called Hope & A Future, that provides an intergenerational approach to senior care.

In my free time I enjoy hiking in the woods, cooking healthy meals, and gardening. Since moving to the area, my husband and I have had the chance to attend Badger games, fish in the lakes, and attend several events. All in all I look forward to learning more about all of the wonderful things that Madison has to offer, and meeting new people including all of our volunteers!

Numerous volunteer opportunities are available, and vary widely from sharing musical talent to delivering meals. To learn more, call 608-268-9641 or write to volunteer@independentlivinginc.org.

Appreciation for Board of Directors

Independent Living, Inc. recently saw some changes on its Board of Directors. Jeffrey Bowles and Dennis Thompson completed their terms and have stepped down. Long-time board member Carroll Heideman retired from the board, having served since 2008. “Their commitment to Independent Living and the community we serve is appreciated. Carroll particularly has been a steadfast supporter, and we thank her for her many years with us,” Joyce Behrend, CEO, said.

New to the board are Jo Hoffman and Frank Staniszewski. Hoffman is the co-founder and president of BR Diamond Suite, a family-owned and operated local jewelry store established in 1986. Staniszewski recently retired after more than 30 years as president of Madison Development Corporation, overseeing business lending, real estate development and housing management.

A Special Thank You

“Thanks. The world’s a better place because of you. My world especially.”

These words were printed in a notecard sent by Julie D., whose mother receives Evening Meals on Wheels. In the card, Julie added, “To all my friends at (Evening) Meals on Wheels: Knowing there are people like you to help keep my mom in her own home, makes my heart sing with gratitude. Thank you everyone! The preparers, the administra-tors and all the volunteers!”

Tennyson Senior Living Community

Independent Living, Inc. plans to host a groundbreaking event in May for Tennyson Senior Living Community, planned for development on Madison’s northeast side. More information about this great project can be found at www.IndependentLivingInc.org. Inquiries about support and sponsorship are encouraged. Please contact Arlen Moss, fund development director, at 608-268-9631 or amoss@independentlivinginc.org.
Save the Date

Reserve Thursday, Sept. 21, for a special day of golf! It’s our 4th Annual Golf Outing, hosted again at popular University Ridge, 9002 County Road PD, Verona. Play for fun all the while knowing you are supporting seniors and adults with disabilities in Dane County. The cost is $200 per golfer or $800 for a foursome, and includes registration, lunch, golf cart and reception. It’s great visibility for sponsors, too! Registration and additional information, including sponsorships, can be found at www.IndependentLivingInc.org/support-our-work.html. Just click on the “register” link. Or contact Fund Development Director Arlen Moss at amoss@independentlivinginc.org. See you on the fairway!