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options for independence

Editor, Janis Merrell
GoodLife@LifePathMA.org
(413) 773-5555 x2255

THE GOOD LIFE

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Uncle and Nephew Reunited Through “The Good Life”

Uncle is Participant in LifePath’s Adult Family Care Program

By Jodie Balaguer, Adult Family Care & Shared Living Program Director



Jodie Balaguer

Last December, an article featured Richard “Dick” Hawthorne, a 95-year-old man who has been living with his caregiver, Janice Smith, as part of the Adult Family Care program since 2006. It was a

Saturday afternoon, and Glen Hawthorne was doing what he always does: reading *The Good Life*. He came across the article and photo of his uncle, Dick, whom he hadn’t seen in years, and in fact thought had probably passed away. He was amazed to see Dick’s picture and couldn’t believe that it was him.

So Glen decided to reach out to LifePath to see if they could connect him with his uncle. In return, staff reached out to Dick and his caregiver, who were both open to the opportunity. In late winter of last year, Glen and his partner, also named Janice, took the trip to visit with Dick. Glen stated that his uncle was “once a chatterbox, but during this visit, he was a man of few words and did a lot of nodding of his head.” They brought him what they remembered as his favorite pudding and had a very nice visit.

When asked how he lost touch with his uncle, Glen stated that while growing up, their family all lived on a big farm together with aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. Dick was very close to his mom growing up and, frankly, she was the only person that really understood Dick and that he would listen to. He used to help out on the farm with mowing the lawn, shoveling, raking, and baling hay. Dick even used to dig graves by hand in the cemetery before they got the equipment to do so, according to his nephew. For recreational fun, Dick enjoyed playing horseshoes and was so good at it that he won trophies. Dick’s nickname for his nephew was Bill Goat.

“Not only was he happy to see him alive, but knowing that Dick has been in a stable placement all this time, living with his caregiver, brought Glen joy.”

Unfortunately, on Veteran’s Day of 1986, Dick’s mom passed away. From then on, Dick distanced himself from the family and farm. He would spend most of his days at the downtown corner of Amherst, where everyone knew him. He then met a man who ran a restaurant in town and went to live with him for 10 years. At some point, Social Services became involved. Glen remembers Dick getting moved around a lot. The social worker even came by with Dick one day to visit Glen. That was the last time he saw his uncle, until this reunion in early 2023.

Glen had left the farm in 2008, so there was no way for either one to know where the other was. That is, until he opened

The Good Life article. He remembered, “I was absolutely shocked to see his picture because I couldn’t believe he was still alive.”

Dick’s caregiver, Janice, explained that challenges at the start of becoming an AFC caregiver are a part of learning, where everyone fits together in the family, saying, “I have learned so much over the years, [including] Dick’s likes or dislikes as far as food, etc. In the past few years, Dick has been a pleasure to have in the family, offering many contributions.”

The Adult Family Care program has been an intricate part of Dick’s well-being and longevity. It provides care and support in a home environment for individuals 16 years and older. They could be family or someone you don’t know who is matched with you. Caregivers receive a tax-free, monthly stipend and receive monthly visits from AFC staff consisting of a nurse care manager/community health worker who oversees the placement and provides support such as resources and training. In order for a member to qualify for Adult Family Care, they must have MassHealth Standard, MassHealth Commonwealth, or Private Pay. If you are interested in providing care for the Adult Family Care program, please call LifePath at 413-773-5555.



Glen Hawthorne, AFC participant
Dick Hawthorne’s nephew.

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Info@LifePathMA.org | LifePathMA.org

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