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THE GOOD LIFE

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Togetherness Helps to Triumph Over Life's Challenges

By John O'Farrell, Associate Director of Marketing and Development



John O'Farrell

As the beginning of the fall season arrives, many of us take this shift in the seasons in stride as we go about our daily routine without interruption. However, for some of us, the upcoming winter months mean an increased sense of isolation and feeling alone. As people are less able to venture out due to changing weather conditions, coupled with anxiety about potential slips and falls outdoors, it can make for some worrisome times for older adults throughout our community. It is in situations like this where togetherness and kindness can play a key role in making older adults feel supported and more secure, while overcoming feelings of being alone.

The power of knowing there is someone else in the community or even right next door that cares about us can go such a long way to help boost self-esteem. In our fast and complex world, it's easy to forget that beyond the masks and facades, is a human being just trying to do the best they can, who could also use a little help to get them through the day.

Take, for example, some of LifePath's valuable programs, such as our Phone Pals program that keeps an open dialogue between paired individuals who periodically talk to one another to make sure that things are going ok. Also, our Grocery Shoppers program addresses issues with food insecurity where volunteers can grab a list of items at the market for people who might not be able to make it to the store due to mobility or transportation constraints. It is these relationships that help people to feel more secure in their homes and in life.

Oh yeah, and I almost forgot to mention our Rides for Health program that provides individuals with access to get to and from a doctor's appointment, making sure that they receive the health care they need. These particular programs are made possible by our amazing LifePath staff and through our group of caring volunteers.

With over 40 different programs, LifePath relies on continued volunteer interest to help deliver our programs. As we celebrate our 50th Anniversary, we are launching a new volunteer initiative to recruit 50 new volunteers between now and the end of the year. So please consider becoming a volunteer with LifePath today! It's easy to apply and is very rewarding. Just visit lifepathma.org/support-our-mission/volunteer/ to fill out an application.

As you may know, I enjoy being outdoors. Here in New England, it's not too hard to find a quiet place in the woods with the sounds of chirping birds, tranquil streams, and chipmunks rustling under the cover of leaves and twigs on the forest floor. In writing this article, it made me recall a time

when I felt alone on the trail and the power that people have to make a difference.

When I was younger, I was always the one that lagged behind in the hiking group. Just like today, I really enjoyed the sights and sounds along the way and would become distracted, stopping numerous times as I briefly took in all of the natural scenery. As such, I would always drift to the back of the pack. As we hiked along the challenging, uphill trail, I can remember the group leader would always hang back with me to encourage me to keep going. As the trail got steeper my inclination to stop as I became more overwhelmed would increase. The task seemed so daunting.

However, by the group leader simply engaging with me through friendly questions and conversation, the ensuing dialogue helped to magically pass the time as we made our way up the trail together until we reached our destination. Even to this day, when times are difficult, I can still remember his positive words of encouragement with phrases like "it's just up here around the corner," "we're almost there," or "you're doing great." These were important words of reassurance that let me know that together we would get there, even though on the inside I had my doubts. The experience made me realize that I was stronger when I had someone beside me to help me along the way.

Probably one of the biggest concepts to master in life is the understanding that an individual's actions don't have to be huge to make a big impact. More often than not, what we think is too small is huge to the person on the receiving end of your kindness and means the world to them.

That's the power of LifePath and its many programs—all rooted in the same principle that no one accomplishes all that they need to by themselves. Instead, it takes a whole team of people, working together to support an individual's unique circumstances, and together building a road map of steps, to help make things better along life's journey.

All of this is made possible by your financial generosity through events such as our annual Walkathon. So please take a moment to donate/sign up and join us on Saturday, October 19, at the Franklin County Fairgrounds. More information can be found on our website at lifepathma.org/events-workshops/walkathon/.

So this fall, don't just walk for LifePath. Walk together with friends and family, showing one another that you are there for them, that you are making time for them, and in doing so, enjoy the comfort and fulfilling feeling that occurs when we take an active step in caring for one another.

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When you support LifePath, you are creating opportunities for people to come together and be supported in their challenges. Just knowing that there is someone by their side gives people strength to muster the courage and determination to take the next steps toward positively changing their lives. Here at LifePath, we are proud to work together with older adults and individuals with disabilities, along with their caregivers, in making great things happen, one step at a time!