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A publication of

LifePath

options for independence

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THE GOOD LIFE

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Soul-Searching Journey Leads to Focus on Aging

By Gary Yuhas, MBA, Executive Director

As you read this, I am just past my one year anniversary in my role. Before coming to LifePath, I had been working in healthcare administration for most of my career. I had been fantasizing about my departure from the field for some time before the pandemic came in early 2020 and upended everything we knew. Just a few months prior, my grandfather had passed, about two years after my grandmother, his wife of over 60 years. We were very close, and being very involved in their caretaking gave me a first-hand understanding of the complexity and challenges, but also the rewards and necessity, of caregiving.

During my time assisting them together, then my grandfather alone, I had never imagined this as my next career. We talked about my desire to make a change. They gave a lot of practical advice and were incredibly supportive, and I miss those conversations in their living room, all of us in our assigned spots on the furniture, as comfortable as was possible given their physical ailments and given that my assigned spot was on a sofa across from grandma that I found to be uncomfortable from the moment they bought it. It was also scratchy, but it was bought for durability and practicality, not comfort, as I was told, and as was their way. In case you are wondering, it was not covered in plastic, but the lampshades were! My husband Bob was more of a guest than I was, so he of course got a not-scratchy and very comfortable recliner. After grandma's passing, our assigned places remained the same, with grandma's sofa empty.

As my grandfather's life was coming to an end, Bob and I had been thinking through some options, working on plans to get to New England, and wondering hopefully about what was next for us. Then, the world went on lockdown. With the pandemic's arrival, I could not in good conscience walk away from my role and responsibilities, and so I stayed on, for what I thought would be "just a few extra months." A few extra months dragged out over a much longer time. But we finally moved, I worked remotely for a while as a transition, and then moved on from the career field I had dedicated a significant chunk of my life to and knew best.

I had planned on taking some time off work, which I did. I wanted to read "fun" books again, pick up some old hobbies, work on the travesty of a house we bought, and spend time with those who are important to me. I did all of those things, and while enjoying my time off, the opportunity to join LifePath appeared. There was a lot to like about LifePath. I met great people, now my colleagues, during the interview process.

I instantly appreciated, respected, and liked the board of directors. My treasured time with my grandparents created a deep connection to and an interest in this work. I was excited about remaining in a helping field, albeit at the other end of the age spectrum. I felt deeply about LifePath's mission, and I naturally align with non-profits.



**Gary Yuhas, MBA,
Executive Director**

And something that deeply resonated with me was that in 2024, LifePath would be coming upon its 50th year of providing essential services to the community, in the same year that I, myself, would be turning 50. It might sound a bit silly, and certainly was not the only factor at play, but as I had been on a soul-searching journey for a few years, and was feeling a bit lost without my grandparents, I looked upon this opportunity as a gift from the universe. As we begin LifePath's and my 50th year, I am very excited to see what this next chapter looks like for both of us.

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Looking back on this first year, I continue to be humbled by some of the wonderful team members who give so much of themselves to serve our consumers. And I am continually impressed by the amount of time and energy our volunteers and our board devote to service. I have greatly enjoyed meeting folks in the community, whether they are folks we serve, individuals and groups performing social service/human service work, or the folks that support those of us doing the work. I've enjoyed seeing us start up new programs like our Hospital to Home and Community Transition Liaison Program, which provides support for folks looking to get back home from a stay in a nursing facility. I'm proud of our team for reinvigorating our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging work, and securing numerous grants to expand our services. And I look forward to working with these great people to change up some things over the next year. More to come on that!

This work is certainly not without its challenges. We receive over 80% of our funding from the state, and ongoing budget cuts will affect us. The recently passed federal budget decreases funding for many necessary programs, including senior nutrition. All of this occurs while the number of folks who are aging increases, individuals are living longer, and the complexity of situations continues to escalate, much of this stemming from our country's mental health crisis.

My grandparents once sent me a card, with a note inside. I keep it on my desk to this day. It says "We're still kicking, just not as high or fast. We know you're busy. Be sure to take care of yourself. We love you. Gram and Pap." There's a lot of wisdom here in this short note. Keep kicking. Take care of yourself. Keep connected with and surround yourself with people or animals who love you. Be kind to folks, and let your loved ones know they're loved.

So, one year down at LifePath, I'm so thankful to be here for the next one, and hopefully for more after that. I will keep kicking.