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A publication of

LifePath
options for independence

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THE GOOD LIFE

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LifePath Prepares to Celebrate 50 Years this Fall

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



John O'Farrell

I feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to join the LifePath team, particularly at such a pivotal time in its history, as we get ready to celebrate LifePath's 50th anniversary this September. One of

the biggest events of the year, of course, will be our annual Walkathon event. It will be held on Saturday, October 19th at the Franklin County Fairgrounds. Start gathering your walking teams together to put your best foot forward in support of LifePath's efforts! This major event will be just one of a number of activities and events over the course of a 12-month period, starting in September. So please keep your eyes open for more details.

LifePath is proud to be a supportive partner, providing compassionate support while helping to navigate life's ups and downs together.

When I think of celebrations, I often think of balloons and the role they play in highlighting an event. Whether it's birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, or other significant milestones along life's path, balloons have always added a certain festiveness to any occasion. In a way, balloons represent all that we have accomplished and yet at the same time signify the promising future of what lies ahead.

Upon arriving at LifePath in May, I immediately wanted to learn as much as I possibly could about the team, the organization, and the many programs that we offer throughout the community and beyond. I was amazed at the incredibly large number of impactful and beneficial programs, now 43 in total. If that alone wasn't enough, I was even more impressed by the vast and complex number of staff, volunteers, vendors, and our financial and community partners that work tirelessly behind the scenes and directly in our programs. Together, they truly make our programs possible and have such a positive and life-changing impact on those we serve each and every day. Thank you!

In an effort to get to know more about our programs, I started my journey by popping into our newly relocated Community Engagement Center located at our Greenfield office. Upon walking in the door, I was warmly greeted by the staff and program participants in attendance that day. I was even invited to participate in a small group activity. As luck would have it, it was a balloon activity.

With the six of us all sitting in a small circle, we prepared to start the balloon activity. I myself, a complete stranger to the group, immediately felt included, welcomed, and accepted. As

we gently bounced the balloon around from person to person for a while, you could begin to understand the power of the exercise. It was all about social connection and interaction.

It was great to see everyone positively engaged in the activity, having fun, and even displaying a healthy competitive spirit amongst friends. Wow, just think of it: A single balloon did all of that in such a short period of time, yet again demonstrating the magical influence of a balloon. And that's just one of our many programs—I haven't even talked about our other 42 yet.

Someone recently asked me what makes LifePath so special? In quickly collecting my thoughts it became abundantly clear to me in that moment that there would not be enough time during our short conversation to adequately describe all that we do, so I offered this: "As individuals, we are often faced with overwhelming challenges. Challenges that were never meant to be faced alone. Throughout our lives, there have been people along the way to get us to where we are today. It could be a parent, a teacher, a sibling, or a friend. That's why social connection and

interaction with one another is so important, and that's where LifePath comes in. LifePath is proud to be a supportive partner, providing compassionate support while helping to navigate life's ups and downs together. We are an advocate and teammate in providing viable options for caregivers and their loved ones to consider, helping them along the way in making informed decisions that positively affect their futures."

When LifePath was chartered back in September of 1974, I'm sure no one at the time had any idea that 50 years later, we would still be growing and expanding, providing quality programs in support of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and their caregivers after all this time. Yet, here we are because of the help we received from so many people and community partners along the way over the years. Those collective efforts have made it possible for us to be an active and thriving partner in the community, allowing us to make a positive difference in peoples' lives, and for that, we say thank you.

As we look to the future and the promising potential of the next 50 years, we must always continue to put our best foot forward in all that we do, envision an even stronger and brighter future in delivering vital programs and services, and must never lose sight of the importance that social connection and interaction make in everything that we do. As the path of the last 50 years has reminded us, it takes help from everyone to make this all come together and the next 50 years will be no different. So join us today in our quest as we continue to make a positive difference in our community in the years ahead: Let us all take a moment to celebrate our 50th Anniversary, and don't forget to bring the balloons!