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THE GOOD LIFE

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Through Interdependence We Help to Strengthen Our Own Independence

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



John O'Farrell

Wow! 250 years as a young nation and still growing. As the country celebrates this milestone of birthdays, it is a time to pause and reflect on all the hard work that has gotten us to where we are today,

while looking ahead in determining what our next possible steps might be. I like birthdays because they are symbolic mile markers along life's path, providing us with a great opportunity to look at all that we have accomplished so far, while helping us to define our hopes and ambitions for the year ahead.

As we look at our country's quest for independence way back in 1776, I find somewhat similar parallels today in our continual search for our own independence. As some of our readers may know, LifePath's motto is "options for independence." Independence is such a powerfully encouraging and inspiring word, signifying freedom, choice, and a person's own ability to make decisions that can positively affect their futures. It gives us all hope for better days ahead and quietly reminds us that maintaining our level of independence has a direct correlation with having a certain degree of interdependence on others as well.

For over 50 years, LifePath continues to be a collaborative partner helping to assist and guide older adults and individuals with disabilities, as well as their caregivers. By connecting people to valuable resources and support, we help to provide stability, first by listening to their unique circumstances and then by sharing potential options that can assist people to make informed decisions that can positively affect the futures of their loved ones.

LifePath currently helps to support over 13,000 individuals on a yearly basis through the delivery of services encompassing a large variety of programs throughout Franklin County and the North Quabbin region, as well as Berkshire County and beyond. Through our involvement and with the help of a supportive network of caring individuals, we all work together towards the same goal of creating a certain level of independence and self-sufficiency among those in our care, reinforcing dignity, self-respect, and increased self-esteem.

This is one of the many reasons why our programs are so important: We understand the role we play in working with caregivers, their loved ones, our community partners, and financial donors alike. As we help to guide and collaborate with others in determining the best next steps in approaching everyone's challenges, we create that essential balance in helping to achieve the best possible outcome.

As both individuals and organizations, we strive to function independently on a daily basis by trying to accomplish everything on our own. However, as challenges grow, we come to realize

that in our quest to be independent and self-sufficient, there is a certain level of interdependence that is required to take it to the next level.

Meals on Wheels is one of our core programs that plays a key role in not only making sure that older adults have a warm meal each day but also provides a wonderful opportunity for much-needed social interaction and connection to the outside world. These important exchanges also provide an essential chance to do a welfare check as well. To check in with people, see how their day is going, and to catch up on what's going on in their world builds a positive rapport that helps to form a caring and supportive bond that people rely on. It also helps individuals to feel more confident and secure in their independence at home.

Programs such as Meals on Wheels, among LifePath's other valuable programs, continue to face significant funding cuts on both the state and federal level. These financial constraints make us even more reliant on local, community, and regional support to ensure the continuity of various LifePath

programs through Franklin County, the North Quabbin region, and Berkshire County.

Throughout our lives and in business too, we often find ourselves struggling with this balance between independence and interdependence. As we strive to maintain our independence, we are continually reminded that it is this very connection of interdependence and

support for and from one another that truly keeps us grounded and positively focused on the future. It was never intended for any of us to have to face life's challenges on our own. Things can be accomplished a whole lot easier, and in fact makes us collectively stronger as a whole, when we find creative ways to work together.

In essence, we're all one big, connected world, and not in the technological sense you might think of. Long before technology came around, the importance of human interaction was what made a critical difference in our daily lives. In return, your actions will pay you back in ways you couldn't possibly have imagined. When we reach out to help others, it reaffirms within ourselves that we all have something valuable to contribute, that our skills and experience throughout our lives can, in fact, make a wonderful difference in the lives of others.

If there is just one lesson that can be drawn from our founders back in revolutionary times, it is that only through working together to collectively solve problems can we truly make an impact in the world and achieve success through everything we do. Happy Fourth of July!

To help LifePath continue to make a difference in our community, please consider becoming a volunteer with us, or make a financial donation in support of our important programs. Your support is needed now, more than ever. To make a secure, online donation through our website, please visit LifePathMA.org/support-our-mission. You can also show your support by mailing your donation to: LifePath, Inc., 101 Munson Street, Suite 201, Greenfield, MA 01301. Thank You!

Things like checking in on your neighbor, volunteering for your favorite non-profit, or even getting involved in your local community are all important actions that you CAN take to make a difference.