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**LifePath**  
options for independence  
Editor, Janis Merrell  
GoodLife@LifePathMA.org  
(413) 773-5555 x2255

# THE GOOD LIFE

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## The Power Within Us to Make a Positive Difference

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



John O'Farrell

During the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, I often take time to reflect on the year gone by and how my own choices have contributed to making a positive difference in the world around me.

It could be decisions concerning my own family circle, the community in which I live and work in, or even within my own sphere of well-being. Believe it or not, each of us has the power to make a difference in the world around us. Sometimes the key lies in just starting by taking small steps each and every day.

You see, making a difference doesn't have to be complicated or grandiose to have a huge impact. It could be a simple act of kindness towards a complete stranger to brighten their day. For example, starting an upbeat dialogue with the hard-working person at the drive-thru window can go a long way for that person, who might be having a difficult day. Perhaps even holding a door open for someone with a handful of large boxes can provide a welcome reminder that there are people in the world that are willing to lend a helping hand; or even deciding to volunteer a couple of hours a week for a local non-profit in your community—it can all make a huge difference.

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Similarly, individuals sometimes might feel hesitant to make a modest financial gift to their favorite non-profit because they don't feel that their gift is large enough or will make any difference. Nothing could be further from the truth. Every gift matters in supporting the good work that organizations do within our local community. For example, a contribution of just \$10 per week can amount to an annual gift of \$520, making quite an impact and helping to keep services going to those in need. For the past 50 years, LifePath has made a commitment to address local and regional needs of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers throughout Franklin County and the North Quabbin community, as well as in Berkshire, Hampshire, and Hampden counties. Providing over 40 different programs, LifePath has helped to strengthen our local communities. It truly takes the collective efforts of our volunteers, donors, staff, and community partners to make it all happen.

We hope that you will join us as you look to make a difference in your local community, no matter how large or small, because your involvement matters. Remember, it takes all of us to make a collective difference.

As I take a moment this Thanksgiving weekend, I am thankful to be a part of a great organization and the larger community, rooted in supporting and helping others, and am grateful to the many individuals who work so tirelessly in making a difference. Through your efforts, you truly make your local communities better places to live and work. Thank You!

## LifePath's Community Engagement Center Open House Provides Information and Support

Information and support, along with free chair massages, were offered at the Community Engagement Center (CEC) Open House, which took place on Wednesday, November 13, at LifePath.



Emily, a caregiver, receiving a free massage.

Speakers included Meghan Lemay, from the Alzheimer's Association, who presented on both "Communication Techniques for People with Dementia" and "Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors," and Sue Tracy, from All Out Adventures, which provides senior and adaptive outdoor programming. Sue said, "It's an honor to be here and get the word out about All Out Adventures because we help people of all abilities get outside to experience nature and meet new friends."

According to Donna Bigelow, LPN and CEC Program Manager, "Caregiving has so many joys and challenges and so often the caregivers are not recognized for what they do. Our hope is that the CEC allows them some time to care for themselves."

During the event, Emily, a caregiver, received a massage while her husband, A.D., participated in activities. Lynne Kelley, of Greenfield, visited to explore available options for day care.



A.D., Emily's husband, participating in an open house activity.

Rita Johnson, a Bernardston resident, also stopped by to find out about resources to help her support her 99-year-old father, Fred. Her friend, Nora Bixby, a former volunteer at LifePath, encouraged her to come.

"The CEC has provided over 6,000 hours of respite since it opened a year ago. For some, this is the difference between living at home or in a nursing home," said Diane Robie, Director of Client Services. "Participants form friendships and find joy in coming."

The event concluded with a beautiful performance by the Eventide Singers.

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The Community Engagement Center is a social day program that provides respite and resources for caregivers, while providing socialization and meaningful activities for participants, two days per week. It is funded through a Respite Innovation Grant from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. For more information about the program, or to volunteer, call LifePath at 413-773-5555.



Rita Johnson, right, finding out about resources to help her support her 99-year-old father, Fred.