



The Mosaic

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Opening Our Eyes to Human Potential

by Teresa Amaral Beshwate, MPH



“I wonder how many people I’ve looked at all my life and never seen,” wrote John Steinbeck. It makes me think about the people I’ve known all my life and begs the questions: What’s just beyond that hard-to-read exterior, and what assumptions have been made in the absence of true understanding?

What long-time perceptions lack all accuracy? What truths about ourselves are we unwilling or unable to speak, leaving others to just take a wild guess?

And specifically what about older adults? In general, society looks but doesn’t see. When we look at the older adults in our organizations, what do we—the people who lead the counterculture to fight ageism and change the aging experience in our country—really see? Is it possible that we can also be guilty of looking without truly seeing? Those who make assumptions about the abilities of older adults based on where they reside or a diagnosis or disability are indeed as blind as the rest of society.

Retirement communities of the past were geared toward entertainment and hospitality along with providing safety, security and care. Today’s currency is growth and potential for all. The aging field is evolving, becoming aware of not only *who* older adults are and the skills and expertise they possess, but also helping to facilitate *who they might become*. We are creating environments in which the universal need of “mattering” is met. To matter is to feel noticed,

appreciated and depended on—and to be *seen*.

In this edition of *The Mosaic*, you’ll read some inspirational stories of mattering. Of looking *and* seeing—not only what is but also what could be. These are the stories of Presbyterian Village at Hollidaysburg and Marilyn Berger. The Masterpiece network is filled with more stories of mattering: Helen, a health care resident whose purpose is to visit and put a smile on the face of each of her neighbors every single day. And Erma, who provided wise advice to a young widow despite her difficulty in recognizing her own grandchildren. No matter where a person resides, and regardless of diagnoses or disability, every single person possesses a wealth of human capital that must not be wasted.

Arguably the biggest tragedy of our age is the loss of human capital of older adults—simply because our society doesn’t expect it, doesn’t ask for it, and misunderstands its tremendous value. The aging field is beginning to take up this fight. We have two battles on our hands: to redefine our organizations as places of growth and potential; and to truly understand older adults in our organizations and leverage their incredible potential. With our leadership, our country can indeed be a very different place to age—where the wisdom of older adults is valued and all people matter. Winning these battles requires a daily commitment to not only look, but truly see.

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Who's Livin' It? One Dragonfly's Transformation: An Interview with Marilyn Berger

by Danielle Palli

The dragonfly represents transformation, adaptation and joy in many cultures. It spends the first several years of its life growing in dark waters before emerging into the sunlight, expanding its wings and taking flight. In a blog post entitled, "My Mother, The Dragonfly," author Wendy Knox wrote about the amazing change her mother, Marilyn Berger, made after her move to ABHOW'S Piedmont Gardens, a Masterpiece Living partner community.

"I was depressed and needed a challenge," Marilyn told *The Mosaic*. She found that after her husband passed and with her children grown, her life needed purpose. Now in her eighties, this is the first time in years when she felt she had the opportunity to redefine what would give her life meaning.

Curious about an art class that artist Lisa Kokin taught at Piedmont Gardens each week, Marilyn would stand outside the classroom, observing. "I was scared," she explained. "I would peek around the corner, nervous. Then, Lisa—my angel—told me I could come in and watch the class. I didn't have to do anything if I didn't want to; I could just watch. After two weeks of watching, I decided to give it a try."

What Marilyn discovered was a natural talent for drawing, color and design that had been lying dormant for years. The experience transported her back to her childhood home, where after dinner her parents would listen to the radio while Marilyn took her place on the living room floor with her coloring book and crayons. "It was one of the happiest times of my life," she said.



Now, she uses felt-tipped markers to color "only happiness," and if she is feeling depressed, she takes out her markers and "colors her sadness away," even if it's 2:00 in the morning.

Shelley Tsao, the Director of Resident Services at Piedmont Gardens, explained that their community has always been progressive. "We are always challenging ourselves to be more creative," she said, and "Masterpiece Living helped bring greater awareness into our skilled nursing." The art initiative that began in skilled nursing was quickly adopted by Residential Living [Independent Living]. Meanwhile, word was spreading about Marilyn's work.

"I've seen the transformative power of art in my own life," Lisa Kokin told us, having witnessed Marilyn's demeanor change from sad and withdrawn to happy and social. Lisa confessed that it's rare for older adult communities to hire a professional artist to offer an adult art class and is encouraged that Piedmont Gardens places a high value on creative programming.

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Hot Health Topic: Bringing the Outdoors In by Brittany Calvert, MA



As summer comes to an end and the holiday season is in sight, members from across the Masterpiece Living Network will likely be spending less time in the garden. Research shows multiple benefits from gardening, including improvements in vegetable

consumption, physical strength, quality of life, cognitive ability, and socialization. A recent International Council on Active Aging white paper titled “Practical Strategies for Providing Wellness in Outdoor Environments” highlights the advantages of time spent outdoors in gardens for those living with dementia. Documented improvements include decreased levels of agitation and increased general relaxation. Masterpiece Living organizations can ensure that these benefits are enjoyed year-round by bringing the outdoors in.

It is common for organizations to have indoor plants, but what about indoor gardens that are easily accessible? The urban farming movement has inspired wider usage of creative indoor gardening solutions, including hydroponic systems (growing plants using mineral nutrients in water without soil), high-tech planters, and even do-it-yourself planters made from 2-liter bottles. These solutions could be showcased in resident apartments, through long sunlit hallways, or even within a dining space.

The physical environment is a key element of culture within the Centers for Successful Aging criteria. Masterpiece Living partners are challenged to continually reassess their physical environments to ensure that they support a successful aging lifestyle. By bringing the garden indoors, you can continue to support the growth of all who are touched by your organization: socially, physically, intellectually and spiritually.

Indoor gardening resources:

<http://www.windowfarms.com/>

<http://www.hydrofarm.com/resources/links.php>

<http://www.garden.org/>

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/>

<http://www.icaa.cc/business/whitepapers/icaa-environmental-wp.pdf>

Donna Wang & Thalia MacMillan. [The Benefits of Gardening for Older Adults: A Systematic Review of the Literature](#), *Activities, Adaptation & Aging*, 37:2, 153-181 (2013).

Aime J. Sommerfeld, Amy L. Mcfarland, Tina M. Waliczek, and Jayne M. Zajicek. [Growing Minds: Evaluating the Relationship between Gardening and Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Older Adults](#). *HortTechnology*, 20: 711-717 (2010).

Who’s Livin’ It? (Continued from page 2)

“What is so powerful about creating art?” we asked. Both Marilyn and Lisa agreed that creating is like a meditation, giving the artist a chance to step away from their problems and look at life objectively. And for Marilyn, the joy her art has brought to the other residents gives her life meaning.

Marilyn currently has more than two dozen vibrant, fanciful works of art on display at Piedmont Gardens and has hosted two art exhibitions so far. The demand is great from fans who would like to purchase her work. Now known as “the Artist” at her community, Marilyn teaches us that we all have the power to transform our lives at any age and at any time. This artistic dragonfly is *livin’ it!*

Community Spotlight: Presbyterian Village at Hollidaysburg Harnesses the Power of Human Capital

by Danielle Palli

Team members and residents of Presbyterian Village at Hollidaysburg (PVH) are finding new purpose in life, demonstrating what it means to leverage human capital, and proving that it's never too late to learn something new.

What is "human capital?" Human capital refers to the collective skills, talents, and knowledge of an organization's members. An organization's success depends on its ability to analyze those skills and talents, determine where there is a need for them, and then match a person's skills to the need.

"After Masterpiece Living's annual Lifestyle and Mobility Reviews, we identified the interests and goals of the residents and what they wanted to accomplish," Executive Director of PVH, Debra Larkin, told us. "Through Masterpiece, we were able to align our practices with those goals." Masterpiece Living asked Hollidaysburg to invest in their own human capital by seeking residents willing to lead a group or teach a class related to a skill they possess. With that invitation, Carolyn Toth, a retired elementary schoolteacher, stepped up to the plate.

"I offered to lead a prayer group," Carolyn said. As Carolyn was passing out flyers that contained a hymn for the weekly meeting, one resident, Joan Burket, declined, explaining that she couldn't read it anyway.

"Why can't you read it?" Carolyn asked Joan. "Is it a vision thing or a school thing?"

"It's a school thing," Joan replied. When Joan was young, her father tried enrolling her in school, but the

school was unable or unwilling to accommodate Joan's learning style and told her father that she should be removed from classes. As a result, Joan never learned to read or write.

Carolyn volunteered to tutor Joan, using a variety of methods to match Joan's learning style and abilities. Now, at age 87, Joan is writing (not just copying)

her name for the first time. She's also reading numbers so she can, as she told us, "play bingo without help!" She may move on to letters and words next.

"She's remarkable," Carolyn spoke of Joan. "She's patient and never gives up." For Carolyn, the prayer group and her

role as a teacher have brought another sense of purpose to her life.

For Joan, she is accomplishing something she never thought possible. She is now able to sign her name to documents instead of simply putting an "X" down. "I'm going to keep learning as long as I'm breathing," she told *The Mosaic*.

"They meet in the Sun Room down the hall almost every day," Debra told us. "And the first time Joan signed her name, Carolyn said to me, 'Joan and I would like you to sing it from the rooftops!'"

But theirs is just one example. Penny Rupeka, Community Life Director at PVH, shared that their partnership with Masterpiece Living has been instrumental in providing opportunities for all levels

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Healthy Eats Recipe: Vegetarian Posole Soup*by Brittany Calvert, MA***Ingredients**

- 2 15-ounce cans golden hominy, rinsed and drained
- 2 15-ounce cans red beans, rinsed and drained
- 3½ cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 16-ounce jar salsa
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. cumin
- ½ cup milk or milk alternative
- 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour
- Sliced green onions
- Sliced avocado
- Shredded cheese (optional)

With the arrival of fall, the days get cooler and we naturally turn to soups and stews to warm us. Posole is a traditional Latin American soup served since pre-Columbian times, and it continues to be especially popular in Mexico and the American Southwest. It contains hominy, which is the result of soaking and washing dried maize corn in lime to remove the outer husk and soften the grain.

Posole is traditionally made with pork or other meats; however, you won't miss the meat in this tasty vegetarian version.

Directions

In a 4-quart slow cooker, combine hominy, beans, broth, salsa, and spices. Cover and cook on low-heat setting for 7 to 8 hours or on high-heat setting for 3-1/2 to 4 hours.

With 30 minutes of cook time remaining, increase to high-heat setting if necessary. In a small bowl stir together milk and flour until smooth. Stir into mixture in cooker. Cover; and cook for 30 minutes more or until mixture is slightly thickened.

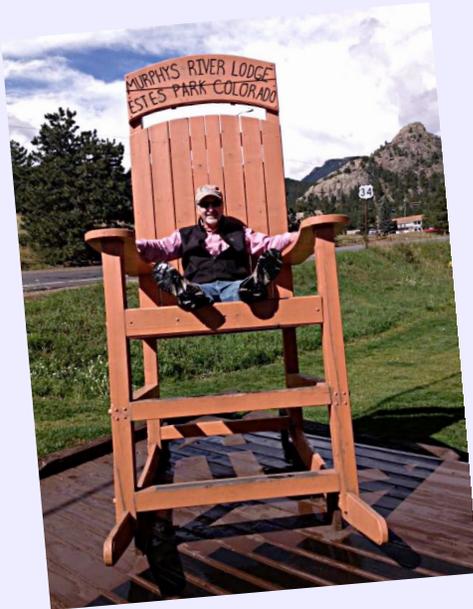
Ladle into bowls and top with green onions, avocado, and shredded cheese, if desired.

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of living. "At one time, Independent living neighbors seemed reluctant to come 'across the street' to Personal Care or Nursing." Now, Penny tells us, "there's much more interaction among all residents." Drum circles, prayer groups, luncheons and other social events include all levels of living. And more and more residents are trying new things and making new social connections.

The Hollidaysburg community is a shining example of identifying and leveraging human capital. Their residents prove that meaning and purpose continue long after we retire and that it's never too late to try something new.

Best wishes to you, Joan, as you continue your journey with numbers and words!



Where in the World is Dr. Roger Landry?

Dr. Roger has been very busy lately with radio interviews and writing articles. Here are a few:

“Why Words Matter as We Age”

www.thirdage.com/aging-well/why-our-word-choices-matter-as-we-age

“The Many Blessings of Being a Grandparent”

www.grandmagazine.com/news/2014/08/22361grandparent/

“Is Multitasking Multi-deadly?”

www.akhpublications.com/health.html

Congratulations to the following partner organizations that are celebrating September/October anniversaries with Masterpiece Living:



ABHOW's Rosewood Senior Living
Windy Hill Village
Quincy Village
Presbyterian Village at Hollidaysburg
Clermont Park

Masterpiece Living Lyceum 2015:
Making Your Masterpiece Matter
April 15-17, 2015

[Register Now!](#)

Renaissance Vinoy Resort & Golf Club
St. Petersburg, FL

