

The Meadian



A newsletter published periodically for families, friends and residents of St. Anne's Mead

MARCH 14, 2016

BARB CARLEY'S JOB 1: Keeping things in their proper odor

Cleanliness is next to Godliness, it is said.

So, it is no small wonder that the level of housekeeping is one of the first things people notice when coming into an assisted living facility.

“Keeping things clean and odor-free is my Number One passion,” says Housekeeping Manager Barb Carley.



Barb and her staff of three are constantly changing and washing sheets, curtains, towels, and other linens to ensure their freshness and lack of smell. “They (her staff) deserve a lot of the credit for keeping everything nice and clean.”

The Detroit-born Berkley resident recalls back in 1980 when she was interviewed by the Board of Trustees. “What is the most important part of the job,” she was asked. Her reply was quick: “That the building doesn’t stink.” She laughs now but back then she worried that her spontaneous reply was sharp. Obviously, the board accepted her frankness.

“The second most important thing about my job is paying attention to details, the small things that people will notice and exaggerate, such as cobwebs high in a corner and making sure the hallways are free of

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debris. If there is dust on the furniture or a gum wrapper tossed in a corner, people are going to notice and remember that the place wasn't clean. They'll go elsewhere," she says.

Her third most important task is being patient and having a love for seniors. "I love them all but it is easy to become impatient because of their ages and disabilities. You just have to accept that they will have their moments," says Barb.

Fourth most important is "coming to work every day like you're supposed to and doing what you're supposed to. 'It's not my job,' is no excuse for letting something go by. If you know something needs to be done, you do it," she says.

At the end of every day, Barb reviews her performance: "Have I done everything I can do to help make sure the residents are happy with their home?" With rare exception, her answer makes it easy to leave and go home.

There, she and Leonard, her husband of 47 years, tend to gardening and maintaining their 1972 Chevelle, a classic they drive in the annual Woodward Dream Cruise and the Berkley car parade. The Carley's are empty-nesters with two grown daughters.

Worth Repeating

Here's what they're saying about St. Anne's Mead

"Thank you all for helping make our (private) celebration of Maggie's birthday a wonderful time. Checking to make sure we had everything we needed was so thoughtful."

-- Phyllis L.

Residents Agree

Time is Relative, So It's Best to Use It Wisely

Most people seem to agree that when they were very young, a day lasted a lifetime, a year forever. After middle-age though, weeks seemed to be shortened to days, and days to hours.

Every fourth February, time keepers or rather time setters insert an extra day to compensate for discrepancies in our clocks and the orbital motion of the Earth. Each day, leading up to Feb. 29, the Earth is a little off in reaching the same point in its orbit, so we make an adjustment by adding one day in February: Leap Day. Then, all is right with the World, that is, until the error in timekeeping catches up again and we add another day to the year.

If one is lucky, or unlucky, enough to have been born on Feb. 29, birthdays come only once every four years. Unfortunately, that time warp only retards the observances, not the aging process.

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Speaking of time warps, Einstein proved that time is relative. Time passes more quickly or slowly depending on which frame of reference the observer is in. Recall his twin example, where one sets off in a very fast spaceship and returns to Earth a few years later after nearly reaching the speed of light to find that a twin had become an old man. Because of their different frames of reference, time either sped up or slowed down due to the velocity with which one traveled relative to the other.

The reality is, when there is little to do, life becomes boring at best, drudgery at worse. Being bored because there is “nothing to do” may be attributed to a lack of creative experiences and not knowing how to fill time with a satisfying activity. Most people agree that time passes more slowly when an activity is not very stimulating - for example, standing in a long line at a checkout. The corollary is that persons engaged in stimulating activities seem to run out of time more quickly.



Resident Ken Schwartz once collected grandfather clocks.

Take, for example, resident Ken Schwartz. His days are tightly structured, routine and scheduled.

Says Ken, “Every day here is pretty well planned out by someone else, kind of like it was growing up with my five siblings. Mother did all the planning and cooking. As preschoolers, we had nothing to do but play and eat. Time ran a lot more slowly then,” says Ken.

He points out that the activities in the Life Enrichment program at St. Anne’s Mead keep him busy and he enjoys the time spent doing them. “I think time ran more slowly (as a kid) because there was less to think about and be responsible for. No stress,” says Ken.

For some, going into retirement after a fulfilling career, the perceived lack of opportunity is unsettling. Time then seemingly expands leaving an even larger void of non-activity.

Everyone has the same amount of time to fill every day: 24 hours. How one chooses to fill it will either give satisfaction or it won’t. That depends on one’s ability to know what gives pleasure and one’s willingness to choose that activity over someone else’s displeasure with the selection.

Says Joe Bassett, a resident at St. Anne’s Mead, “I’m busier now than ever before. I watch TV, sure, but I also work on my autobiography and, up to recently, on my stock portfolio,” says Joe who takes time out every day to review his life, the incidents and the people in it. “They helped make me who I am,” he says.

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“I don’t have time to be bored; I’m looking to the future.”

There’s a certain amount of irony in that, given that Joe is 96.

For resident Cecilia Rehe, reading mystery novels and working word puzzles make for a fulfilling day. “I wear a watch but seldom look at it, except to note how long it will be before lunch or dinner or when an appointment is near,” she says. Cecilia does agree that time goes by more quickly now.

Explains Joe Bassett: “I like to think I am in a canoe, going down a very calm river. I have one paddle and it’s fairly easy to steer the canoe, so I have plenty of time to reflect on my life. I am enjoying it all over again.”

The residents’ secret to enjoying time seems to be that the passage of it is less important than how one fills it.

Remember Einstein and his law about time being relative? As the old saying goes, “a glass half empty is the same as one half full.” It all depends on how you look at it. Time spent, is time spent. Given the 24 hours we have to make it through another day, it is best to make it stimulating, and that’s something that has to be defined by the person, the residents agree.

Life Enrichment programs at an assisted living facility are meant to stimulate and please. But in community settings, finding a common denominator is challenging so working one-on-one is important too. Hence the general sense of satisfaction with such popular activities as art therapy where instructions and accomplishments are personalized.

Joan D. Vinge, American author of “The Snow Queen” series, sums it up this way: “What does immortality mean to me? That we all want more time; and we want it to be quality time.”



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Our Mission

St. Anne's Mead mission is to provide compassionate and professional health care and supportive services to seniors in a safe, secure, and loving home.

In keeping with our faith-based traditions, we endeavor to serve the unique needs of individuals and their families while preserving dignity and enriching lives.

