

## Still Sweethearts After 71 Years

**R**obert and Bertha Kimball were married on March 26, 1939, at the Wisconsin Dells. They met at a dance and have been dancing ever since. Their life together has been, in some ways, a typical American story, but in other ways it has been very special. The seasonal work available at the Dells at that time was not enough to support a young family, so they moved to Chicago in 1941 to find work. A knee injury made Robert ineligible for military service, so he began a career as a tool and die setter.

The Kimballs were the family we all want for neighbors: Robert was a Boy Scout leader for many years, and Bertha was active in the women's fellowship at their church. Together they raised three children — Roberta, Joanne and Robert. Bertha's home and family were the center of her life.

Of their growing-up years, Joanne says, "We always ate home-cooked meals and always had dessert. Mom loved taking care of the home. My parents lived in the city, but were still small-town in the things they loved and valued."

Robert and Bertha have five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. For many years after retiring, they spent winters in Florida, but returned to this area to be closer to family. Today, they call St. Matthew Center for Health in Park Ridge home, and this is where they celebrated their 71st anniversary



Robert and Bertha Kimball

with family and friends. Megan Bitner, director of social services at St. Matthew, says, "I've been married two years, so the Kimballs

are a real inspiration to me. They are so sweet to each other — a perfect example of what a wonderful marriage can be." ♦

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Karen Larsen

# We all have a story...

*“...writing down the details of your life story can help subsequent generations know who you are.”*

In his essay “On History,” Thomas Carlyle, the irascible 19th Century philosopher, wrote, “In a certain sense, all men are historians. Is not every memory written quite full with annals, wherein joy and mourning, conquest and loss manifoldly alternate; and, with or without philosophy, the whole fortunes of one little inward kingdom, and all its politics, foreign and domestic, stand ineffaceably recorded?”

What Carlyle was saying in plain English was that we all have a story, according to Karen Larsen, who helps people write their memoirs. “No other person has lived your life, and only you can tell that story best,” she says. “When people create a record of their lives through memoir writing, they give a gift not only to themselves but to the people who come after them.

“Imagine finding a manuscript written by your great-grandfather that detailed where he lived, who he loved, what he did for a living and what things were important to

him. It would be like sitting down and getting to know him,” she says. “One of the things I just found out from a newspaper article about my own great-grandfather who was a bridge tender in Chicago was that he saved someone from drowning. If only I had a diary account from him to tell me about how it happened from his point of view.

“It’s important to get your experiences down on paper, including the unique details of your own story,” Larsen continues. “Once my own parents were gone, I realized that I had never asked them where they were when they heard about Pearl Harbor, and I realized how writing down the details of your life story can help subsequent generations know who you are.”

As an added benefit, researchers at the Universities of Wisconsin and Texas have proven that the act of telling your own history can lower your blood pressure, increase

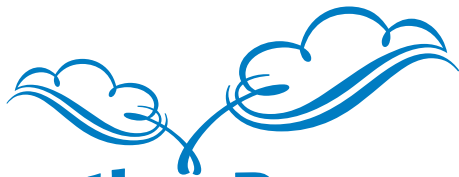
your self-esteem and improve your immune system, according to Larsen.

“Don’t worry about grammar, spelling or punctuation when you’re getting your story down on paper,” says Larsen. “The most important thing is to include the unique details of your story.” To jump-start your memories, she suggests thinking about topics like duck-and-cover drills, ration coupon books, milk delivery or bobby socks, and how they impacted your life.”

Another good question to get you started is “What was the happiest day of your life?” she concludes. ♦



*Karen Larsen’s company, Generation Connection, helps people create a record of their lives for themselves and their families through classes and private consultations. [www.generationconnection.net](http://www.generationconnection.net)*



## Restorative Program

Marilyn Dannhauer, R.N., Certified Restorative Nurse at St. Matthew Center for Health, answers questions about the program she manages.

### *What is the Restorative Program?*

Restorative is designed to help residents retain their highest level of function in so many ways: range of motion, ambulation, transferring, bed mobility, dressing and grooming, eating and swallowing, communication and improving continence. Restorative is part of the care that is expected in today's nursing homes.

### *Who participates?*

Resident participation is determined and reviewed at quarterly care conferences, where several factors are looked at to see if possible improvements can be made. People who don't qualify for Restorative are encouraged to attend Wellness classes or our daily exercise sessions.

### *Which staff are involved in the program?*

We have two dedicated, trained restorative certified nursing assistants who work one-on-one with patients, but all nursing staff have had some in-house training. Nursing works hand-in-hand with our therapy department to help patients gain further improvement or to keep them from losing ground.

### *What results do you see?*

Restorative efforts help people maintain their independence to the maximum level possible. Deterioration is prevented or slowed, and we see increased socialization. It is clear that people enjoy participation, particularly in the range of motion and ambulation programs. Increased endurance levels are often achieved. ♦

## Living History Program at St. Matthew

Keeping Our Valuable Personal Histories Alive

The Living History program being used at St. Matthew was created by Sheila Brune, RN, MS. She wanted to create a document that would provide basic information about a resident so that staff might "provide care to the heart and soul" of the resident. The staff at St. Matthew has been working for many months interviewing residents and family members in order to gather information for these stories. Residents are asked not only about where and when they were born, but what their parents were like and what they liked to do as a child. Some residents have also revealed what they value in life or what wisdom they would like to pass along. The goal is for all residents who wish to participate to have their life history written and printed. It is our hope that residents will share their histories with staff and family, so that we all know each other a little better. ♦

## Fitness Leader Certification



Cathy Burchard, LifeBalance<sup>SM</sup> Coordinator at St. Matthew, has received her Professional Long-Term Care Fitness Leader certification from the American Senior Fitness Association. She received the materials for the course last fall and says she studied hard and took the test in March.

A Certified Long-Term Fitness Leader can effectively supervise group fitness classes for elderly and disabled participants. She can also incorporate basic mental fitness activities into her programs. The course provides knowledge of specific safety guidelines in order to achieve effective conditioning while minimizing risk.

In April, Cathy took part in Level 1 of Compassionate Touch workshop, led by Ann Catlin. The workshop taught gentle massage technique and skills to help patients with dementia. Cathy is also trained in CPR and first aid. ♦

PASTOR EILEEN HARRIS

# Retiring



Education program,” Pr. Harris says, adding that through this program, “I have mentored individuals specializing in chaplaincy to the benefit of St. Matthew’s residents and also to the benefit of my own learning and growth.”

“Pastor Harris has been wonderfully supportive to families, residents and staff during her 10 years at St. Matthew,” says Valerie Niskanen, marketing director. “She provides comfort and aid to anyone of

*“She provides comfort and aid to anyone of us who needs her, and we will all miss her and remember all she did for us.”*

us who needs her, and we will all miss her and remember all she did for us. She is completely dedicated to our residents.”

“Pastor Harris has a generous, beautiful and gentle spirit, and she brings this to her work of ministering to the residents at St. Matthew and to their families,” adds Jo Ann Dollard, daughter of a former resident. “She spent a lot of time with my mother and our

family, especially during the last few weeks of my mom’s life. I felt that she both cared for and honored my mother at a very sacred time — she was really with us in that experience.”

Pr. Harris is a graduate of Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa.; University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Social Work in Philadelphia; and Gettysburg (Pa.) Lutheran Seminary. She was ordained May 1990 in Binghamton, N.Y., and served congregations in upstate New York and Illinois, including the Ravenswood area of Chicago, Blue Island and Mundelein. She also trained for chaplaincy at Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights.

Pr. Harris plans to spend more time with her son Nathan, daughter-in-law Sylvia and grandson Evan. She also hopes to travel more and will continue to be supportive of LSSI through The Women’s Network and church programs. In addition, she will continue her work with the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. ♦

**A**fter 10 years of service, Pastor Eileen Harris is retiring as Chaplain at St. Matthew Center for Health.

“How wonderful these last 10 years have been,” she says. “And how wonderfully God has blessed me through the countless people within this family we call St. Matthew Center for Health and LSSI.”

Pr. Harris says St. Matthew and Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) allowed her to grow “into the best I could be within this very special ministry. I found St. Matthew rich with opportunities to be creative within the realm of spiritual support and guidance. Being available to residents, families and staff became an ever-present opportunity to respond with relevance to them in the name of the Gospel.”

She says that working with the Park Ridge Ministerial Association also became an important aspect of bringing St. Matthew to the community. “And I am grateful that we have become a site for Advocate Lutheran General’s Clinical Pastoral



Ed Bertram with his award at the Niles Night of Roses.

## Ed Bertram Honored

There's a good chance if you have been to St. Matthew Center for Health in recent years, that you have seen Ed Bertram here. As one of our most dedicated volunteers, he can be found helping to set up for events or singing and playing the guitar for residents. He often goes on outings to assist residents. Ed encourages residents to perform and rehearses with them, visits one-on-one and has helped build Tuesday evening's Hymn Fest into a major weekly activity. Residents think Ed is **The Best**. Staff, residents and families all appreciate him for his kindness and generosity.

In April, Ed was honored at the Niles Chamber of Commerce's annual awards dinner, Night of Roses, for his outstanding volunteer service at St. Matthew Center for Health. As he received his award, he said, "Spending time with the residents from the Greatest Generation is so rewarding. I wish the staff of St. Matthew could accept this award alongside of me. The love and care they show the residents is inspiring, and they've taught me so much."

Ed was also honored for outstanding service by Life Services Network at their annual convention at Navy Pier in 2008. ♦

## Wellness Programs Bring Real Benefits

It is a long-standing assumption that physical and mental decline are an unavoidable part of aging. But researchers are finding if steps are taken early and before decline begins, most serious illnesses and injuries can be avoided. The current increase in senior wellness programs across the country is evident of this shift in thinking. More and more people are beginning to understand being active is just as important as they age, as it was during younger years.

Problems arise when people accept this myth as inevitability. It is important for seniors to be proactive about their total wellness. Even if negative changes have already been noticed, it is never too late to start. LifeBalance<sup>SM</sup>, a senior wellness program offered by Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, has noticed countless improvements in its members since the program began in early 2009. About her husband, one woman said she had not seen further decline in his abilities and at 84 that was more than she could have asked. Another woman is amazed at her mom's ability to throw a ball across a room, something unimaginable one year ago. Similar programs all over America are reporting stories like these.

Steps to improving overall wellness are easy and can be done daily: read a book, join a club, find a walking partner, anything to keep the body and mind active everyday. If everyone makes an effort to stay active, devastating physical and mental decline related to age could become the exception, not the rule.

—Amelia Mazzei, Coordinator of LifeBalance<sup>SM</sup>



# Being a Nurse

by Melodie Chenevert

Being a nurse means. . .

You will never be bored.

You will always be frustrated.

You will be surrounded  
by challenges.

So much to do and so  
little time.

You will carry immense  
responsibility and very  
little authority.

You will step into people's  
lives, and you will make  
a difference.

Some will bless you.

Some will curse you.

You will see people at their  
worst – and at their best.

You will never cease to be  
amazed at people's  
capacity for love, courage  
and endurance.

You will experience resounding  
triumphs and devastating  
failures.

You will cry a lot.

You will laugh a lot.

You will know what it is  
to be human and to  
be humane.

## 'How Far Would You Go to Keep Your Family Together'

Presentation by author Marlin Keesler

**A**uthor Marlin Keesler presented "How Far Would You Go to Keep Your Family Together" to LifeBalance<sup>SM</sup> participants and guests in March. Marlin shared the struggles his family went through trying to adapt to having two special needs children.

As Marlin watched his son, Austin, become increasingly withdrawn and depressed, he searched for a way to bring Austin back. Then, to his dismay and confusion, Marlin's daughter Erin started demonstrating some of the same characteristics. After 12 frustrating years, finally armed with a diagnosis, Asperger's syndrome, Marlin embarked on his unique quest to reunite his family. He used the goal of running a marathon in all 50 states to educate and bond his family through travel and cultural experience. The audience members were amazed and impressed as Marlin told how his once-withdrawn son is now an active, contributing member of society. Marlin's journey is one any family can relate to, as busy schedules increasingly threaten the time spent as a family unit.

To learn more about Marlin, visit his Web site at [www.ourlifeontherun.com](http://www.ourlifeontherun.com). If you wish to receive information on upcoming LifeBalance<sup>SM</sup> events, contact Amelia Mazzei, LifeBalance<sup>SM</sup> coordinator, at [Amelia.Mazzei@LSSI.org](mailto:Amelia.Mazzei@LSSI.org) or 847-338-6409. ♦

## So much happening...



At last the weather was nice enough to enjoy the courtyards. Residents gathered on a sunny afternoon to paint flowers.

**Happy Birthday!** The March birthday party was hosted this year by the St. Matthew recreation services staff. Edison Park Lutheran Church hosted the April party, and their 'Good News Singers' performed for us. Grace Lutheran Church in Mt. Prospect hosted the May party.

**In March**, an outing took residents to see *Seussical* at Maine East High School.

St. Patrick's parties were held on March 13, with Dan Sullivan performing Irish songs, and on the 17th with Ed Bertram performing.

The St. Matthew Service League hosted their annual **Spring Café** on March 28. Residents welcomed the spring season and enjoyed pastries.

**In April**, a group of residents went to Trinity Lutheran Church in Des Plaines for Maundy Thursday service and were treated to a luncheon.

On April 12, Cubs opening day, the Service League provided hot dogs and hamburgers while residents watched the game.

The First Congregational Church choir in Des Plaines gave an impromptu concert and party for residents on April 18.

On April 28, the children's choir from St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Park Ridge brought their Orff instruments to St. Matt's and performed for residents in dining areas throughout the building.



St. Luke's children's choir.



Etching by Charlotte Schaefer

**Celebrations: A Group Art Exhibition** opened with an artists' reception on April 30. Thirty-three pieces by eight artists are on display in St. Matthew's lobby gallery until June 30. Artists from Park Ridge, Des Plaines and Mt. Prospect are exhibiting a variety of styles and mediums. Exhibitors are Marianne Comfort, Jo Hanch, Agnes Luchsinger, Christine Rendina, Charlotte Schaefer, Pat Schuler, Tom Schuler and Tina Mazzoni Solarz.



Bonnie Canavino hugs her mother, Agnes Luchsinger, at the Celebrations art show opening reception. Agnes is exhibiting two of many sketches she made during the 1930s and 1940s of Chicago Blackhawks players. As a young woman, Agnes traveled to many Blackhawks games and sketched players on the bench and in action, and then had them signed by the players.

**The Golden Agers**, St. Matthew's kazoo band, performed their spring concert for residents and staff.

Residents enjoyed a trip to Maine West High School in April to see a performance of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

**Mr. Taps**, one of our favorite tap dancers, returned to perform in April.

*continued on page 8*

So much happening... continued from page 7

In May, Bill Helmuth presented his travel talk to residents about Australia and New Zealand.

Recreation Services sponsored Celebrations Week in May, which included Celebrate Art History, with an art walk at St. Matthew, led by art therapist Andrea Koch. Andrea says the art walk was inspired by the suggestion of one of the residents.

Celebrate Games day included a bingo party with Lutheran Church of Martha and Mary. Celebrate Our Nurses included karaoke and snacks. Glenview Senior Chorus was here to Celebrate Music. The week wrapped up with a Celebrate Wellness event.

St. Matthew's Garden Club Opening Day was May 24. ♦

# giving & receiving

## SERVICELEAGUE NEWS

The Service League is extending hours for the Boutique to include Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. These new hours will begin at the end of June. In order to extend our hours to be more convenient for residents and families, new volunteers are essential. If you would like to join our crew, please contact Linda Anderson at 847-977-7470.

The annual plant sale held on our Western Avenue grounds on May 14 was very successful. Mother Nature cooperated with pleasant weather, and the flowers were beautiful.

On Mother's Day, Kirsten Synnestvedt presented a special program called "Hats," to the delight of residents and guests. Kirsten brought her collection of dozens of hats and told stories about them, and the room was filled with laughter. Father's Day was celebrated on June 13 with a barbershop quartet. Helen Johnson, special events chairperson, and her committee take care of all the details in presenting special programs by the Service League.

Our spring buffet for residents and staff was served on June 9, and everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch. Enjoy a lovely summer!

—Norma Rendina  
Service League Publicity Chair

## Celebrating Nurses

Nurses spend their days giving

For a week in May, St. Matthew celebrated nurses with a series of special events. Nurses were treated to pizza parties, sub sandwiches and cake, and received gift bags filled with Avon products. Each department at St. Matthew provided raffle prizes, and Chaplain Heather conducted a Blessing of the Hands for all employees. As part of the week of honoring nurses, the recreation services department hosted a karaoke party for residents. Karen Kingston, director of nursing, coordinated the week's events. ♦

## St. Matthew Service League

**BECOME A MEMBER JOIN TODAY!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

New Member \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ My address has changed \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting Member \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to make a donation! \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Life Member \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Other amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **Thank you for your support!**

Mail form and check to: Membership Chairperson • St. Matthew Service League • 1601 North Western Avenue • Park Ridge, IL 60068

# THANK YOU



Thank you to all who helped with our annual plant sale: Allstate Northbrook employees, LegacyCorps volunteers and St. Matthew Service League.

**We give thanks to those who have made contributions, either financial or in-kind, to St. Matthew Center for Health.**

**In Memory of:**

**Anna Dahl**  
Vicki Herrick

**Josephine Minelli**  
John & Lois Rotunno

**Rose Piersanti**  
LaMovne Blair  
Brian Conmy  
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**Mission Statement**  
Responding to the Gospel, St. Matthew Center for Health values people and those who care for them.

St. Matthew Center for Health is a program of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, and serves seniors of all faiths in need of short-term rehabilitation, skilled nursing care, respite care and specialized dementia services.

**Lutheran Social Services of Illinois**  
1001 E. Touhy Avenue • Suite 50  
Des Plaines, Illinois 60018  
847-635-4600 • [www.LSSI.org](http://www.LSSI.org)

## Create a Lasting Memory Brick Program

Families and friends of St. Matthew Center for Health are responding to the Service League's memory brick program by ordering engraved bricks as a perpetual remembrance of loved ones. The memory bricks will be installed in one of our lovely landscaped courtyards. Bricks are available in these sizes and prices, (family rates and corporate rates):

- 4 x 8" – 3 lines: \$100
- 8 x 8" – 6 lines: \$200 & \$300

• 12 x 12" – 9 lines: \$350 & \$500  
Bricks 8" wide have 13 characters per line; 12" bricks have 19 characters.

Your order will help make this project and great success and will be a lasting remembrance of your special person.

Order forms are available on our website, in our lobby, or by calling 847-825-5531. ♦



# Lutheran Social Services of Illinois

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To be added to or removed from our mailing list, please contact Valerie Niskanen, 847-825-5531 or Valerie.Niskanen@LSSI.org.

## Upcoming Events at St. Matt s

- June 15**  
**3:00 p.m.**      **“The Funniest Comedians of Radio and Television,”** with **Larry Bergnach**, founder of “Reminiscing with Larry” and “Vision Builder.” Relive the laughs and skits of Milton Berle, Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca, Burns and Allen, Red Skelton, Jackie Gleason, Fibber McGee and Molly, Jack Benny, Lucille Ball, The Bickersons and many more. [www.reminiscingwithlarry.com](http://www.reminiscingwithlarry.com)
- June 27**  
**2:00 p.m.**      Pastor Denver Bitner, CEO of LSSI, will officiate at a **service of worship** in our chapel, including the **“Order of Farewell and Godspeed”** for Pastor Eileen Harris. Reception following.
- July 16**  
**3:00 p.m.**      Karon Gibson, RN, CCM, **“Traditional, Alternative and Optional Health Treatments for Long Life”** presentation on hair analysis for vitamin deficits, excess toxins and medication analysis.  
[www.americanurse.com/newSite/products.htm](http://www.americanurse.com/newSite/products.htm)
- Sept. 11**  
**11:00 a.m. –**  
**2:00 p.m.**      St. Matthew’s Annual **Fun Fest!**

[www.StMatthewCenter.org](http://www.StMatthewCenter.org)