

Elder Network Quarterly

October, November, & December 2010

Alexandria, MN

By Debbie Hudspeth, Program Director

As part of Elder Network's efforts to improve client services, facilitate growth, and better support our clients, we are pleased to announce that Elder Network's administrative staff has relocated from the Marion Building to a rented office space in the Knute Nelson administrative building, located at 420 12th Avenue, Rooms 31 & 32. Our mailing address is PO Box 232, the phone number and e-mail address will remain the same (see back page). To ensure that our admin costs are kept to a minimum new office hours are Wed—Fri from 8:30—4:30. Our new office spaces are on the ground floor thus providing easy access to sponsors, clients, and volunteers. This new location is centrally located, close to *The Gathering's* new location as well as many other community services. Although we will miss our friends at the Marion Building, we look forward to making new and lasting friends at Knute Nelson and Nelson Gables. The Elder Network staff invites all volunteers to stop by and get acquainted with our new spaces.

Next year's outlook is exciting! Elder Network is continuing to grow our client and volunteer base for the Peer Support and Respite programs. Jill is currently conducting a peer volunteer training session which brings us five new volunteers, especially important at a time of year when so many leave us for warmer climates. As well as our base programs we are also anticipating the buildup of the Matter of Balance service which is a part of the Live Well at Home project. This service will enhance and expand our ability to further support our clients.

In short, with many transitions now behind us and many unforeseen experiences under our belt I believe Elder Network has come out a healthier and wiser organization; that we will continue helping people to help people.

Lastly, we need some fun time so we are planning a volunteer get together slated for mid November; as soon as we are able to arrive at an exact time for this event each volunteer will be contacted.



Jil Jacobson, Peer Support

Coordinator, receives grant money from the REA Operation Round Up program. The grant is in support of the Matter of Balance program in which Jil has been trained & certified as an instructor. For those at risk of falls this service may be a means to keeping their strength and agility up, one more key to staying independent.

By Judy Peterson, Respite Coordinator

The Gathering has moved! Now located at Nelson Gables, *The Gathering* participants will enjoy entertainment at each meeting and be able to select their lunch from a menu. If you are aware of anyone who would benefit from the respite this program affords for caregivers and the fun and socialization it provides for the participants please refer them to me.

Sow a thought,
reap an act,
Sow an act,
reap a habit,
Sow a habit,
reap a character,
Sow a character,
reap a destiny.

---E.D. Boardman



from *The Vintage Journey: A Guide to Artful Aging* by Trish Herbert

Who are the most courageous of all? Many of our frail elderly exhibit more courage on a daily basis than any other population. Their deeds certainly don't get the headlines that the younger, healthy, adventurous sorts who challenge mountains and whitewater do, and their deeds may appear humble, but, if the measure includes degree-of-difficulty, they are major victories. Many frail elderly model for us how to face their limitations and increasing dependence on others with a grace and dignity that we need to pause and appreciate.

It takes courage for the chronically ill to keep plugging along knowing that there is no cure for what ails them, and that this is no temporary trial but a long trip downhill - an inevitable decline.

It takes courage for the dignified, proper elderly to venture out to eat when they fear spilling and embarrassing themselves and others.

It takes courage to continue crocheting afghans with your shaky hands when you know that the finished product won't be what is used to be.

It takes courage to simply look in the mirror and see an old face and say, "Hey, I like the way I look, wrinkles and all," when our society out there seems to be saying "Be ashamed of those wrinkles, keep looking young," as if there is something unnatural or wrong about aging.

It takes courage to be responsible and give up your drivers license and all that freedom when you know your eyesight and reactions are no longer good enough.

It takes courage to find the balance between letting people know how you feel and what you need, and yet being able to get out of your narrow world of aches and pains and be genuinely interested in the feelings and activities of others.

It takes courage for caregivers of the chronically ill to 'stick with it' when their energy is being drained, and, despite all their efforts, their loved one is getting worse.

It takes courage to swallow your pride and ask for help.

We all know older people that exhibit this kind of courage. This is a kind of courage-by-default that most of us hope that we'll never have to know whether we have or not. We like to think that we are going to live a healthy, relatively carefree, full life and then die suddenly and painlessly in our favorite chair. A few do. And, factually, we are living longer healthier lives. This improvement and technological victory over longevity has only postponed and masked our society having to look at its lousy and often calloused attitude towards those who are no longer healthy and have less control.

Let's get our heads out of the sand and let them teach us. They have more experience. They are facing their limitations. They know death is the tail end of life and force us to look at the illusory nature of always thinking that there is a 'cure'. They know that their bodies won't get better or younger.

They are quietly waiting for our crazy world to respect one's full life cycle, to stop worshiping the young, the unblemished bodies, and to recognize that it's the spirit, how one thinks, feels, and acts that is most significant.

They exhibit a reverence for life and heightened sensibilities to the beauty of otherwise ordinary events. They have a wholeness and perspective of what is important that you rarely find in younger people.

Let's learn from our frail teachers, let them know what we are learning, and that we appreciate their courage.

Who we are and what we do...

This month's spotlight is on **John Schroeder, Volunteer.**

By Arlene Quam

Although he's not as active in the community as he once was and knows how to say "no" when asked to volunteer, John Schroeder generally says "yes." That's what happened when he was asked by Mary Jane Reif and Pauline Coleman to become a respite volunteer six years ago.

Sharing a love of music with a client who had suffered a severe stroke, Schroeder played his Native American flute while visiting and eventually witnessed the wiggling of a toe in time to the music. A common interest in motorcycles fostered good conversation with another client.

Schroeder and Margaret, his high school sweetheart, celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary in September. The couple has a son and daughter and three grandchildren. Graduates of Waseca, MN high school, the Schroeders' went to the University of Minnesota, where he majored in education. For seven years he taught business and marketing in Montevideo, MN.

Wanting to live on a lake, the Schroeders' moved in 1969 to Alexandria, where his mother grew up and with which he was familiar. As a Prudential Insurance and Investments representative he enjoyed his clients and enjoyed solving their problems. In 1996, he retired from full-time work and with Margaret moved to Germany, where he worked part-time and she full-time for Prudential. Neither speaking the language nor knowing how things would work out when they embarked on this adventure, they learned the language during their six year stay.

They have also learned Spanish. With the "Sister Parish" organization, the couple spent two weeks in Nicaragua and lived with a family simply to say, "We care about you." He later returned and lived with their new friends for two months.

Says Schroeder, I have come to realize I would rather go motorcycle riding with my wife than play golf." On a six week motorcycle trip this past spring, the Schroeders' attended their grandson's graduation in Louisville, Kentucky and toured the Tennessee and Indiana area. Six years ago, they rode their bikes to Sturgis – two weeks after the rally—and visited the Badlands and Black Hills. "Two oldies," says Schroeder, "We're risk takers."

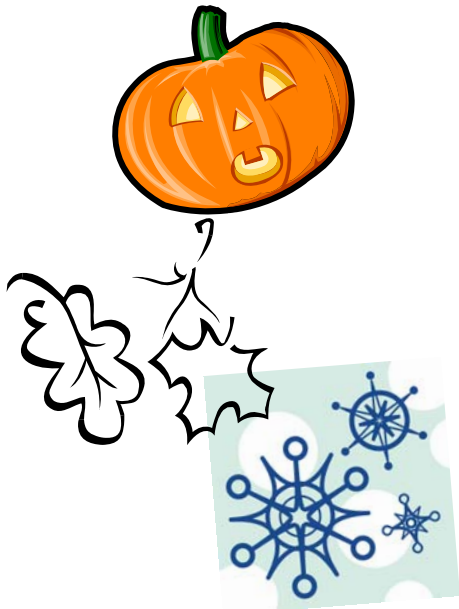
He's also a "wannabe poet." His poetry often appears in *Senior Perspective*.

Having taken up the Native American flute six years ago, he plays for his own enjoyment and at church functions, in classrooms, and sometimes at Evansville's Open Mike.

Between his senior year and college, two buddies and Schroeder decided to raft down the Mississippi from Winona to the gulf. Required to have power control of the raft through the locks, they ran out of money because their engine needed repair. They made it to southern Iowa.

It's no surprise that John Schroeder's philosophy of life is: "Take time to have fun."

Return Service Requested



Supervisory Meeting & Inservice: Supervisory at 1:00 p.m. Inservice at 2:00 p.m.
Monday, October 4th, Jean Robley, RN Clinic Coordinator, Alexandria VA Clinic
Monday, November 1st, Jeremy Anderson, O.D., Eye Associates of Alexandria
Monday, December 6th, Deb Shea, Affordable Healthcare Act
Meetings are held at Calvary Lutheran, 605 Douglas Street, Alexandria.

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please send an e-mail to eldernet@embarqmail.com or call us at 320-763-9084.



Elder Network Journal is printed quarterly to support and promote Elder Network. You can contact us at our office in the Knute Nelson Admin Bldg., 420 12th Avenue, #32, Alexandria, or call 763-9084, email: eldernet@embarqmail.com Mailing address is PO Box 232, Alexandria.

Board of Directors: Jola Amundsen, Elroy Anderson, Carla Beem, David Carlson, Jean Challeen, Sister Patrice Kiefer, Loni Kjos, Melinda Megel, Ruth Nagle, & Georgia Nelson.