

## A Note from Executive Director, Vicki Hickman

### The Value of Being Grateful

Recently I had a discussion with one of the assisted living residents. This gentleman has been working on securing Twin Towers transportation to the College Hill Community Center to facilitate a group of residents who want to play indoor tennis there. While talking, it occurred to me that he was asking for the benefit of others, not himself. Though he is quite mobile throughout our community, he has some physical challenges and limitations which prevent him from playing tennis. In fact, he doesn't intend on visiting the community center at all. As we talked, he mentioned his personal remedy that keeps him from feeling down. It's all about gratitude. He spends time looking at the problems others are experiencing, focusing on helping his fellow residents; and in doing so, he feels more positive about his own situation.

Gratitude is an appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible. It forces us to look outside ourselves. It helps us take our eyes off our own challenges and seek out the positive things in our lives. We affirm that, despite challenges, life is good and has elements that make it worth living. In the process, we usually recognize the source of that goodness lies outside ourselves. As a result, people connect to something larger than themselves.

Gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships. Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice. There are many ways to practice gratitude, such as:

- Keep a daily journal of things that went well.
- Express gratitude to your friends or loved ones every day.
- Mindfulness and meditation can help you stay present and cultivate a sense of gratitude in every moment.
- Write down something you're thankful for on a piece of paper and put it in a jar. This can be a constant reminder of the good in your life and provide comfort and joy during challenging times.
- Helping others can foster a sense of gratitude and connectedness. Volunteer your time, donate to a cause you believe in, or perform acts of kindness to experience the fulfillment that comes from giving.

Often when we reflect on what we are grateful for, profound life experiences, circumstances and events come to mind. We may feel grateful for our upbringing, family, job, good health, and the opportunity to gain an education. While recognizing and being grateful for these experiences is important, we can also find joy in everyday experiences, such as admiring a beautiful piece of art, delivering flowers to a resident of the health pavilion, laughter with a friend, or listening to birds sing while relaxing on a park bench; all of which can be enjoyed at Twin Towers. Whatever these simple pleasures may be, consciously expressing our gratitude for them can help us grow our daily gratitude practice.

I'm grateful to the gentleman in assisted living who reminded me how beneficial gratitude can be, for every simple moment I get to spend with my precious grandson, and for the privilege to serve all of you as Executive Director.

*Vicki*