



## *A Note from Executive Director, Lisa Zimmers*

### **Living Vicariously**

I've often heard people talk about living vicariously through others. This statement is often stated when someone is sharing an adventure they've been on or a lifestyle that seems glamorous to the audience. What does it mean to live vicariously? It means experiencing life through the activities of other people, rather than living the events yourself. Living vicariously is a good way to stay connected to people in your life and can bring joy through shared conversation, expression of emotion and intentional listening.

Living vicariously is often associated with the investment parents put towards their children's experiences. As parents, we often want to provide opportunities for our children that we didn't have. It can be very motivating to work hard, earn good wages and enjoy seeing others reap the benefits. I don't intend to belittle anyone's choices, but I do think it's important to keep a practical sense about what we do for others. I've probably spent more than was necessary on family vacations, my kid's sports fees and even education. Although I could have a healthier bank account without some of these decisions, I've enjoyed the experiences with my family rather than just hearing about it after the fact. I'm grateful to have been able to make many memories and look forward to making more.

On April 6th, Twin Lakes, in collaboration with the City of Montgomery, hosted a Mental Health Fair. It was a wonderful day filled with speakers, providers, and guests. We're very blessed to have the wonderful Shirley M. Davies Community Center to hold such events. Although I didn't know Shirley Davies, I know many people who did. I hope she and her family had some sense of the impact her gift would have on our community. I'm not sure she or anyone would have been able to envision all the events that happen in that space. It truly is a blessing and I'm eternally grateful.

During the Mental Health Fair, one of the speaker sessions was conducted by the Montgomery Police Department. One of the speakers spoke about vicarious trauma. That was a new word association for me and I was anxious to learn more. Vicarious trauma is a condition that affects people who are indirectly exposed to the trauma of another. It is often associated with professions that witness violent acts or traumatic events, as well as counselors who work with victims after such events. Vicarious trauma can be debilitating to police officers, emergency medical technicians, firefighters, those serving in the military, emergency room workers and many other professions. It is essential to be in tune with the emotions that are brought on by such events and address the needs of those experiencing vicarious trauma.

Each of us experiences vicarious living and vicarious trauma on some scale throughout our lives. It's important that we recognize when we're trying to live vicariously through others. If it comes at the expense of our own needs, we may need to realign our priorities. It's equally important to be aware of bias and fear that may result from others trauma. Don't allow the wants, needs or experiences of others to trump your own health.

Live well Friends,

**Lisa**