

BRANCHING OUT

LIVING BRANCHES

Live & Grow – Together

Chords of Love:

Music Therapy Program Deepens
a Unique Mother-Daughter Bond



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

THE POWER OF MUSIC

A FEW YEARS BEFORE MY MOTHER'S

dementia progressed, our entire family vacationed together at a cabin in the mountains. One of my fondest memories from that trip was when my mom started singing "Trust and Obey" and talked about it as Brandi's song. My mother and Brandi, my daughter, often sung the song together when Brandi would visit as a child and so that hymn was very special to them.

Years later when my mom was deep into her dementia, my wife, daughter, and I sang that hymn as we visited her. Even though my mom had not been verbal for some time, she began to mouth the words along with us as we sang. It was a very special moment for our family. And a memory I often thought about as plans for the dementia care strategy and creative arts therapy programs were being established at Living Branches.

Music allows us to form intense emotional connections to other persons and specific moments or seasons in our lives. Sometimes those connections are so powerful that it can be hard to articulate in words how music makes us feel. In this edition of Branching Out, you will meet Lois Herbine and learn how the power of music has allowed her to reconnect with her mother, Olga. It is a meaningful story that we can all relate to in some way.

Last summer we introduced the creative arts therapy program which includes music, art, and movement therapy provided by Seth Laucks and interns from local universities. It seems that every week we hear stories of how relationships are being formed and connections are being made between therapists and residents with dementia through the creative arts. Just as Lucy, Brandi, and I were able to connect with my mother through a treasured hymn, residents, family members, and staff are connecting each day at Living Branches through the power of music.

EDWARD D. BRUBAKER
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Chords of Love:

Music Therapy Program Deepens
a Unique Mother-Daughter Bond

IT CAME AS NO SURPRISE TO LOIS BLISS HERBINE THAT MUSIC WAS THE MAGICAL KEY THAT HAS UNLOCKED THE DOOR TO A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF COMMUNICATION WITH HER MOTHER, Olga Bliss, who is currently a resident in the Dock Woods Memory Care program. For as long as Lois can remember, music has woven through the symphony of her family's history – connecting them to each other and to the beautiful memories of music shared and loved. Today, Lois has yet another reason to believe in the power of music, as it has helped awaken her mother's memories from the past and enticed her to a place where she and Lois can connect in the present.

LOIS, who is an internationally-renowned flute and piccolo soloist, learned about the Living Branches creative arts therapy program for Memory Care residents a few years after her mother had moved into Harmony House at Dock Woods – and she immediately saw its great potential to find new ways to care for and communicate with her mother.

“I still can’t believe that I didn’t think of using music as a means of communication – or as a means of opening the door to conversation,” said Lois. “My mother was diagnosed with dementia about ten years ago, and since then she had been slowly losing her ability to communicate. The more I learned about the creative arts therapy program, the more empowered and hopeful I felt about the possibility of connecting with my mom in new ways.”

Lois quickly bonded with Kathleen Roberts, director of dementia care strategy – whose own mother Sumako (Sue) was, at the time of their first meeting, one of Olga’s neighbors. Lois and Kathleen shared not only similar experiences and challenges in communicating with their mothers, but also a passion for learning everything they could about the healing and connecting power of music.

As Kathleen was working to formalize the new creative arts therapy program at Living Branches, she invited Lois to join her as a volunteer on a variety

of classes at Drexel University that spotlighted new techniques in using dance and music to enhance the care of those living with dementia. One of those classes was led by Seth Laucks, a certified music therapist and licensed counselor, who now leads the Living Branches creative arts therapy program.

Seth’s class utilized easy-to-play hand instruments to engage everyone in the room to play a group song, and when Lois saw the participants light up with happiness, she was deeply inspired.

“I went home and pulled my father’s old hand instruments out of the closet for my next visit with my mom,” said Lois. “I wanted to try out all of the new techniques I was learning – and it was definitely a process of figuring out what would work best. When I eventually experienced that breakthrough moment with my mom where her mind opened and we were able to connect as mother and daughter again, I was overwhelmed with hope and joy.”

Lois explained that she can’t fully put into words just how much that breakthrough moment – and the many other moments of connection with her mother since then – have meant to her. To help paint a more complete picture, she took us back to her earliest memories and explored the critical role that her mother’s love and support played in Lois’ lifelong passion for music.

AN INSPIRING OVERTURE – THE MUSICAL ROOTS OF THE BLISS FAMILY

Today, Lois may play for huge audiences that fill a concert hall, but many of her earliest musical memories consist of an audience of one: her mother.

“My mom actually played the piano when I was young,” said Lois. “She used to tell me that when I was only three years old, I would wiggle my way onto the piano bench until I eventually kicked her off! Fortunately, she enjoyed seeing me learn and develop the basics of music.”

Lois’ father provided her musical instruction at home. An electrical engineer by day and a professional musician on the weekends, he started out in vaudeville and worked his way to playing in some of Philadelphia’s biggest clubs during the World War II era.

“My mom was part of a Ladies Contingency, and she would sometimes join my father on his band jobs,” said Lois. “My brother and sister – who are much older than I am – often stayed with my grandparents during these times, but my mother would later bring me along to the country clubs to hear the band play. I loved everything about that world, from the variety of the music, to the reactions of the audience, to the energy that stayed with me long after the music ended.”

In fourth grade, Lois chose the flute as her musical focus – a natural choice, as her mother, sister, and father all played the flute.

“My dad enjoyed giving me harmony lessons, and while I’m not sure I paid attention to the technical aspects much, I remember loving how animated he was when he played,” said Lois. “His expressions would change with every musical shift – so while I may not have picked up all the names of the chords, I learned from a young age the importance of playing with emotion.”

Lois’ father credited her natural aptitude for music to her great-grandfather, who was a coal miner and a piccolo player – and to her Welsh blood, rich with musical history.

“In junior high school, I started to play the piccolo as well,” said Lois. “There were 27 flutists in my band, so I saw an opportunity to shine with the piccolo, which is an octave higher and much easier to hear in an ensemble.”

Even though piccolo solos were uncommon in Lois’ junior high school band (primarily because there weren’t any written until the turn of the last century), she convinced her band teacher to let her perform a solo for an upcoming concert.

“When I eventually experienced that breakthrough moment with my mom where her mind opened and we were able to connect as mother and daughter again, I was overwhelmed with hope and joy.”

“I was a pretty shy kid, but you really can’t be shy with the piccolo, because it stands out,” said Lois. “Plus, that solo earned me the attention of my teachers – one of which told me that his son had been squirming in his seat during the concert until he heard my solo, which made him freeze and listen with a wide-open mouth. I felt like the Pied Piper of little kids!”

Through every concert and every musical stepping stone, Olga was there for support.

“I remember her whistling along as I practiced,” said Lois. “Occasionally, she would make recommendations that enhanced my performance. Once time in particular, she encouraged me to smile during the most joyful parts of a piece to help me draw the audience into that feeling. Her advice reinforced the connection of music and emotion – and has served as an important reminder that has undoubtedly strengthened many of my performances over the years.”



PLAYING BY EAR – EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES IN CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

In 1986, Lois began her professional career as a musician. Since then she has performed with the Philly Pops, the Reading Symphony and Ocean City Pops Orchestras, among other ensembles – and has released multiple award-winning solo recordings that have been broadcast on radio stations across the country.

Through her many professional challenges and accomplishments, Lois appreciated the eager listening ears of

Just as her musical career has been a journey, so too has been Lois and Olga’s journey with the Creative Arts program.

“Recordings of my dad’s dance band music led to my first real opening with my mom,” said Lois. “I took a handful of his music reels and had them digitally converted and loaded onto my daughter’s iPod. Then, during my next visit, I played the music for her. At first, she just stood there and listened. Then, she started smiling and dancing. I said, ‘Do you know who that is playing? It’s Dad!’ I pulled out a picture to show her, and – as if a switch had been flipped – the words and sentences flowed out of her. It floored me completely. Two years earlier, she had stopped making complete sentences, so the amount of progress she made in a matter of minutes was extraordinary.”

MUSICAL INSPIRATION – A MOMENT OF BEAUTIFUL CONNECTION

Even though her father’s music certainly created an impact, Lois’ most memorable breakthrough with her mother didn’t come from music of the past, but rather, from music of the present. One day, while Lois was eating lunch with her mom in the Dock Woods bistro, she decided to play Olga a selection of her own music – soon to be released on a new album.

“And all of a sudden, I had my mom back. She asked me about my daughter who is getting married, about the music on my album, and about all of her family members. It was nothing short of a miracle..”

her mother, whose pride and support encouraged Lois on her musical journey. When Olga’s dementia progressed to the point where the duo could no longer communicate as they once had, Lois deeply missed those shared connections with her mother.

“Even as I mourned the loss of what we once had, I knew part of my mother was still in there,” said Lois. “I could hear it in her laugh, which has always been – and still is – the most beautiful, musical sound in the world. I was determined to use what I was learning in the creative arts therapy program to inspire positive change in my mom’s ability to communicate.”

was nothing short of a miracle. When I walked my mom back to her room, she touched me on the arm and asked, ‘Are you okay?’ I could barely speak, as I was so overcome with emotion.”

Week after week, Lois played Olga selections from her new album, and time after time, Olga’s mind opened. The two even shopped together in the Dock Woods gift shop, something they hadn’t done for quite some time.

“I picked out a necklace for my mom, and she picked out one for me,” said Lois. “But here’s the really interesting part of the story: during that particular shopping visit, we misplaced the necklace she picked out for me; when we went back another time, she found it again – and remembered that it was the one she had chosen for me. The necklace she picked features birds in flight, which closely mimics the theme of my album, *Alight*, and its music – the ‘key’ that unlocked a very magical door in her mind. I wear it all the time to remember that special moment.”

To learn more
about Lois’ music
project, visit
www.piccolois.com



A NEVER-ENDING SYMPHONY OF CARE AND CONNECTION

While Lois is thrilled with every special conversation and shared experience she has with her mom, what inspires her the most is the knowledge that their story is just one of many that will be touched by the Living Branches creative arts therapy program.

“Kathleen and Seth are so passionate about what they do,” said Lois. “They believe in the healing and connecting power of music, and their ideas, care, and successes will continue to open the hearts and minds of both residents and their families.”

Lois also has some pearls of wisdom for other family members who are looking to use music to connect with loved ones living with dementia.

“There’s no one-size-fits all approach,” said Lois. “Play different kinds of music – especially music that has special meaning. Share memories, both verbally and through photographs. I noticed that some of my mom’s older memories – even those from her very early childhood – were as vivid to her as if she were watching a movie in the



present. Talk about those memories, and if at all possible, try to capture them on film, because they are precious gifts to cherish.”

Whether reminiscing about the past or sharing new experiences together in the present, Lois treasures the special days she shares with her mother.

“I feel so many emotions regarding my newly strengthened relationship with my mom, but what I feel the most is gratitude,” said Lois. “I’m overflowing with gratitude – for my parents who instilled such a deep love of music in me, for Kathleen and Seth who inspired me to use that passion to unlock my mom’s ability to communicate, and of course, for every precious moment of connection I have with my mom.”



CURRENT SCAMS AND ADVICE

for How to Prevent Becoming a Scam Victim

By: Bruce Alder, Chief Risk Officer



IRS SCAM

The IRS scam involves you getting a phone call or voice message saying: “It’s the IRS and you have an outstanding tax liability that needs to be paid before you get arrested.” What do you do? Hang up or do NOT return that message or call! It is a scam. The IRS will NOT be calling you, and it will not be threatening you to immediately pay a tax liability.

SWEEPSTAKES AND LOTTERY SCAMS

Sweepstakes and lottery scams involve you receiving a letter, phone call, or email telling you that you won! It’s a lottery, sweepstakes, or some other prize. There may even be a real looking check enclosed with the letter for several thousands of dollars. But wait, there is a catch. They tell you there’s a fee, or taxes, or customs duties you have to pay. They ask for your bank account information to verify who you are or ask you to send a check or send money via a wire transfer or to purchase gift cards and provide the card numbers in order to collect your remaining winnings. It is a scam. True lotteries or sweepstakes don’t ask for advance money. If they want money for taxes, they are mostly likely crooks. As my grandmother always told me, “There is no such thing as a free lunch.”

GRANDPARENT SCAMS

Grandparent scams involve you getting an urgent call from someone claiming to be (and you think is) your grandchild. The “grandchild” claims to be traveling and has gotten into a bad situation (like being arrested for drunk driving or in a car accident) and needs money wired to them ASAP. They also say, “Don’t tell mom or dad.” You think to yourself, the distraught caller does sort of sound like your grandchild, but you are only reacting to the situation; you are caught off guard. What do you do? Resist temptation to react or act quickly. If you feel you need to ask this person questions, ask questions to which only true family members know the answers. Don’t send any money. Hang up and call your grandchild’s home number or cell number—the numbers you know, not the numbers given by the caller. And call their parents too. You will discover the grandchild is usually safe and sound.

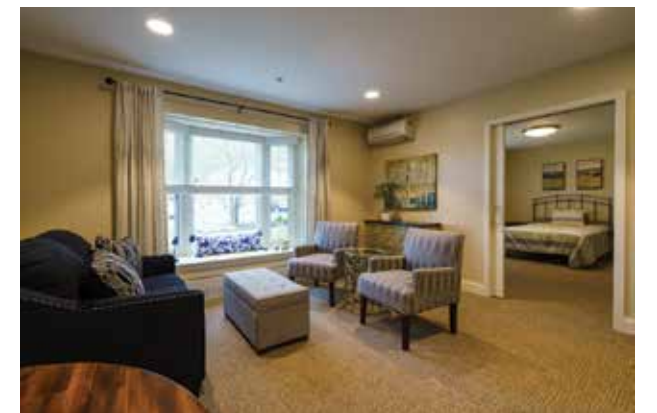
Scammers tend to target seniors with all types of scams, often taking advantage of their isolation, ease of trust, and and higher savings, among other things. Realizing that the best defense against scams is increased awareness of them, Living Branches provides regular Safety Minute presentations on the latest scams to residents at periodic resident meetings.



RENOVATIONS

at The Willows of Living Branches

By: Alex Metricarti, Chief marketing and Public Relations Officer



EARLIER THIS SUMMER WE COMPLETED RENOVATIONS IN THE SOUTH WING AT THE WILLOWS OF LIVING BRANCHES.

The scope of the project included combining studio apartments to create one bedroom apartments, installing a sprinkler system, and updating the community spaces.

The new one bedroom apartments now boast beautiful features including bay windows and bathrooms with a larger footprint and easier accessibility with barn doors and walk-in showers. Additionally, the south wing now has a new lounge with a kitchenette and game tables for residents to enjoy. The common spaces are now light and bright with new paint, carpet, lighting, furniture, and artwork. One hallway has a coastal theme and the other has a meadow theme. The south wing now feels peaceful and elegant and has become a place that residents enjoy.

The response to the renovations has been overwhelmingly positive. We are thrilled to offer these attractive one bedroom apartments to prospective residents and also to make the community more beautiful for the residents who already call The Willows home. If you would like to schedule a tour to see the new updates, call Karen Walser at 215-368-4438!

DAY TRIP TO THE AUTO MALL (1)

Last month residents from Souderton Mennonite Homes visited the Classic Auto Mall which is an indoor showroom and consignment house for over 1,000 vehicles offered for sale and on display. There is also a display of 400 barn finds. The residents shared that seeing the old vehicles brought back many good memories and they enjoyed reminiscing about their past during the trip.



CONTAINER GARDENING 101 (2)

Residents, future residents, and community members ushered in the summer season with a container gardening class as part of Living U. Instructor Susan Doblmaier gave a presentation about the recommended equipment, soils, fertilizers, and plants for container gardening, and then the class moved the pavilion to create their own containers. This was one of the most popular classes of the spring semester. Not only did everyone have fun getting their hands dirty during the class, but they were able to enjoy the beauty of their flowers all summer long.



FANTASY ISLAND TALENT SHOW (3)

The theme of the 2019 talent show as Dock Woods was Fantasy Island. Songs, skits, and performances were selected to focus on the beach theme, which was enjoyed by all as they longed for the warmth of summer.



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Discovery Tours are designed for first-time visitors to Souderton Mennonite Homes and Dock Woods. Each event begins with light refreshments and a brief presentation to explain the communities and help you become better acquainted with Living Branches. Then you'll take a tour of the community center and residents' homes, visiting a villa, a cottage, and an apartment. There is no fee for this event, but registration is required. *To register, visit www.livingbranches.org/events.*

Dock Woods – 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 8

Wednesday, October 30

Souderton Mennonite Homes – 1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 3

Wednesday, October 16

