

The ADVOCATE

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Fall 2019



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Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church

2700 19th Street South
Arlington VA 22204
Phone: 703-979-5580
Fax: 703-979-5590
www.olqpva.org

Editor's Note: *As more people live longer lives, a growing number of our aging population face debilitating memory loss. The Fall issue of the Advocate features an article on Memory Cafes; a "small house" that is designed for residents with Alzheimer's at the Goodwin House retirement community; and a reflection on a loved one living with dementia. The agro-forestry program in OLQP's twin parish in Medor, Haiti, also is highlighted, and a column by Fr. Joe Nangle OFM challenges all of us to put our prayers to public action*

Paula Cruickshank
Editor, The Advocate

Goodwin House

"Small House" Care for Alzheimer Residents

By Jack Sullivan

With a cure for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia still elusive to medical science, increased attention is being given to the care provided to those afflicted. Goodwin House Alexandria, a "life plan" continuing care community, is pioneering in what is termed "small house" care.

Only about one percent of nursing care facilities currently employ the concept, according to Joshua Bagley, administrator of the small house health care center. When Goodwin House got permission to erect a new building a few years ago, it convened current residents to get their opinions on its configuration. "The residents had three priorities: A private room, a private bathroom and a space where they could meet with family," explained Bagley, who holds a master's degree in health administration from George Washington University.

Goodwin House responded by building a facility that contains nine units called "small houses" where ten residents live. Each house has two certified nursing assistants who are supervised by nurses 24/7. Each house has ten private bedrooms, each with its own spacious bathroom, a kitchen with a cook, a living room, a lounge area and a long table where meals and other activities occur. Residents living in the houses have access to all communal areas of Goodwin House. One house is "locked" to prevent wandering but has its own ground floor enclosed garden area where residents may walk.

This physical infrastructure is accompanied by "person centered" principles of care, Bagley noted. "Decision making is not by a

bureaucracy. Individual residents make decisions. Residents are treated as autonomous adults and caregivers as knowledgeable partners." Those precepts are backed up by staff policies



Dining room and kitchen area of the "small house."

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“Small House” Care

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and training, he added: “For example, any member of the staff, including me, may be called upon to do any task necessary to insure resident needs are met.”

“Too many nursing homes treat memory care residents like children,” Bagley said. “We have replaced stiff regimen with concepts of community, house and individual engagement. We normalize life by facilitating what a person might do at home, including read a book or discussing the news, thereby raising the comfort level of our residents.”

A brief tour of one “house” found individuals variously engaged in reading a newspaper, talking to a family member, or using an exercise machine. Bagley addressed each by name in introducing me. Meanwhile, the cook was busy in the kitchen preparing lunch. The home-like atmosphere was evident and in sharp contrast to other mental health

facilities I have visited in the past.

Dementia is a terrible affliction. In lieu of a cure, the “small house” concept is a promising step forward in memory care.



Enclosed garden for patients at risk of wandering. They reside in the only “locked” house in the complex.

Memory Cafes: A Valuable Resource — and Free!

By Kathy Desmond

Many members of the OLQP community have loved ones struggling with memory loss, mild cognitive impairment or dementia. Some are caregivers themselves and know how difficult and isolating this responsibility can be.

Memory Cafes are a resource that can help. A Memory Cafe is a monthly social gathering for persons living with memory loss, mild cognitive impairment or dementia as well as their care partner. The care partner may be a spouse, friend, family member or paid caregiver, such as an aide.

The Cafes provide an opportunity for loved ones and care partners to find support and friendship in a safe and welcoming setting. A qualified facilitator leads the two-hour session in activities that promote social interaction, engagement, cognition, and reminiscing. Everyone participates on an equal basis. The atmosphere is non-judgmental. Often a person with memory loss can come up with the answer to an exercise before the caregiver. Cafes are dementia-friendly outings.

There is no cost to attend a cafe. But facilitators ask that you make reservations in advance so they can arrange for materials and snacks. The facilitators volunteer their time and host organizations provide meeting space, free parking, coffee, and snacks.

Memory Cafes began in the Netherlands based on the concept promoted by Dr. Bere Miesen, a Dutch psychiatrist, in 1997. The Cafes were a way to break the stigma associated with dementia and the resulting

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Memory Cafes

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isolation of those suffering from the disease and their caregivers. More a movement than an organization, Memory Cafes spread through Europe, to Australia and then the United States. Their network is called the “percolator.” There are now hundreds of Cafes in the US including 10–12 in Northern Virginia. Find the one nearest to you at MemoryCafeDirectory.com.

The two local Memory Cafes are:

- **Mount Vernon Memory Cafe**, which meets the first Friday of each month from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. (7910 Andrus Rd, Suite 6, Alexandria, VA 22306).
- **Arlington Memory Cafe**, Rock Spring Congregational Church, which meets on the second Thursday of each month, same time. (5010 Little Falls Rd, Arlington VA 22207).

Nicole McMonigle Knight is the Facilitator of the two cafes. She is a Certified Dementia Practitioner whose company, Dementia Care Connections, offers support services to family caregivers and health care professionals (www.DementiaCareConnections.com). Her 20-year experience in helping families and caregivers began with hospice and later to aging followed by helping to improve and maintain the quality of life of those living with dementia.

“It is important to me to help others help their loved ones,” she explained. Nicole’s mother had multiple sclerosis and their family helped with the majority of her care needs. Later in their caregiving journey, they brought in additional support and hired a private aide so she could live comfortably at home through the end of her life.

The main benefit of the cafes is socialization. Participants have fun and form bonds of friendship. The focus is on the positive, what persons with dementia can do, rather than what they can’t do. The socialization benefits the care partner as well as person with dementia.

Attendance at these Cafes averages 6–12 persons, including care partners. The average age ranges from the 50s to the 70s, and those with dementia are in

the early to moderate stages. The care partner is most often a friend or spouse.

The sessions typically are two hours. Both Cafes focus on brain games, discussion, trivia, and holiday themes, such as Labor Day and Oktoberfest in September and the history of Halloween candy in October. In a travel series, they discuss different locations, interesting facts, trivia and share reminiscences.

They play visual and word games, and concentration exercises and puzzles. Everyone works on them together rather than competing with each other. Each activity is 15–20 minutes long. Halfway through, they break and have a snack.



Nicole McMonigle Knight, Facilitator of Arlington and Alexandria Memory Cafes

Nicole gets positive feedback from participants and their care partners who tell of positive changes in their mood, social skills, and confidence. Most participants with short-term memory loss remember that they had a good time at the Cafe and look forward to attending again. She adds, “I notice changes in myself from participating in challenging brain games.”

Each Memory Cafe is different, meeting on different days and having their own focus. For example, the Vienna Memory Cafe concentrates more on socialization, games, and bringing in outside music entertainment while others focus more on arts and crafts. Participants can attend any Cafe, at no cost.

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Memory Cafes

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Memory Cafes are not support groups, or adult day programs or respite care (where caregivers can drop off those they care for). There are no waiting lists or eligibility tests.

Anyone is welcome to attend a Memory Cafe. The only requirement is that everyone must participate in the activities. RSVP to:

nicole@dementiacareconnections.com.

My Brother, Buzz

A Reflection on a Loved One Living with Alzheimer's

By Paula Cruickshank

My mother had only one wish throughout her life — that my sister Stephanie and I take care of our brother, Buzz, after she passed away. Everyone in the Shenango Valley where I grew up knew Buzz. In fact, it was impossible to miss him. At 6'6" tall, he towered over most people, and it seemed at least once a day someone would ask him, "How's the weather up there?" No matter how often he heard this, it made him laugh.

Buzz loved the simple things in life. At the top of the list was his custom-made bicycle. Standard sizes simply did not fit, given his 78-inch frame, most of which consisted of his lanky legs. He rode his bike everywhere in our small town and was a fixture at the local park and swimming pool. Buzz also loved to bowl and he was phenomenally gifted in drawing. One year he gave us an incredibly detailed picture of the Taj Mahal, all done freehand and to scale.



A summer outing with my sister, Stephanie Longstreet, and my brother, Buzz Lazor.

I'm sharing all of this because our brother now has Alzheimer's. It was only in the past five years that my sister began to notice a gradual diminishment of his memory. At first, it could be attributed to the normal aging process, but over time it became more pronounced. He started to have difficulties organizing his thoughts and grew easily confused. My sister fastidiously labeled his bedroom chest of drawers: one was for his t-shirts; another for his socks; a third for his boxers and briefs; and the fourth for his pajamas. She used to lay out his clothes to make it easier for him to choose what to wear. Now he can no longer dress himself or take a shower.

When Buzz began showing some decline in his memory, my husband and I started visiting more often and staying longer with my sister and her husband to provide them some down time. We had arranged for a companion, too, for several hours per week, but my sister still had to spend hours of time working out the schedule and working on everything else she couldn't do until Buzz was immersed in a movie or drawing or napping.

Seeing their need for respite care, we began to take Buzz with us to Arlington — initially for a week or two, then three or four. As his needs grew more demanding, we extended his stay to five or six weeks. Last winter was his longest visit — two months at my sister's request. To her, simply not venturing out in the icy, frigid weather for doctor appointments or to run errands without arranging for a "sitter" was equal to a summer vacation.

Because Stephanie saw Buzz every day, the changes were not as sudden to her as they were to us. But when his personality and moods began to change last summer, we could no longer risk driving with him on lengthy

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My Brother, Buzz

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trips. There was also the challenge of setting up specialists in our area and the nightmare of trying to have his doctor bills paid by a Pennsylvania-run health care plan.

So now, I drive to Pennsylvania more often. Instead of biking to the park, Buzz pushes his “Rollater” (the “Rolls Royce” of walkers). Instead of spending hours drawing at the dining room table, he is content to scribble large concentric circles on a sketch pad and color the empty spaces.

On my last trip, I remember walking into the dining room, the room which used to be brightly lit for him to do his coloring or work on his word puzzles. This time the lights were not on and there was only the faint illumination of the late afternoon sun coming through the window. Buzz was immersed in watching a movie — one he had already seen several times and was enjoying again as if it were his first viewing.

During his stays with us, he loved to take out several books at our local library and pick out a few DVDs. He would leaf through the books and read contentedly in our living room. His favorite topics were volcanoes and dinosaurs.

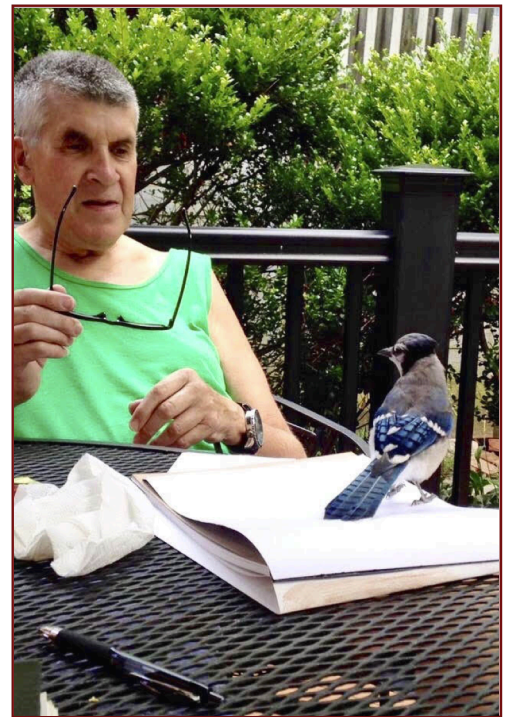
Now he has difficulty reading a single sentence. Yet, his limitations — which for the past few years so angered him to the point his entire body sometimes shook — now seem to be easily dismissed. He is content to play simple games, watch his favorite television programs and rest comfortably in his special Lift Chair.

When I see Buzz now, he is once more the gentle giant. I think back to one of his first visits. He was sitting on our back deck when a beautiful Blue Jay alighted on our banister. Buzz had his drawing board on our wrought iron table and barely looked up at the bird, which to my surprise, hopped on to the chair opposite of where Buzz was sitting. The Blue Jay was uncharacteristically calm and tame, even when I drew closer to look at him. Then, in an instant, the bird flew on to the table — only a few feet away from where Buzz continued drawing.

The Blue Jay gingerly grew closer to Buzz. Then to my surprise, it hopped on to his sketch pad. At that point, Buzz looked up from his drawing and looked straight at the bird, which looked directly back at him. I made sure to take

pictures of this unique photo opportunity. Then the Blue Jay flew away. Never to be seen again.

I mentioned the odd behavior of the bird to a few good friends. One suggested it could have been the spirit of my mother telling me it’s time to help out my sister more as she looks after my brother. I like to think our mom is pleased that Buzz seems to be content with his life and that his two sisters love him and will do the best they can to keep their promise to her.



Buzz and the Blue Jay

Update on the Agro-forestry Program in Medor

By Sue Carlson, M.D.

Agro-forestry is an important and successful element of the twinning relationship between Our Lady Queen of Peace (OLQP) and St. Joseph of Medor parish.

The program addresses Haiti’s severe deforestation, which has created or exacerbated some of the

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Update on Medor

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nation's major problems:

- Floods and mudslides
- Lower water tables
- Loss of animal forage
- Poor growing conditions for crops, decreasing food security
- Contaminated water sources, contributing to waterborne diseases
- Loss of biodiversity
- Local climate change

Medor began its agro-forestry efforts in 2010, with support from OLQP. In 2014, OLQP entered into an agreement with the Smallholder Farmers Alliance (SFA) (smallholderfarmersalliance.org), which continues to implement the program. The agro-forestry program now includes a tree nursery, training, and agricultural services in eight of the twelve chapel areas of the parish.

At least 50 farmers participate at each nursery, planting seeds, caring for the seedlings and transplanting saplings onto the mountainsides.

When the seedlings are ready, community members, including school children, transplant them on the mountainside as part of a work party known as a kombit. Participants learn to maintain trees that have been transplanted and to curtail animals from free grazing in agricultural areas.

Since 2010, 711,000 trees have been transplanted within in the 74 square mile parish. Key to the program's success is one-on-one and group training provided by SFA agronomists. The training enables the community and individual farmers to successfully maintain their trees and learn to be problem solvers instead of just beneficiaries. Women farmers are equal partners with the men in this training and in the entire program.

Another important element of the agro-forestry program is the mix of plants cultivated. They include

trees that produce food such as oranges, breadfruit, and papaya for family use and sale; trees for timber; and coffee, a cash crop.

Farmers who participate in the tree-growing program earn "tree currency" which allows them to participate in a black bean and pigeon pea seed bank. After harvest, the farmers return their original quantities of seed to the seed bank for others to use, sustaining the program.

Workers in the tree nurseries also earn agricultural tools, such as a hoe or a machete, allowing them to increase their harvests.

The most recent addition to Medor's agro-forestry program is a livestock program. A participant is loaned a female goat and he passes on the animal's first offspring to another family. When an offspring is passed on, the participant becomes the "owner" of the goat he was loaned.



Volunteers transplant trees from the nursery.

Transforming Lives

Francois Pierre lives in the community of Dodar in St. Joseph parish. He became involved in the tree nursery program in 2013 and learned about agro-forestry technology and environmental protection. With

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assistance from SFA, he built a tree plantation that currently is one of the most productive in the area.

In the first planting season of 2016, Mr. Pierre received 24 pounds of black bean seeds from the seed bank. He harvested 192 pounds. After returning his initial amount to the seed bank, he sold some of the beans, kept some for his family to eat, and used the remainder to create his own personal seed bank. The money he made selling beans enabled him repair his home. He used seeds from his own stored seeds for the second 2016 planting, and did not require any support from the program's seed bank.

In 2016 the agro-forestry program loaned Mr. Pierre a

female goat. By the end of the year he passed along the first offspring to another farmer, becoming the owner of the mother goat. An SFA technician says a healthy male goat can be sold for at least US \$120.

Mr. Pierre's economic situation has improved dramatically through Medor's agro-forestry program. He is more self-sufficient, uses more environmentally friendly practices, and is knowledgeable about better agricultural techniques. SFA conducted a study in 2015, which found that families who participate in its tree nursery program increase their annual income an average of 50%. Mr. Pierre is one of the many farmers in St. Joseph parish whose livelihood has improved through the agro-forestry program.

Essay on Public Protest and Civil Disobedience

By Fr. Joe Nangle, OFM

In the past six weeks large groups of Catholics have gathered in two very public places to protest our government's treatment of immigrant families, particularly children, on our southern borders. Each venue was consciously chosen: the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington and the Federal Building in Newark, New Jersey.

The U.S. Senate was selected to underscore our legislators' total failure to enact a just immigration policy for our country; Newark, because it houses one of the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) offices.

The reasons for these public protests are well known. Due to a draconian immigration policy known as "zero tolerance,"

instituted in 2018, every adult crossing the border into our country without proper documentation is subject to detention and deportation; meanwhile their children are separated from their parents and held in other facilities. In May and June of this year some 2000 children have been held in horrendous conditions — some even in cages — for weeks and now months beyond the 1997 (Flores) regulation that obliges immigrant agents to free children from detention after 72 HOURS!

Quite appropriately, this stain on our government's soul has aroused the indignation of most Americans, including, of course, the Catholic groups mentioned above. Our actions at these two venues were vivid examples of the

Gospel mandate to "speak truth to power" both as American citizens and as followers of Jesus.

The Archbishop of Newark, Cardinal Joseph Tobin, affirmed the validity and indeed the necessity for such public actions when on the streets of his city he cited American free speech and biblical mandates as reasons for the action taking place. The Cardinal was particularly forceful in mentioning God's word in the Book of Leviticus "you shall treat the alien ... no differently than the natives born among you... for you too were once aliens..." (Leviticus 19:34) He spoke of Jesus' own judgement recorded the 25th Chapter of Matthew's Gospel: "Blessed are you by my Father... for I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matt: 25:35). [He

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Public Protest

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might also have spoken of Jesus' further judgement: "you accursed... I was a stranger and you gave me no welcome". (Matt 25:43) The Cardinal stood with the protesters for two hours signaling that he approved and blessed this action.

These two events were entirely Catholic. People of other faith traditions joined us, but both actions clearly reflected Catholic Social teaching, especially the spirituality which underscores it. The key moments of each protest were enveloped in the recitation of the rosary. For the various Sorrowful Mysteries, specific cases were cited of little ones whose horrendous experiences of this "zero tolerance" policy have traumatized them. It was almost amusing to note that warnings by the police to those of us committing civil disobedience were mixed with choruses of "Our Father who art in heaven...; Holy Mary, Mother of God..."

Personally, I found that participating in these events was a wonderful meditation on the call to a preferential option for the poor and truly a holy action. In fact, at

one moment I reflected that what we were doing was sacramental — a gesture, a sign that pointed to something quite more than itself. Our simple act of blocking a passageway in a hall of Congress or traffic on a cross street in Newark to protest the violation of vulnerable human beings on our southern borders clearly directed attention to that totally larger picture of children ripped from their parents and herded into holding pens like little animals. Sacraments in the public square.

And there was Civil Disobedience — a further dimension of sacrament: willingness to undergo arrest and incarceration in a public way to underscore the unlawful situation of parents and children held like felons, separately and against their will and with disregard for all humane considerations.

Civil Disobedience follows the example of the arrest of disciples for public actions, described often in the Acts of the Apostles or of St. Francis making a very public effort to forestall a crusade; of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer protesting also publicly

the evils of their times. These actions by our Catholic population will continue as long as this Administration continues its "zero tolerance" policies which are doing untold harm to our immigrant sisters and brothers and especially to their children.

A final reflection. Franciscan presence — especially in Newark — was quite evident and appreciated. And so, as the six OFM provinces of the United States continue the process of becoming one entity, part of their stated objective of the Order's Revitalization in this country surely must be such public actions when called for — written, proclaimed (especially in our pulpits) and acted out — actions that speak Gospel truths to power. We simply cannot be absent from participation in such public sacramental moments.

*"I have done what is mine to do,
may you do what is yours."
St. Francis of Assisi.*

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Advocate Staff:

Paula Cruickshank, Editor: 703-533-7355, laika1031@gmail.com

Feature Writers: **Jack Sullivan**, **Kathy Desmond**, and **Sue Carlson, M.D.**

Dan Larkins, Layout Design

Jeannette Gantz Daly, Distribution

Please send an email message to jgantz Daly@olqpva.org to receive *The Advocate* by email or to have it sent to your home address.