



Bridges

A Newsletter for the Families and Friends of Carol Woods
Residents in Assisted Living and the Health Center

Volume 2, Issue 2 Chapel Hill, NC September, 2007

A New Path

By Martha Bell, Former Director of Nursing

Thank you for the notes and comments about our first grandchild, Elizabeth Jean, who joined our family in March. She has enriched our lives in ways known to those who have enjoyed “grandparenthood.” Her arrival, a birthday for me in March (an official senior citizen at age 60!), plus a few other things, prompted me to realize there were other paths I wanted to journey in life. Pat Sprigg and I had been talking about my stepping down as the Director of Nursing for a few months. Recruitment efforts went forward, and we have welcomed a new Director of Nursing, Amy Alexander, RN, MSN.

Amy joins us after many years as a nurse and nurse manager in New York and here in North Carolina at UNC Hospitals. By the time you receive this edition of *Bridges*, she will have officially stepped into the Director role.

I accepted Pat’s offer to remain at Carol Woods in a position that involves employee education, serving as a liaison with local schools of nursing and preparing for our October 2008 accreditation survey, among other projects. When I read Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken,” at age twelve,

it seemed to speak directly to me. I took that road less traveled years ago when I entered the Army Nurse Corps and then, in 1995 after retirement, accepted the position at Carol Woods. Each path was the right choice at the right time. I know this new one is the same.

Since I’ll be around the campus, this isn’t good-bye but more a “see you next time” when you come to Carol Woods. In the meantime, please accept my warm regards and thanks. It has been a privilege and honor to serve in the role of Director of Nursing at Carol Woods.

New Family Support Group

**By LaShandra McLaughlin,
Health Center Social Worker**

About a year ago, a few family members of residents living in the Health Center expressed interest in having a forum where they could discuss issues affecting their loved ones and network with other family members who are in a similar situation.

We began a monthly support group in January of this year. Topics discussed in the group include caregiver stress, dementia, hospice and end of life issues, and how to

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navigate the higher levels of care at Carol Woods. Group members also benefit from one another's perspectives and practical suggestions on how to cope with difficult situations.

All family members of residents living in buildings 4, 5, 6 and 7 are welcome to attend. The support group meets on the fourth Wednesday each month at 3:00 p.m. If you live locally and would like to attend please feel free to join us. If you live out of town, but happen to be in town during a meeting time, we invite you to attend.

The next meeting will be September 26, 2007 in the Entertainment Room on the 3rd floor of the Health Center. If you are unable to attend the meeting but would like information on topics discussed in the group, feel free to contact me and I would be happy to provide that information. I am available by phone at (919) 918-3216 or by e-mail at lmclaughlin@carolwoods.org.

Joining Carol Woods

By Amy Alexander, Director of Nursing



I wanted to take advantage of this issue of *Bridges* to briefly introduce myself to all of the Carol Woods residents and family members. I've already had the privilege of meeting

many of you and look forward to meeting many more of you in the time to come. Martha Bell has already provided a brief background on me so please allow me to share a little more on what brought me here.

A wonderful physician friend from UNC recommended that I come to Carol Woods and talk with Pat Sprigg about the DON opportunity. I visited Carol Woods several times during the interview process, and each time, I left with my heart feeling happier than when I arrived and knew that this is where I needed to be. Carol Woods' philosophy of resident centered living allows me to do what I learned so many years ago in Nursing 101 – listen, talk, share memories and spend quality time with people. As a nurse, my passions have always been focused on two primary goals: providing the very best quality of care possible and giving the staff I work with the support and guidance they need to do the same. Here at Carol Woods, I discovered an environment that allows everyone the opportunity to participate in the Carol Woods way of life -- residents and staff.

We can learn from each other and appreciate the value of each individual's uniqueness. Many years ago I lost a child, and not so many years ago I lost my father. In the middle, I lost my oldest sister. Those experiences taught me how important quality and compassion are in all of our interactions with each other and especially how important family, friends and loved ones are at all the times of our lives. I am delighted to be a part of the Carol Woods community and to have this opportunity to participate with you and your loved ones in the wonderful life here.

I am available by phone at (919) 918-3344 or by e-mail at aalexander@carolwoods.org.

Congratulations!!!



Every year, a state survey team visits the Health Center's 3rd floor (the skilled nursing floor) and conducts an unannounced inspection to assess whether Carol Woods is conducting its clinical and administrative practices to Medicare standards. We are pleased to report that we received a deficiency-free survey in July.

At the end of every survey, a written summary of findings is mailed to Carol Woods, and those reports are posted for all to review. The survey results are kept in a loose-leaf notebook in the bookshelf in the 3rd floor lounge and on the resident bulletin board in the 1st floor corridor as you approach the elevator from the front lobby.

Buildings 6 and 7, our licensed Adult Care Homes, also received deficiency free surveys in July from the Division of Health Service Regulation. We are very proud of our outstanding and committed staff that has made this possible. Congratulations!

In the next issue of Bridges, please look for more on using Medicare benefits in skilled nursing facilities. If you currently have questions about benefits, you may contact the Health Center social worker at (919) 918-3216 or the Carol Woods billing office at (919) 918-3234. For general information about coverage, you may contact Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE.

The Importance of Saying Goodbye

**By Kerri Patrick,
Former Social Work Coordinator**

Throughout our lives we experience beginnings and endings, starts and stops, hellos and goodbyes. As we age, these losses come more frequently, and we experience them more inti-

mately. People and things in life that we hold most dear are taken away from us. Older adults may have to give up a beloved hobby. They may have to give up driving. They may lose their ability to function independently and need to move from a much loved and familiar home. Most significantly, they experience multiple losses of friends and beloved family members from death. And unlike other skills we need to master throughout life, people never really become experts in dealing with grief and loss. Each new loss brings its own challenges and demands on our spiritual and emotional resources. At times, some of us might not feel up to the challenge and we can get stuck in a place that is free from pain but devoid of life and all its beauty.

The ability to experience loss and grief is the essence of our humanity. Our ability to experience grief is parallel to our ability to experience love. We need to acknowledge the losses in our lives and experience grief fully rather than try to minimize it or sublimate it. Honoring our relationships and the inevitable loss of them provides emotional healing and wellness. This sounds simple but sometimes long held hurts or emotional estrangement can make this seem like an impossible gap to bridge. When we don't take opportunities in our daily life or during times of illness or impending death to acknowledge what people mean to us and how we will miss them, we miss the opportunity to live fully and without regrets.

I was once at a conference and heard Dr. Ira Byock speak about our power to heal our relationships. Dr. Byock, now the Director of Palliative Medicine at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, has written extensively on end of life care. He has also written a book entitled *The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book about Living*. Dr. Byock states that a nurse he worked with in

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hospice once told him what people should say to one another throughout life, but especially at the end of life, to ensure that others know what they mean to us. These are: **(1) “I love you.”** We should never take it for granted that those around us know when we haven’t said the words. They are simple but powerful and should never be left unspoken. **(2) “I’m sorry.”** We all do things consciously and unconsciously that hurt those closest to us. It is part of being human and imperfect. **(3) “I forgive you.”** To err is human, to forgive divine. To be able to hear and accept an offer of sincere apology is a great gift to give to another person and yourself. And finally, **(4) “Thank you.”** We go through life with expectations about *what others should* do for us and *how they should* do it. We often get disappointed and angry at others when these expectations are not met, all the while missing that most people are doing the best they can with what they have. Take time to consider the special gifts you have received from others, and share your appreciation with them. Start practicing telling these four things that “matter most” and see how it impacts your life and relationships. You don’t have to wait until it is time to say goodbye.

I just practiced the four simple things when leaving Carol Woods last month to accept a faculty position at the UNC School of Social Work. I hope that the residents and families at Carol Woods know how much you have given me and how much I appreciate your support and friendship the last three years. I am pleased to announce that the new Social Work Coordinator is Jenny Eller. Prior to this role, Jenny served as our Staff Education Coordinator. She was also an intern at Carol Woods, while completing her Master’s in Social Work from UNC. Jenny looks forward to working with you and can be reached at (919) 918-2610 or jeller@carolwoods.org



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