Some say with greater age comes greater joy - like the joys of retirement, grand-parenting, and newfound hobbies or passions. But let’s keep it real, aging is not always graceful and it’s not always joyful. We cannot ignore that aging can also bring increased incidence of disease and susceptibility to physical challenges.

Episcopal Homes resident and Minnesota native, Fred Emmings, sets a fine example for those managing challenges of aging. Fred has his dukes up and is ready to fight. Fred was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease at the age of 68.

It is estimated that over one million Americans live with Parkinson’s disease, which according to the Parkinson’s Disease Foundation, is more than the total of those diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy and Lou Gehrig’s disease combined. While individuals with Parkinson’s experience symptoms differently, they generally face a steady loss of control of their muscles, leading to tremors, loss of balance, and difficulty walking or speaking.

“It’s made a clear difference. I notice my balance has improved, and I feel a certain energy in my walk.”

Researchers are conducting numerous studies today in the United States and abroad exploring how exercise prevents Parkinson’s disease and eases symptoms for those diagnosed with the disease. Longitudinal research by Sweden’s Karolinska Institute found that, among 43,000 research participants, those who participated in moderate exercise were half as likely to be diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease later in life. Studies exploring the effect of activities, like Tai Chi and Rock Steady Boxing, on disease symptoms show promising results. For example, research published in New England Journal of Medicine concludes, “Tai Chi training appears to reduce balance impairments in patients with mild-to-moderate Parkinson’s disease, with additional benefits of improved functional capacity and reduced falls.” In addition, preliminary studies, while not sufficiently rigorous to be conclusive, indicate that physical training provides both initial and sustained improvements in balance, gait, activities of daily living, and quality of life. Fred, now age 80 and battling Parkinson’s, is not waiting for the science to become conclusive!
Fred previously lived in Hopkins with his wife, Judy. “She began showing signs of dementia around 15 years ago,” Fred recalls. Fred cared for Judy in their home as long as possible. About six years ago, they decided it would be beneficial living closer to family in a senior care community. With two sons, one in New York and one in St. Paul, Fred and Judy chose to move to an apartment on the Episcopal Homes’ campus.

Now only a few blocks from their son in St. Paul, Fred and Judy’s new home offers reassurance of a continuing-care campus with residential and care settings that offer flexibility as needs change. Amenities are also at their fingertips like a warm water therapy pool and a state-of-the-art fitness center.

This spring, Fred began exploring resources of Episcopal Homes’ Fitness Center, introducing weight lifting and boxing with Episcopal Homes’ Personal Trainer, Matt Demma. His exercise regimen now incorporates the speed bag, heavy bag, instructor’s mitts, and balance equipment. Fred says, “Working with Matt has made a clear difference. I notice my balance has improved, and I feel a certain energy in my walk.” Matt emphasizes the importance of establishing a “base of support,” which is beneficial to those with Parkinson’s because it helps improve stability and offsets the gradual loss of balance.

Boxing for Parkinson’s has been gaining attention more recently. Rocksteady Boxing (rocksteadyboxing.org) empowers people with Parkinson’s to fight back, just as Fred is doing. According to Rock Steady, boxers condition for optimal agility, speed, muscular endurance, balance, hand-eye coordination, footwork, and overall strength to defend against and overcome opponents. In Fred’s case, the opponent is Parkinson’s disease, which causes a loss of functioning in many of the same areas that boxers condition to improve.

Aquatic Therapy interventions are designed to improve or maintain:
- Function and flexibility
- Balance, coordination and agility.
- Aerobic capacity/endurance conditioning
- Gait and locomotion
- Body mechanics and postural stabilization
- Muscle strength, power, and endurance.

To learn more about our Wellness programs and how they can improve your quality of life, contact Life+ Wellness Director, Julie Niewald at 651-272-4953 or jniewald@episcopalhomes.org. While many services are offered at no charge, some specialized services of therapists or other specialists require a nominal fee.

Did you know Transitional Care and Life+ Wellness teams partner to provide aquatic therapy in the warm water therapy pool? Warm water facilitates muscle relaxation and increases peripheral circulation. Viscosity of water provides resistance for strength training. Warm water stimulates body awareness, balance, and trunk stability.

Centenarian, Jack Lund with Wellness Director, Julie Niewald

Episcopal Homes Rehabilitation Team partners to offer Aquatic Therapy!

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Aquatic and Physical Therapist, Lauren Hopkins working with Gardens’ resident, Janet.

Fred’s boxing improves endurance, balance and strength.

Episcopal Homes of Minnesota, a long-standing community for older adults in St. Paul, provides a comprehensive wellness program to address physical, spiritual, and emotional wellness. Episcopal Homes’ mission is to enrich life and build community for older adults.

Visit www.episcopalhomes.org to learn more.

Matt Demma, Fitness Specialist spots Fred on the balance bar.

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Happy [Liturgical] New Year!

A message from The Rev. Phil Rose, Director of Spiritual Life.

Sunday, December 3rd is the first Sunday of Advent and in the Episcopal faith, is the beginning of a new liturgical year. So, Happy New Year!

There have been many changes in Spiritual Life since last Advent and Christmas. We have added two new and amazing chaplains, Leah and Jennifer. We have begun a lay pastoral ministry program, Community of Hope, which is equipping a team of lay pastoral visitors to serve throughout the campus. And we have said goodbye to beloved staff, Keely, Lisa and David. They are deeply missed. We have also celebrated the lives of over 80 community members who have passed.

It gives me comfort to know what a caring staff of nurses, aides, activities, food service, housekeeping, chaplains, and others are present with all who live here and especially with those who live out their final days here. They make this truly a home.

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Advent is a time of great anticipation. And in the coming year we have much to look forward to. Among other things, we will be beginning a hospice basket ministry that will provide those on hospice with a prayer shawl, essential oils, music and similar comforts. What a joy it is to celebrate the Spirit in our midst in the lives of the residents, families, volunteers and employees of Episcopal Homes.

Happy New Year!

Blessings,
Phil Rose, Director of Spiritual Life
Hands of Episcopal Homes

We are the stories we lived. We are the stories we tell. We are living our stories still.

by Sally Russell
(Life Enhancement Coordinator, Episcopal Church Home)

“Ann firmly believes that what survives and blossoms is not individuals but the quality of contact between and among them.”

So reads part of the essay on poster board just inside Ann Meissner’s Cooke House room at Episcopal Church Home.

It outlines an extraordinary life well lived. It also explains how she came to be a bridge to sanity and success during my first fumbling weeks as Weekend Life Enhancement Coordinator.

Inevitably lost, with a big smile pasted on, I once again lapped through the dining room. Where was the lobby? A bemused Ann waved me to her side.

“Honey, are you lost? Because that’s the fourth time you’ve walked by me.”

I read her amusement as she gamely adjusts to a milestone: “I learned a lot when I had to start using a walker.

My unexpected learning was about teenagers. At first I thought it was a fluke. Both boys and girls jumped to open doors for my walker and me. Some were casual, as if this was a common practice. No fuss. With others, it was a flamboyant high drama – as if I were some kind of queen. No one recognized me as a person they knew, but each of them recognized my older and its claim to a civic duty.”

Pouring over her lectures and papers about creating and sustaining relationships, stages of life, self-acceptance, I appreciate anew how observant she still is.

Her handwritten notes, “On becoming an elder,” speak volumes about how she entered head and heart first into this stage of her life.

And how she can still read a room and a mood, or offer a nudge.

“Honey, are you lost?”

Nope. Not while I’m in Ann’s company.

Embracing the community life in Cooke House is an obvious extension of Ann’s life. Her commitment to becoming a vital part of a greater whole is woven throughout her life: Enlisting her sister’s support to help with her children; creating and living in an urban commune, Omega One; traveling to an Elderhostel in Sweden; moving to Cornelia House with her husband, Corbin Kidder, “each joyfully claiming 6 marriages between them.”

Storyweavers & Writers Workshop

Storyweavers is a writers’ group involving residents and staff who gather monthly and discuss their writing. The group formed in 2010 and has expanded to multiple groups as Episcopal Homes has grown.

Storyweavers and Writers Workshop meet regularly. They also gather for an annual event called Stories Out Loud, where writers read aloud with fellow writers, families, and friends. The At Home newsletter features “The Creative Corner,” a forum to share samples of our resident [and staff] writers. You may wish to check out our blog at EpiscopalHomes.org for an ongoing Storyweavers Series, coming soon!

This issue’s Creative Corner, features a little poem about a well-recognized pup on campus, Bramble. Furry friend to Betty Cowie, a resident at The Terrace at Iris Park, Bramble keeps busy entertaining residents, staff and guests around campus. When Betty was in need of transitional care, staff helped ensure Bramble was well cared for, keeping him company and meeting his needs as another way to extend our care to Betty.

Bramble

By Bettie Cowie
Terrace at Iris Park Resident

Good walk with Bramble Such a nice amble.
No! No! Go faster!
Well he’s the master.
It’s hot or it’s cold, I do as I am told.

Now we must stop
Right here at the top.
Nose caught a whiff.
Need a good long sniff.
Yum a dead mole!
Let’s have a nice roll.

Well what can I say?
A lovely spring day,
My love knows no end,
For my perfumed friend.

Beloved Bramble reaches for a treat during his morning walk.