

# Letters from Home

WINTER 2004



*Nurturing family, fostering friendships, honoring God & preserving life until its natural end*

## *Dear Friends*

I hope you have received your invitation to the 2005 New Year's Charity Ball on January 8th. This wonderful, elegant evening is especially important to Gianna Homes this year because all of the fund raising proceeds from the ball will be given to support our care services.

As many long-time readers of this letter already know, Gianna Homes residents have been attending this Charity Ball for years. They look forward to the event and their excitement increases as we prepare for the evening. Our residents are always thrilled to wear their finery just one more time and they can't wait for the magical moments that the evening provides. For weeks afterward, the ball is always the main topic of conversation.

The Charity Ball is just one of many opportunities Gianna Homes residents have to continue celebrating life while living here in *their* home. The Charity Ball is also an opportunity for you and our other friends to consider a gift to support the Gianna Homes mission.

Gifts helped create Gianna Homes and complete the original renovations to our house five years ago. Generous annual donors continue to help support the services and programs we provide to our elders with memory loss so that they may maintain their highest level of independence. This year we are seeking support from special donors who will help us expand and renovate our facility so that Gianna Homes may keep up with current trends in elder care as well as respond to the growing need for effective dementia care in our community.

As announced in our fall letter, we have started an exciting construction project this winter so that we can better meet the needs of families in our community who have a vulnerable loved-one struggling on the journey of Alzheimer's. Your contribution will help us meet their needs.

One way you can help is by buying a ticket or making a contribution to the Charity Ball (see the insert). You can also help through a more personal gift to honor or memorialize a special person in your life—perhaps someone who has benefited from Gianna Homes' services, or a loved one who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Or you may wish to simply recognize the importance of quality long term care for vulnerable seniors in our community.

Naming opportunities are available for special gifts that might provide a permanent endowment or support the construction costs of a specific space in the renovation plan. Spaces such as a resident room, atrium, chapel, or bird

*Dear Friends, continued on top of page 2*

*Gianna Homes, memory care that celebrates each moment*

## Dear Friends, continued from page 1

aviary are available for this form of recognition. If you would like to discuss a naming opportunity, I would welcome your call.

In whatever way you are able to help, I hope you will say “Yes, I Will” to our request for your support. Your gift will help us change the Alzheimer’s journey for seniors and their families to a journey filled with hope and love that makes life worth living.

Each of us who helps recall a memory, restore dignity, or right a wrong for any of our vulnerable friends and neighbors changes the world forever in ways we may never know.

Warmest Regards for the New Year

*Anne Marie Hansen*



*“I’m losing my mind. But the essence of a person is their heart and I hope that as I grow older, I’ll still be able to laugh and I’ll still be able to hug and I’ll still know love.”*

Fran, who has Alzheimer’s

## Welcome Anita

Gianna Homes—Sursum Corda is pleased to introduce Anita Soledolu as our new home director. Since December 1st, Anita is managing staff assignments, scheduling, payroll, and other administrative responsibilities for the organization.

“Gianna Homes is known by all of its constituents to be a progressive and positive establishment with many accomplishments,” Anita said. “My goal is to add to its existing strengths by finding innovative ways to improve and complete projects.”

Anita comes to us with nine years of experience in staffing, human resources, sales and marketing, customer service, and administrative support. She served as a nursing assistant for 7 years while earning her bachelor’s degree in English literature with a minor in education. She is currently pursuing a business degree. Along with impeccable references and high esteem from former employer, she brings a personality that radiates sunshine, a creative spirit, and an eagerness to make a difference—all of which correlate perfectly with the vision and mission of Gianna Homes.

Her wonderful family—husband, Stephen, and four children, Devanté, Malcolm X., Maya-Angelah and Kesiena Simone—live together in Brooklyn Park where she loves to tutor neighborhood children in English, literature, and mathematics. She shares a family dog, Bogart, with Janet Manske, a dear friend. In her spare time, Anita loves to write poetry and is an avid reader.



Staff member Naomi joins residents Marian and Ardell on a visit to a nearby apple orchard and pumpkin patch

# Physical Therapy Services

## The Importance of Exercise in Dementia Therapy

It is very common for people to attribute the poor mobility or balance problems of many older persons as the unavoidable consequences of aging, rather than a condition that results from a simple lack of muscle strength. Changing this misconception can have a dramatic affect on the quality of life for many seniors.

According to Yale researchers writing in the October 2004 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, "An ongoing exercise program consisting primarily of balance exercises and strength training can slow, if not prevent a functional decline among older adults." As people age, they will naturally lose between 5 to 7 pounds of muscle mass every decade after age 20. This loss, if not addressed, will eventually lead to challenges in everyday activities such as difficulty getting in and out of a chair and difficulty walking.

Only strength training can increase muscle mass to slow or even reverse this process. Even small improvements in strength can make a significant difference in how an older adult lives.

The professionals at Senior Abilities Unlimited provide physical therapies for residents at Gianna Homes. Now celebrating its fifth year anniversary, Senior Abilities provides on-going strength and balance training to older adults, many of whom experience dramatic improvements in mobility and physical abilities. Some of the most rewarding results have occurred among people with dementia.

As an example, after someone with memory loss falls and breaks a hip, he or she typically receives Medicare-covered physical therapy services for a short period and is then given a walker to use while healing. As a result of the memory loss, however, these seniors do not remember how to use the walker. In some situations these seniors are often constrained to a wheelchair for their own safety, and as a result stop walking all together.

As an alternative, Senior Abilities works with its senior clients to increase their function through on-going strength and balance training to eliminate the need for an assistive device altogether, and thereby negate any safety issues due to memory impairment. Our clients with dementia experience improvement because we realize the importance of using one-step commands. Our therapy practices have demonstrated that repetitive activities can become learned activities in spite of memory loss challenges because people do not always need to think about how to do something if it is repeated often enough.

A person who is able to walk without a walker because he or she has good strength and balance is at a lower risk of falling and is more likely to enjoy an active lifestyle.



Marian enjoys some treats on the midway at the State Fair.

## A Recent Family Testimonial - Help with Household Chores

"While visiting earlier this week, I observed a resident wandering from room to room, somewhat distressed, and seeking hugs from staff and visitors. I'm happy to say that the staff was very tender in accommodating her need for reassurance. At one point, one of the staff pleasantly redirected her to help fold a pile of laundry. I couldn't see, but based on the conversation, I believe the resident did help. For that brief period, the resident let go of her distress and was oriented to the moment.

"This event reminded me of a discussion at our last meeting of resident families in January. At the meeting, one family member requested that household tasks be hired out so that the staff could spend more time with the residents 'holding their hands.' As an occupational therapist, I agree with you that there is value in having the residents being involved in these simple household tasks. Whether it is through direct participation, observation, or conversation about a task at hand, I think residents gain a sense of non-institutionalized living as well as purpose and contribution."

from the daughter of  
a resident living at Gianna Homes

*continue living...continue sharing...continue loving...continue enjoying...continue participating...*



## Our Mission

Providing memory care  
with a loving kindness  
that respects the dignity  
of each resident.  
Welcome home!



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Dear Reader...

With **Letters from Home**  
we hope to share with you,  
our friends and family, a little  
bit of what life is like here at  
Gianna Homes.

Each stage of life brings its  
own changes. At Gianna  
Homes we create a place  
where our residents can feel  
at home and where they will  
find care, companionship,  
and dignity.

Anne Marie Hansen  
Founder & President

**Letters from Home** is  
published for family  
& friends of  
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## Construction Update

The renovation and expansion project announced in our last letter is moving forward with construction financing approved by Bremer Banks. This project will add three new private resident bedrooms as well as expand kitchen, dining, and family room spaces in our home. Construction is now underway.

Capital gift opportunities are available to donors who would like to support the work of Gianna Homes by honoring or memorializing a loved-one with a permanent naming opportunity in our Minnetonka home. Please contact us at 952-988-0953 for more information.

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## Resources for Families on the Journey with Alzheimer's

**Book:** *Fading: One Family's Journey with a Woman Silenced by Alzheimer's*

In this wonderful book, Frances A. Kraft tells the story of her mother's battle with Alzheimer's Disease. From the first moment she recognized her mother's bizarre behaviors through all of the issues of daily care until the final hospice ending, Kraft shares the emotions of her family's progression through these events. At the end of her personal story Kraft shares a list of survival techniques for anyone facing this same journey. The book also includes "Preventative Nutritional & Psychological Help for the Families and Patients with Alzheimer's Disease" by Beth M. Ley, Ph.D. and Barry Kraft.

**Book:** *How to Honor Your Aging Parents*

Author Richard P. Johnson Ph.D. offers ten principles to guide children in care giving for their own parents. The book offers a way to find meaning through care giving. Johnson asserts that by applying his principles you'll not only honor your aging parents but you'll honor yourself as well.