

Letters from Home

for the friends of Gianna Homes

SPRING/SUMMER 2013

Serving our community since 1999

RENEWED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR BILLY

Billy was 53 when he showed early symptoms of dementia and I became his guardian. When Billy deteriorated to a point where I was no longer able to care for him, we both entered a very dark episode in our lives.

Because Billy was unpredictable, aggressive, and sometimes violent, he was admitted to many hospitals for psychiatric care. His medications were frequently adjusted, leaving him with permanent side effects. As a nurse and his sister, I could not bear the suffering he experienced day after day.

Last March, Billy was in his eighth hospital and 15th admission in 18 months when he began to fade away. He lost 45 pounds. He was physically aggressive and violent or he was depressed or anxious. Nurses were unable to care for him. I prayed harder than I had ever prayed in my life!

God answered my prayers in April 2012.

With the help of Mike Justin of ElderCare Consultants—truly God’s hand at work—Billy was accepted into Gianna Homes.



Bill as a young man.

The staff listens to what I want for my brother and interprets what he wants or needs but is unable to ask for.

Now Billy can peacefully lie on the floor. He has sunshine in his own bedroom. He enjoys listening to the canaries sing and helping staff water plants. And, Billy—a lover of motorcycles and children—has been “adopted” by a volunteer family whose young son brings in motorcycle books from the library. This child has become a very dear part of Billy’s life.

Once, Billy was an electrical engineer who scrimped and saved for a “rainy day.” Well, that rainy day has arrived and Gianna is holding up his umbrella to keep the rain at bay!

Ann Elizabeth Nistler, RN, MSN
(Bill’s sister)

“Gianna Homes provides exemplary care for residents and their reputation is excellent. Only the unique and professional multidisciplinary staffing at Gianna Homes has been able to respectfully and, with dignity, provide appropriate care and support for the highest quality of living. I cannot put a price on the peace of mind Gianna Homes gives to loved ones!”

Mike Justin, LICSW, MALP
Care manager
ElderCare Consultants.



Music therapist Claire meets regularly with Bill one-on-one to play guitar and sing his favorite songs by the Beatles.



Bill creates a painting with Mneme therapists Suzy Volden.

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Dear Family Members, Donors, Volunteers and Friends,

I feel fortunate and blessed to officially join the Gianna Homes Board in my new capacity as Board Chair. In looking back, I am living the proverbial circle of life. My Dad, Dwayne, started the family business, brought me in, and allowed me to nurture it into a nice career. My wife Kathy and I have raised four now-grown children. And, I've experienced the wonderful care the Gianna Homes staff provides first-hand.

After my Mom passed away suddenly in 2011, my Dad lived with our family for about a year before we could no longer provide what he physically needed. He spent part of his final life's journey at Gianna and our family will forever be grateful for our Gianna experience. When Anne Marie boldly and graciously asked me to give back a little, it took me less than five seconds to say "yes."

Gianna's collective mission is to modestly provide the best senior dementia "home" care in the Upper Midwest. Such an honorable task takes all of us sharing our love, attention and resources where and when we can. Most of you know the financial challenges that come with this mission. Our Board's short-term focus is to stay ahead of expenses related to the kitchen remodeling project; our long-term goal is to extend the good works of Gianna to meet the Twin Cities' need for what I personally feel is an obligation to our greatest generation.

I cannot wait to dig in and further promote this great cause for Gianna Homes.

Sincerely,

Rick Borg, Board Chairman



Rick with his father Dwayne and wife Kathy

Looking for a way to help?

Gianna Homes is currently seeking these items or donations toward the following:

- Memberships to the arboretum, the Minnesota Zoo, and the Minnesota History Center
- Old jewelry pieces for resident activities
- Sponsor a dinner for residents and staff from Famous Dave's or Davanni's
- Sponsor an activity (e.g. Mneme therapy, a petting zoo, or a special music guest)
- Sponsor the garden flowers
- Pay for a piano tuning
- Help us shampoo our carpet
- Buy an iTunes gift card to add to our music library



- Fund a spiritual care service
- Instruments for music therapy groups
- Note cards for residents to write their friends and family
- Care products such as shampoo and conditioner
- No skid socks
- New bedsheets and pillows
- Afghans and blankets
- Backup generator system



VOLUNTEER PROFILE

DEACON FRANCIS TANGNEY



Deacon Francis leads services for residents in the Gianna Homes chapel.

Why I volunteer at Gianna Homes

Several years ago my friend, Deacon Dick Broich, was a resident at Gianna Homes. When I visited him, we would take a walk around the Fairhills Circle. He enjoyed the walk and so did I. After the walk we would sit and have a cup of coffee. Maybe we talked or maybe we just sat in silence. As time went on, as it does, he could no longer walk or drink coffee and he went to his reward. That's how I came to know Gianna Homes.

Ten months ago I began coming in every Thursday. Two Thursdays a month I either conduct an ecumenical prayer service with Holy Communion for the Catholics or assist a Priest at Mass. The other Thursdays I just hang out with residents.

Giving a sermon to residents was one of my greatest challenges. Thanks to my mentor Claire Klein, Program Director, I learned how to address each resident by name with a simple question one at a time. This requires great patience. Some responses are verbal and some not; all are precious!

Hanging out with residents usually includes taking walks. Don and I walk up the hill and sing a few patriotic songs when we get to the top. We really belt them out. The truth is, I can't sing! Don doesn't care and, out there, neither do I. Don always thanks me for the walk.

Now Sylvester, he never thanks me for the walk. But I enjoy listening to him talk about the hill and the trees. I guess where he lived in North Dakota they didn't have either. Sylvester whistles old songs I know and I really enjoy that.

Lenny always greets me with a big smile. Whether or not we go out, we work on our bird calls. I think he would much rather listen to his music than any of my whistling.

It's fun to have Betty greet me when I come upstairs. Our conversation goes in different directions but in the end Betty always approves of whatever I say.



Francis convinces Betty to come out for some exercise and fresh air.

I have a few dances with Heather and am always touched when either Gladys or Lillian smile at me. I truly wish I could see Dale tee off in his golfing days and someday I hope to hear Bill play the guitar.

What keeps me coming back? It's the warmth and love of and for the people and the staff.

Deacon Francis Tangney



Alexa received her award at the Minnetonka Community Center on Thursday, March 21.

CONGRATULATIONS ALEXA BUSSMANN

Congratulations to our volunteer **Alexa Bussmann** – recipient of the **Caring Youth Award** given by the cities of Minnetonka, Hopkins, and Golden Valley! Alexa received the recognition in March for her volunteer work at Gianna Homes visiting residents and providing piano music.



Alexa and Sylvester work on a puzzle together.



Alexa plays music for the residents every Monday.

GIANNA HOMES AFTER DARK:

A report from the Night Shift

Not many people know what happens once the lights go out and the residents are tucked into bed at Gianna Homes. Here we share what the night crew—who know firsthand—say about the comings and goings of nighttime at the home. After ensuring the residents are settled for the night, the staff begins a number of tasks including baking our desserts, keeping the cookie jar full, and light housekeeping such as sweeping, mopping, cleaning the kitchen, feeding the birds, and washing the wheel chairs. CNA Greg, who has over 30 years of caregiving experience and has been with Gianna Homes for five years says, “There’s always loads of laundry to keep up with; wash, dry, fold, and put away.” Though this checklist may seem extensive, the night shift staff enjoys the calm of the early morning and they work together to complete everything. “We’re there together in teamwork – all of us – otherwise, we couldn’t survive!,” explains Assu, a five-year Gianna employee who has been caregiving for 15 years.

In addition to the work, several staff members appreciate spending quality time with the “night owl” residents. According to Greg, “The residents have unique perspectives on life. They help me with my life, too.” Assu says, “The workers, residents, and management are family.” Rose, a team lead with 14 years experience adds, “It’s a second home.”

What’s the hardest part for the night crew? Karen, another team lead with 11 years experience, three of them with Gianna Homes, explains that the most challenging part of her job is seeing the changes in the residents. Along the residents’ journeys, however, a team of loving caregivers is there for them day and night.

*“Always live each day
as if it were your last.
Live life to the fullest!”*

*“I’m just happy to be alive and kickin’!”
—Don, Gianna Homes resident*

Programming Highlights:

The residents of Gianna Homes had a joyous holiday season, filled with carolers, family, and home baked cookies! With the help of all our staff and volunteers, we hosted a family Christmas party in December.



Since then, we’ve been enjoying the coming of spring with continued walks outdoors with our volunteers, Easter egg coloring, and watching the flowers bloom out the window.





Staff attend regular trainings and coaching from the home director, director of nursing and other Gianna Homes team members, as well as outside speakers.



Mary picks out Easter flowers with resident Betty at a local garden shop.



Mary snuggles up with residents Heather and Betty.

HOME DIRECTOR – MARY MCCARTEN

Home Director Mary McCarten has been with Gianna Homes since 2007. Her diligent efforts help keep Gianna organized and running smoothly, and her tender ways make residents and their families feel welcomed, loved, and respected. She oversees most staff and directs the home's day-to-day operations including training staff and ensuring that their coaching and growth are constant.

Born in Kenya, Mary grew up in a family of five. Before graduating from Bible College, Mary owned and operated a beauty salon for seven years. With degree in hand she worked as a Youth Minister and helped establish a women's ministry in her parish in Ruiru, a small town outside Nairobi City, Africa.

When she moved to the United States, Mary worked as a certified caregiver. Though she spent three years in a large nursing home, her move to be a caregiver and mentor at a six-bed assisted living facility was more fulfilling for Mary. It offered her the opportunity to give personalized care and learn the residents' life stories. Time spent laughing with residents, learning from them, and being able to help them with daily challenges was a perfect fit with her personal care philosophy. In her own life, Mary was familiar with the positive impact of a simple touch, laugh, or moment of listening; even one minute of genuine presence from another person is beneficial.

Through this journey, Mary realized that caregivers also need attention to avoid feeling burnt out or unappreciated. She makes a point to show staff members and caregivers the value Gianna Homes has for them. She knows everyone carries some baggage. "In order to care for someone else," she explains, "you have to be able to address your own 'things.' You have to be able to give from a full source; you cannot give from an empty source. I believe in self-care. I practice it, teach it, and train it."

This care for caregivers can be seen in Mary's compassion when working with staff members, being creative in scheduling, and encouraging open communication. "I love to see people happy, feeling accepted, safe and able to rely on each other. When I see that in a given day, I go home happy. We are all wounded healers. I am healing and in helping others heal, they in turn can help more people heal."

Beyond Gianna Homes, Mary values family very much and enjoys walks with her husband Don, particularly on warm days which remind her of her native Kenya. She also enjoys entertaining family and friends, and arts and crafts including sewing, crocheting, and painting.

"I love to see people happy, feeling accepted, safe and able to rely on each other."

Mary McCarten



ST. GIANNA

On April 28, the world celebrated the feast day of St. Gianna Beretta Molla, the namesake of our own Gianna Homes. St. Gianna Beretta Molla was born in Italy in 1922 as the 13th child to Alberto and Maria Beretta. As a youngster, she participated in many Catholic community and charitable groups. She earned a medical degree in surgery and later in pediatrics. She fell in love, married, and soon had children. With the pregnancy of her fourth child in 1962, she developed a painful tumor that threatened her life and the life of her baby. She chose to have a surgery that would save the life of the baby, but after giving birth, she died of septic peritonitis. This child grew up to be a physician like her mother and cared for patients with memory care needs. In 1977, a miracle occurred attributed to this remarkable woman. A nurse in a Brazilian hospital, a religious Sister, asked all the other caretakers to pray to Gianna for the healing of a young woman suffering from infection. The next day, the patient was fully healed and released from the hospital. Gianna was canonized as a saint by Pope John Paul II in May 2004 and has become the patron of mothers, physicians, and unborn children.



“Dr. Gianna’s great faith and love for the Lord overflowed from her generous heart and her speech, but so much more from her example which left a mark in the hearts of those who were blessed to know her either as a friend or as a patient. In her work as a physician she aimed above all at charity and an individual approach; she took interest in every intimate and family problem, and if she felt it beneficial she would intervene, either with a word of encouragement, advice, or comfort.”

– words of Enrica Parmigiani from Magenta, a colleague of Dr. Gianna

Visitor’s Welcome – Please Come In!

Do you ever wonder what to say or do when you are visiting a friend or loved one with dementia? If you don’t know what to expect or do, and you are feeling awkward and uncomfortable, we want to share a few suggestions to help make your visit more rewarding.

Conversation Starters

- Talk about the children in the family or neighborhood. Highlight an accomplishment, fun event, or an upcoming event.
 - Before the visit, call a friend or family member who lives out of town and find out what he or she has been doing. Prepare to give an update during your visit.
 - Ask for advice about an area in which the person has experience. For example, inquire how to fix something, to plant in the garden, how to make special family recipes, or where to go on vacation.
 - Reminisce about firsts: first day of school, job, car, sweetheart, moving away from home, house or apartment of a child, vacation, flight in a plane, trip on a train.
 - Ask about favorites: favorite color, food, musician, restaurant, place to go shopping, movie, television show, actor, things to grow in the garden, holiday season, house or room, space outside.
- Remember, the visit doesn’t have to be filled with conversation. It is fine to sit together and quietly enjoy the moment.

Don’t have an hour?

Here are some ideas for when you can’t stay too long:

Just stopping by to say hello is always appreciated.

- Feed or watch the birds
- Read one story from the newspaper
- Open the mail
- Give them a hand massage
- Help with a chore (such as dusting off the family photos)
- Sing a song together
- Share a snack

Resident Recipe Box

Lillian Brady's first prize Banana Bread recipe was featured in the October 29, 1986, edition of the *Austin Daily Herald*. Lillian always strived to perfection in planning meals for family and friends. We still enjoy her recipe! —Colleen Brady

Lillian passed away peacefully at Gianna Homes on April 4, 2013



EXTRA SPECIAL BANANA BREAD

5 eggs	1 heaping tsp. baking soda
1 ½ c. vegetable oil	1 heaping tsp. cinnamon
2 c. sugar	2 c. flour
2 c. mashed bananas	2 pkgs. Coconut pudding mix (instant)
1 tsp. salt	½ c. walnuts
1 tsp. vanilla	



Beat eggs. Add oil and sugar Mix in bananas, salt, and vanilla. Sift together the soda, cinnamon, and flour. Stir into batter along with pudding mix. Add walnuts. Bake in loaf pan at 350 degrees for 45 min. - 1 hour. One may alter the oil and sugar amounts accordingly to meet dietary needs.

Visiting Bag

Keep a bag or box packed all the time with things to bring to the visit. This may help to relieve some stress and anxiety that can be associated with visiting and keep you prepared. Consider varying the items in the bag from time to time - may be with the seasons and holidays.

What to pack: Snack or favorite food item, photo albums, camera, magazines, books, games or a deck of cards, music or books on tape, hand lotion, something silly just for fun, craft items to work on together, cards or stationary, journal or tape recorder/video camera to record stories, something to do if you are waiting for your loved one to finish an activity.

When Talking is a Problem

Even though a person may have difficulty speaking or understanding conversation, individuals still have a desire to communicate.

"When I visit my father, he is too weak to speak for himself."

What to do...?

- Ask questions that only require a yes or no, nod or hand squeeze.
- Show you care by a gently touch.
- Bring someone along for the visit. He may enjoy listening to your conversation. Talk about things that would interest him.
- Read to him about current events or topics of his interest from magazines.
- Bring along a photo album and share some stories.

- Recap the news of the day
- Take a walk
- Water the plants or enjoy the garden
- Ask permission to bring a pet
- Create an ongoing craft project to work on each time you come to visit
- Write a letter to a family member or friend and continue it during the next visit.
- Flip through a photo album
- Assist your loved one in phoning a friend or sending a note.



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Memory care that
celebrates each moment.



DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

more than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease. By 2050, up to 16 million people will have the disease

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



Our Mission

To provide memory care with a loving kindness that respects the dignity of each resident – nurturing family, fostering friendships, honoring God and preserving life until its natural end.

SAVE the DATE

Programming/Family

- **Mass services** are held in the chapel every 2nd and 4th Thursday at 10:45am
- **Volunteers will lead a craft** every third Tuesday of the month at 4:00pm
- **Monday mornings** – massages for residents
- **Monday, May 27, 2:00pm** – Honoring our Veterans Memorial Day Service
- **Thursday, July 4, 2:00pm** – Resident and family fireworks show in the parking lot
- **Saturday, July 6, 10:30am** – Jim Shaw will provide piano music for the residents
- **Saturday, July 20, 1:30pm** – Mneme therapy visits with Suzy Volden
- **Monday, September 2, 2:00pm** – Sharing our Work History on Labor Day
- **Sunday, September 8** – Gianna Homes' 14-year anniversary

Volunteers

- **New volunteer orientation** and volunteer specialty infection control trainings offered regularly
- **Friday, July 12, 5:00pm** – Volunteer Recognition picnic

Lewy Body Dementia Support Group

- **Second Monday of the month**, noon – 2pm.
A light lunch is always served.

Friends of Gianna, Annual Fundraiser Dinner

Friday, November 8 at the Lafayette Country Club. Invitations will be sent.