

## Kendal At Oberlin Residents Association

President's Report to the Annual Meeting

Nov. 12, 2015

In a time of change it's important to know who we are, to understand how we came to this identity, and how it guides us going forward.

The first residents moved into Kendal at Oberlin 22 years ago last month. Their decision to partner with the Kendal family of continuing care retirement communities came with a commitment to the Kendal mission and values, inherited from the Quaker tradition.

As a community we have been blessed that so many of those early visionaries were living here with us over these 20 years. They established the organization and processes by which we order our community life in keeping with our mission. Their vibrant, caring leadership and participation created the community culture we love: one of hospitality, generosity, mutual respect, and friendship. A week from Saturday, family and friends will gather in the Lounge to honor one of the dwindling number of founding members of the community, Nancy Gage, and the next day, a service will be held for a former president of KORA, Len Singer.

A few minutes ago, Carol read the names of 23 residents who have died in the past year.

We remember this rich heritage with gratitude. And we turn--to celebrate the arrival among us of a dizzying number of new residents, come to find their place and make their contribution in our community. Most of us were here on Monday to welcome 26 newcomers, and marvel that the entire lineup, one by one, gave sparkling, cogent, self introductions within a 40 minutes time frame! If we count the additional new residents who came in the 2nd half of 2014, I believe we will find that we have welcomed more than 40 newcomers in this relatively short period.

Perhaps you have wondered what change on this order of magnitude means. I recall mentioning to a resident, who'd been here for about 10 years, my concern over helping so many new folks channel their energy into the community, honoring their eagerness while helping them appreciate that the "way we do things here" isn't as counterproductive as it sometimes seems to be. My friend said, "But Ardith, that's how the Founders worried about us!"

This helped me to remember why Ruth Ann and I came here....and to trust why our new friends have come here. I think the tipping point for most of us who cast our lot with this community is the community itself, and the values that guide it. We expect to be participants in keeping it strong and true to its mission.

At the Leading Age Conference last week, one of my workshops was, "Who Are the Boomers?" The oldest cohort are turning 69, so they're closing in on us. There's no simple answer to the question, "Who are they?", but one marketing survey of Boomers asked them what it is about CCRC's that doesn't work for them. The top answers? Too restful; too predictable; too isolated; too few options; too Disneyland!

Folks, whatever you think you've found by landing at Kendal at Oberlin, I'm guessing it's not too restful. And it's definitely not Disneyland.

So what have you--what have all of us--found? I will not take time to read, from the KORA Constitution, the entire Section on Purpose. A few key phrases though, may remind us what we are about: "To cooperate with the Administration, Staff, and Board of Directors...to establish a community in the true sense of the word .....where each resident and the corporate body of residents are committed to a life of openness, careful listening, and genuine respect and loving care for each other.....with sensitivity, good will and patience....the expectation that issues and problems can be resolved....where the values and standards...of the Kendal Corporation are realized."

I'd like to mention, briefly, some of the ways that we, as an Association and a Council, have been working this past year, to fulfill our Purpose. These are just a few markers of

the year. And realize that the work of keeping the wheels turning hummed along in and around them. As you take this little trip through 2015 with me, recall the people and the committees that are behind the projects.

The turning of the year began with Winter Solstice in Dec., with a new format, music, and setting.

January was organization month for the new KORA Council and Committees.

In February and March, we moved into the new Community Spaces: Creative Arts, Woodshop, Horticulture, Kendal Resale Shop, The Education Center, Channel 19, Fitness Center, Salon, Remodeled Administrative Offices. All resulted from years of collaborative work between residents, administration, staff, and Board of Directors. In March, we sponsored an Open Spaces event, celebrating with tours for everyone.

Winter into Spring brought the first of the four Mobility Fairs, funded with a grant from Kendal Charitable Funds. These were launched with the dual purpose of outreach and service to the larger community as well as providing resources to our own residents for better mobility and balance as we age. These Fairs have been produced by a hard working committee combining residents, Kendal and Senior Independence staff, and local vendors.

Transportation emerged as an urgent concern in the survey of possible issues for a grant application. A commission has been working all year in two groups: one researching public transportation within Lorain County, and the other developing proposals for resident transportation to medical appointments, especially those outside of the county.

The Spring Fling celebrated the new season with art, music, dancing, a hat parade, and food.

Preparing to participate in the White House Conference on Aging kept many of us engaged from May into July.

Late summer into fall, a subgroup of the Horticulture Committee proposed that our campus become a certified Arboretum. Wow! This coincided with the announcement by Kendal Charitable Funds of another round of grants. Sustained work resulted in a proposal, which has been accepted. The Arboretum Subcommittee will give describe this project in some detail at the December meeting of KORA Council.

About this same time, the Environmental Concerns Committee began research into solar energy and carbon neutrality for our campus. This project too is a continuing one.

Through the year, the work of the Thoughtful Medicine Committee gave rise to a parallel working group, now called the "Conversations Group". The group is offering a number of opportunities for us to get help and to help us to get clear about our wishes for quality of life in its later stages.

I think we'd all agree that the October celebration of resident artist Bob Cothran and the completion of his mural was a highlight of the year. The occasion was beautifully planned by the Arts Committee.

We have survived this year of construction upheaval with the help of our two construction liaisons, and with the support of Rey Carrion, Director of Facilities Services and his staff.

These project and events are creative, innovative endeavors.

We make room for innovation in a variety of ways. For instance, a few months ago, some of our canine residents saw, wisely, that their owners needed socializing. Thanks to them, we have a doggy play park, enjoyed by owners, dogs, and occasional onlookers in the Stephens Care Center!

As with the seasons of the year, our resident community undergoes change and transition. Through it all, the Center holds. We experience cycles of major change, but we are anchored by the values that have defined us from the beginning.

I remember when, as an eager, well intentioned, impatient, newish resident, I co-chaired the brand new Thoughtful Medicine committee. I could not get my head around the notion that anyone could decide to come to a committee meeting and that's how you got a committee. In my mind, a committee had members--recruited or appointed! How else would you get anything done? Many of you will remember Peg Schultz, who had worked as an Organization Development consultant. I decided to talk to Peg. Maybe she could help me develop a process. Peg listened. Said, "well, in KORA, anyone can choose to belong to a committee or come to a meeting." I told her my objections to this loose approach to organizing. Peg looked at me with that kind, bemused expression of hers, and said: "But Ardith, it's the Kendal way!"

It's the Kendal way! The warp and woof of the tapestry of life we weave here. But the pattern, the colors, the story the tapestry tells-- these change over time.

New occasions teach new duties. Within our community we have new opportunities--more than we've had in a long time--for new leadership to emerge and help ease the load some have carried for years. Friendly recruitment of interested new folks may lead to their eventual readiness to assume leadership a year or two down the road. I've become aware that retirement doesn't happen just once in my life, but that I will continually be challenged to recognize and make new transitions all along the way.

Resilience is also embedded in the Kendal way. We all know that it takes resilience to survive mud, dust, and noise. But resilience is also needed for the major challenges to communities like ours that will come from outside ourselves.

Challenges to move out into the wider community more intimately, to form new partnerships. With the completion of the Mobility Fair, we can turn to assessing what we have learned from that project about community engagement.

There are the challenges of changing circumstances for people of retirement age who may not be able to afford us. Or, who want to continue working while they live in a---get this, Life Plan Community. “Care” and “Retirement” are words that are no longer as appealing as they have been.

Then there is the challenge from health care networks, now consolidating under the umbrella of single, dominant provider organizations.

In the next few months, our team of residents and staff who attended the Leading Age Annual Meeting and Conference will bring reports on what was learned about some of these challenges, and how we may respond.

The Strategic Planning Committee of the Board of Directors is poised to engage all of us in 2016 -- residents, staff, and board-- in setting goals for living our mission in relation to some of these challenges. Plan to be part of this process.

I am still learning what it means for me to be in “the Kendal way”, and I will be learning it for the rest of my life. I make mistakes, and I thank you for your patience and forbearance. Together we have accomplished amazing things for our community this year and contributed richly to the tapestry that tells the Kendal story. I look forward to weaving the next chapter with you. Thank you.

Ardith Hayes

