



Doing Our Best to Make Cape Cod the Dry Bum Capitol of the World

Joan Horvath

*If you want to lift yourself up,
lift up someone else.*

**Booker T. Washington
1856-1915
Educator and author**

“**T**here is a wonderful mythical law of nature that the three things we crave most in life—happiness, freedom, and peace of mind—are always attained by giving them to someone else.” That wonderful quote attributed to Peyton Conway (March, 1864-1955), who was a general in the United States Army offers wisdom and perspective that would serve us all well to remember as we go about our daily lives. The message rings especially true in the assisted living (AL) setting where we follow protocols to provide the best care and design ideal settings for our elderly citizens. We don’t, however, have clinical guidelines for administering happiness, freedom, and peace of mind. We can only hope that our facilities begin to create the environment in which these illusive ideals will grow. Sometimes we have to simply plant the seed and see what grows.

Six years ago the residents of EPOCH Assisted Living at Brewster Place in Brewster, MA, planted a seed that continues to grow and that provides happiness and peace of mind to countless residents and families in the community. The EPOCH seniors decided they wanted to give back to the community in some way. Through his church, one resident had become aware of a local nonprofit that provided tangible services to local needy families. Together, the residents did some investigating and chose to assist A Baby Center (ABC) in Hyannis, MA, about 30 miles from Brewster. Every 30 days, the nonprofit ABC provides free, critical basic items for infants and toddlers up to age 3 who live on Cape Cod and the islands, and whose families meet income guidelines as identified by the federal Women, Infants & Children (WIC) program.

For the residents of EPOCH, the objective was clear and simple. Collect baby items, diapers, and other baby necessities and deliver them to A Baby Center. The residents began small. They simply purchased diapers on their own and gathered them together for donation. Over time, the residents formed a knitting group to create baby blankets and to knit other baby items for dona-

tion. That way, the project expanded to a year-round activity and gave residents an ongoing sense of purpose.

What began as a project conceived by a few residents has grown to include participation by most of the 65 residents living at EPOCH Assisted Living. Although the program is still completely run and directed by residents, it operates with the cooperation and support of the facility, its staff, and its activities director. Working with the activities director, the residents have devised an innovative means of expanding their contribution. The facility set up a playpen in the lobby as a constant reminder to residents and visitors that donations would be welcome. Residents who are able to shop on their own still make purchases and place them in the play pen, and the knitting group meets regularly. When the playpen fills up, a delivery is made. On certain occasions, when the activities director schedules a concert or a chowder fest, the



Residents at EPOCH Assisted Living at Brewster Place in Brewster, MA, gather diapers and other baby items to help support A Baby Center (ABC) in Hyannis, MA, a nonprofit center meeting the needs of less-fortunate infants and toddlers.

Fred Zacheus, the 95-year-old resident who runs the program at EPOCH, receives kisses from ABC staff. According to Fred, “We are doing our best to make Cape Cod the dry bum Capitol of the world.”



event is promoted as free and open to the public with a special caveat that donations of diapers or new baby items are welcomed. The playpen provides a more prominent position for collection purposes when community visitors arrive to take part in the free events offered by EPOCH. Asking for a donation while promoting the free events and inviting the community serves as a

marketing device but also provides a fulfilling multigenerational interaction that is so rewarding for home-bound seniors. In addition, the community has the opportunity to support and participate in the community service project these residents created.

One year, the residents held a baby shower on Mother's Day to collect gifts for A Baby Center. The many families and children in need across the Cape and islands are truly appreciative of the help that EPOCH residents provide. With recent budget cutbacks at ABC, the center is in even greater need of donations of baby wipes and pull-ups for the 533 children they assist. The costs for these two items alone exceeds \$1300 per month, according to ABC Director Mary Pat Piersons.

Smiling from ear to ear, 95-year-old Fred Zacheus, the resident who runs the program at EPOCH said, "We are doing our best to make Cape Cod the dry bum capitol of the world." Under his direction, the EPOCH residents make a monthly donation to ABC. For 6 years, Fred and other residents have filled that playpen in the lobby with items for the children of the needy families serviced by ABC. "When the playpen is full, we load it up and deliver it to these wonderful people who do so much." A recent delivery consisted of diapers, wipes, toys, baby blankets, and some beautiful handmade items too.

Fred says, "EPOCH is full of wonderful, generous people that are dedicated to A Baby Center." When he visits ABC to make his delivery, you can see the joy on his face as he greets babies that receive assistance at the center. As Fred smiled and touched the hand of a 10-day-old baby, the nearly 100-year difference in their ages melted away. This wonderful, caring man could not stop offering compliments to the staff about what they do for the families in need. "These people are wonderful, what they do," remarked Fred. ALC

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Activities for Living Well was created to shed light on the extraordinary opportunities we all have to live well as we age. Our goal is to increase awareness of some of these programs and activities and we invite you to share your stories with our readers. Tell us about your Activities for Living Well. E-mail JHorvath@healthcommedia.com.

When you cease to make a contribution; you begin to die.

**Eleanor Roosevelt
1884-1962
First lady, diplomat, and activist**

Second Principle of Universal Design: Flexibility in Use

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to; some people have too much freedom though. George's kitchenette is always a mess, and I clean it up for him since he cannot see well enough to do it for himself. It does not seem to bother him for some reason. That is the only thing about the flexibility of Any-Home Manor that may not be so great; personal choice is good, but a stack of dirty dishes is unsightly.

Guideline 2d.

Provide adaptability to the user's pace.

David said the other day that I do not call him nearly as much since I moved into Any-Home Manor. I do not have as many needs and I am making friends with people who I have things in common with. I like the dining room too, since I got tired of cooking for myself in my old kitchen back at home. The attractive colors of the walls and the curtains and beautiful dining chairs with armrests and wheeled front legs are great. I can easily get out of the chairs since I can push against the arm rests or roll over to chat with a friend and never have to get up at all. There are also different-sized tables for two, four, and six people and big windows letting in sun during the morning. The dining hall is one of my favorite rooms, and I always see a friend there. Sometimes they put the tables side by side to provide bigger groups for playing cards or board games. This flexibility was a great design invention. George and I have our own table for two in a quiet part of the dining room near the garden; we can hear the birds sing from here and the squirrels come to borrow seed from the birds too. This room answers the needs of the residents in so many ways. It is no surprise to see that most of the events are organized in this homey room.

Well now that I think about it, David found a pretty good place for me to move to. I did not like leaving my home and the people that I knew in my neighborhood. But this place is so much more flexible and convenient. I think I will write to my family and let them know about the things that I like about my new home when I send out my Christmas cards this year. ALC

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