



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Walking the Journey Together

Dear Friends,

For several years, I straddled the line that many have straddled before me — between being a parent to my growing children and a child of my aging parents. One of the greatest blessings of my life was to watch the relationship that formed between my mother and my children as a result of my mother's decision to retire early to spend significant time with my children. As she aged, and they grew into young adults, the strength of those relationships served us all. In the last years of her life, my children shared the role of caregiver alongside of me, and we all grew to understand the joys and struggles of caregiving.

The Princeton Senior Resource Center is committed to walking this journey alongside caregivers as well as the older adults for whom they are providing care. Throughout this issue, you will read several features and find information that will support you in the caregiving/care-receiving journey. The story below is a first-hand account of a daughter who connected her mom with PSRC — and the difference that it has made in their journey. As you read these stories, and review the available resources and programs, think about someone in your life who would benefit from what PSRC offers — and pass it along!

All the Best,

Drew A. Dyson, PhD
Chief Executive Officer

Through a Child's Eyes

During this time when maintaining social distance to ensure the health and safety of our elderly loved ones, many adults of aging parents are faced with new challenges. Not only are we responsible for our parents' physical health, but also their mental well-being. And sometimes it comes as a surprise that our elderly parents, normally so active and busy with their own lives, can fall victim to the effects of loneliness.

In the fall of 2019, my mother had finally decided to retire from her job. One would think at the age of eighty, she would now slow down. But this was not the case. Living in a senior living community with my sister and brother-in-law, she had no need of a senior center because classes and social engagements filled her calendar. She would regularly drive herself to a nearby town to paint with her art group and meet to lunch with friends. She took advantage of the chair yoga group and free library in her senior community and she attended church every Sunday.

Mom frequently enjoyed area music events with family. Her last such outing was in February 2020 when she and several of her six grown children and their spouses gathered at a local Irish music event complete with dancing, beer, and bagpipers. It was a grand celebration!

Then, within a few weeks, things slowed down due to Covid-19 fears. My mother was put on lockdown and quarantined to her home. At first it was just a small hinderance and a bother to reschedule regular doctor appointments. In March 2020 our family gathered on Zoom to do what would turn into a weekly check-in call. Mom had a tablet that she used for art and photographs and that was the device she would use to log on to Zoom. Not too adept with technology and hearing-challenged, she did her best to participate. But honestly, just seeing everyone's faces seemed to lift her spirits. For three months, this appeared to be a bright spot to her weeks of confinement. She had my sister and brother-in-law with her, but we could see the toll of the loss of social contact weighing on her.

In May 2020 we signed mom up for the PSRC Zoom chair yoga class. Encouraged by the family she was willing to try this exercise. This boosted her physical activity and gave her more confidence on Zoom. My brother-in-law was still setting up her tablet for each Zoom event, but she was getting better with the technology. The assistance of the PSRC technology team helped her take her “zooming” to the next level. And then in June, we began a second Zoom meet-up for art. Mom would log on to gather with the daughters and granddaughters to work on painting projects and have some virtual social time.

By the end of the summer, we sensed that she was feeling down again. A few of her friends were coping with illness and mom was unable to assist them as she normally would. Instead, she would speak to them over the phone, but being such a social person, we could see depression was beginning to settle in again. Looking for further ways to help, we persuaded her to join the PSRC Fireside Chat and the Let’s Talk groups on Zoom. The friendly engagement with her peers widened her communal network. This was just what the doctor ordered.

Through fall of 2020, mom was enrolled in PSRC’s Art in the Academy lectures and regularly participating in PSRC chair yoga and support groups. She then discovered how to attend church online and even joined an online prayer group with other members of her congregation. For Christmas my brother gifted her with a “seniors” online art class. Her calendar was filling up again. These groups and classes helped her endure the dark days of fall and winter.

Thankfully for PSRC’s programs, our family had resources to keep our mom connected with other seniors online. She now has the confidence, and a new laptop, to connect to her Zoom groups and classes without assistance. She still looks forward to new PSRC groups and classes and is thankful to the PSRC social services, programs, and tech teams for making it possible for her to navigate her way during the pandemic.