



## FROM THE CEO, DREW DYSON

### Practicing Gratitude

Dear Friends,

Leading an organization through any type of significant change gives you an opportunity to really get to know people. In my previous line of work, even the mention of change would bring out the best — and the worst — in people. In one particularly tense meeting early in my tenure, Yvonne asked the group to stop and reflect on all of the reasons we had as an organization to be grateful. The mood lifted. The bickering stopped. The complaining morphed into encouragement. What Yvonne understood and brought to the table is the reality that gratitude has the power — for individuals and organizations — to transform challenging situations into opportunities for growth.

As I reflect this year on the work of the Princeton Senior Resource Center, there are so many things for which I am grateful:

- An incredible staff — Extraordinary professionals with a deep commitment to our mission, phenomenal creativity, and team approach to our shared work.
- Outstanding volunteers — Board and advisory council members, front desk workers, Evergreen steering committee and instructors, tech lab volunteers, vaccine navigators, and so many more folks who give of their time and talent to make PSRC tick.
- Generous donors — Unlike most senior centers, PSRC is a community nonprofit that relies heavily (over 80%) on individual donors, corporate and community partners, and foundations to support our work. Additionally, completing a \$5.35 million capital campaign this year at 100% of our goal is an accomplishment worth celebrating!
- Beautiful facilities — The revitalized Suzanne Patterson Building and the state-of-the-art Nancy S. Klath Center for Lifelong Learning that provide a welcoming environment for our programs.
- A hopeful future — As much gratitude as I feel for what has been, I am doubly grateful for what I know the future will hold for PSRC. With all of the factors above, we are poised for our next great chapter.

Individually, this is also an ideal opportunity to reflect on the many things for which we are grateful. A few years ago, a friend challenged me to use November as a time to not only be mindful of my reasons for gratitude, but also to practice gratitude with daily acts of acknowledgment. Whether writing a note to a former mentor or teacher, making a phone call to an extraordinary volunteer, or acknowledging (with an extra tip) the gas station attendants, restaurant servers, or other service workers, I try to make gratitude not only a mindset, but a daily practice.



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The National Council on Aging recognizes the power of gratitude and includes it, along with mindfulness, as one of the six dimensions of aging well. Dr. Susan Stiles notes, “By practicing gratitude over time, we can learn to notice and appreciate not only the positives, but also develop better attitudes about the negatives ... the challenges, losses, and frustrations that we all face as we age. Adopting an attitude of gratitude means tackling the negative things and challenging ourselves to find ways to be grateful for them.”

Harvard Health, the publishing arm of the Harvard Medical School, highlights several studies in positive psychology that link gratitude with healthy aging. These studies have found that “gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.”

Throughout this month, I’d like to once again extend this simple challenge to you. Each and every day, do one extra act to practice gratitude in your life. Every day. No exceptions. For 30 days. At the end of the month, send me a note to let me know about your experience. Pay attention to how your acts of gratitude impact others around you. But also pay attention to how you feel throughout this journey. I trust that you will feel the impact gratitude has on your health and overall well-being. I also have a hunch that practicing a month of gratitude will lead to the development of a habit that will ripple well beyond November — and will positively impact your life for years to come. I look forward to hearing your stories!

All the Best,  
*Drew A. Dyson, PhD*  
*Chief Executive Officer*