

Letting the Light Shine Through

New Iona Support Group Helps Caregivers in Next Stage of Their Journey

When Suzanne Gentes' husband passed away in May of 2015, she had anticipated feeling the deep grief of losing a spouse. What she didn't expect, however, was feeling an additional loss from saying goodbye to friends in Iona's caregiver support group for spouses and partners of people with dementia.

Over several years, Suzanne had come to rely on the group as a safe space to vent, laugh, and cry with people in similar situations. "The group really helped a lot, and in a way, I had a circle of caregivers to take care of me," says Suzanne.

After her husband died, it was difficult not to have that continued

"It's nice to have people who care enough to listen and to share their grief with you. It's a wonderful reminder that despite the darkness, there is some light out there."

—Suzanne Gentes, support group member

support. And, while she tried bereavement groups with other area organizations, there was always something missing, as Suzanne found that few addressed her important caregiver role. Knowing that Iona had been there during her caregiving journey, Suzanne turned to Iona again in her grief.

The timing was meant to be. Just a month prior, Iona psychotherapist and support group manager Bill Amt had surveyed former Iona caregiver support group members to learn more about their caregiving journeys and gather feedback on how Iona could better support them.

Additionally, Bill was also investigating bereavement group models. "As the support group manager, I'm always thinking, 'What more do we need?'" says Bill. "When I looked at Iona's menu of offerings, I saw that there was a gap."



This spring, Iona's catalog of support groups expanded with the addition of our new After Caregiving Support Group, co-facilitated by Liza Chapkovsky (left) and Elizabeth Buchanek.

With Suzanne's help, Iona was able to fill that gap.

Using feedback from Suzanne's personal experience, along with best practices, Bill and Iona's Director of Consultation, Care Management, and Counseling Deb Rubenstein designed Iona's newest group: the After Caregiving

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From Rio to DC:

Iona Celebrates Summer Olympics



This August, Iona's Wellness & Arts Center participants showed off their athletic abilities and sportsmanship with our very own Summer Olympics. Pictured at left, participant Marina Quijano expertly competes in our version of the javelin event — with pool noodles — while volunteers from American University keep score. Other activities included golf, seated volleyball, and synchronized “swimming.”

And the best part? During the final Medals Ceremony, a participant stood up and made a special point of thanking staff, saying, **“You all make me happy every day!”** What a blessing it is for us — thanks to your generous support — to make that statement possible. ✓

Thank You for Your Kindness in Honoring Sally and Caregivers

Iona's Executive Director Sally White joined our team back in 1986 as a Helpline specialist. Since then, she has held a number of positions of increasing responsibility. She has been Iona's leader for 7 years. One thing that has remained constant, though, is Sally's commitment to helping older adults and the caregivers who give to them selflessly.

In honor of her 30th anniversary, this summer Iona asked staff, board members, and generous neighbors like you to donate to our Caregiver Support Fund, which provides special scholarships to our Wellness & Arts Center family caregivers who need time to rest and self-care.

Your response was overwhelming. Thanks to your generous donations, we were able to raise \$8,860 for

the Caregiver Support Fund. For Sally — and the family caregivers who depend on Iona, and you, for support — the contribution to the Fund is truly heart-warming. “I am just so humbled and honored by the response,” says Sally. “So much has changed in my 30 years at Iona, but the incredible generosity and kindness of our donors is one thing I am always touched by. **Your words of congratulations, and even more so, your support to the families in our Wellness & Arts Center mean so much to me.**”

If you missed celebrating Sally's 30th anniversary and would still like to make a contribution to our Caregiver Support Fund in her honor, please contact Susan Messina at (202) 895-9401 or ssmessina@iona.org to make a donation today. ✓

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Support Group. Its first meeting was in April.

Unlike other grief groups Suzanne tried, Iona's After Caregiving Support Group focuses on not only grief, but also caregiver identity and transition, says Iona social worker Liza Chapkosvky, who co-facilitates the group with Elizabeth Buchanek, an experienced volunteer. “When you're a longtime caregiver, your identity is so wrapped up in that experience,” says Liza. “When it's done, you might have a wide range of emotions and you're also trying to figure out, ‘what's next for me.’”

The group, then, helps members process their grief, as well as think about next steps. It's also a great space to share resources, literature, and success stories for self-care, adds Suzanne.

And, of course, having a circle of caregivers is a welcome return for Suzanne. “It's nice to have people again who care enough to listen and to share their grief with you,” she says. “It's a wonderful reminder that despite the darkness, there is some light out there.” ✓

Farm-to-Table Market Gets Participant's Health on Track: "You Have Expanded My World"

Thirty women and men are waiting for Iona's free Farmer's Market to open at our Active Wellness Program at St. Alban's, which offers a nutritious lunch and diverse activities to older adults in the neighborhood and beyond. Leading their line with her reusable bags in tow is Lakshmi Hettihewa.

A Scary Diagnosis

Lakshmi Hettihewa has been a huge fan of the Active Wellness Program at St. Alban's since she first decided to check it out last summer. The timing, says Lakshmi, was meant to be. "Last year, my doctor ordered a glucose blood test, and she discovered that I'm on the borderline for high blood sugar. I was so panicky and upset. I needed to make some changes."

For Lakshmi, that meant exercising more and paying closer attention to her diet. The Active Wellness Program at St. Alban's was able to help with both.

"I love Dr. Eileen's exercise program and the yoga. Then, I came to know the Farmer's Market and my whole world opened up. I simply, simply love the program," Lakshmi says.

Making Changes without the Cost

A native of Sri Lanka, Lakshmi was accustomed to eating mostly rice with only a few vegetables or some protein. But after learning of her high blood sugar, she knew that she needed to eat more greens. The cost of this change, however, was worrying to Lakshmi. "Fresh produce, and high-quality especially, is expensive," she explains. "I would not be eating this many vegetables if not for your market."



After a worrisome prognosis, Lakshmi Hettihewa turned to Iona's Active Wellness Program at St. Alban's.

In addition to getting access to fresh and local produce — for free — Lakshmi also praises the educational aspect of the Farmer's Market and, in particular, Ashlea Steiner, Iona's Food Access Coordinator.

"Ms. Steiner is inspiring," Lakshmi says. "She's introduced us to new produce and makes it interesting and exciting. I had never had kale before the market, and now I'm hooked!"

Feeling Healthy, Thanks to Iona

Now, after nearly a year participating in Iona's Active Wellness Program at St. Alban's, Lakshmi feels healthier and has even lost some weight. And her blood sugar? "After six months, it has declined," says Lakshmi proudly. "You have expanded my world to include fruits and vegetables. Thank you to Iona and to Ms. Steiner for this positive experience." 

Four Great Ways to Use Kale (Lakshmi's favorite!)

Kale is a dark leafy green related to collards and cabbage. More importantly, though, it is a nutrition powerhouse! In just one cup of chopped kale, you'll get a whopping 684% of your daily value of vitamin K, 206% of your daily value of vitamin A, and 134% of your daily value of vitamin C. And best of all? It's easy to prepare and it's delicious.

Try kale in your next meal:

1. Sauté kale in a little extra-virgin olive oil with garlic, salt, and pepper for an easy side dish. You can also add in onions or other favorite vegetables.
2. Wilt kale into tomato sauce and serve it over whole grain pasta.
3. Toss kale leaves (stems removed) with olive oil, minced garlic, salt, and pepper, and spread on a baking sheet. Roast in the oven at 375 for about 20 minutes until leaves are crispy on the edges for a delicious and crunchy snack.
4. Stir wilted kale into your scrambled eggs. Add tomatoes, parmesan cheese, or avocado.

** Data courtesy of www.oldwayspt.org*

Iona's Home Delivered Meals a Perfect Fit for Healthy Aging

Larry H. values his independence deeply. A soft-spoken and private man, he tends to keep to himself — and likes it that way. After learning he was pre-diabetic, though, Larry knew he needed to reach out for support, and Iona was there waiting.

A resident of Regency House, the only public housing for older adults in Ward 3, Larry had previously observed Iona staff members visiting neighbors and running different programs like the Farmer's Market there. But, he had always been cautious about participating. "I don't like to be put on the spot or seem like a victim," explains Larry. "But, I said to myself, 'Larry, do you want to end up just like your cousins and siblings who had short lives because of diabetes?'"

So, Larry decided to visit Iona's monthly drop-in clinic at Regency. There, he learned about Iona's Home Delivered Meals, a needs-based program that delivers nutritious and well-balanced meals, with support from the DC Office on Aging.

"Iona had the meals that I was looking for to help my health," he says. "I don't have to worry about sodium and things like that because I can throw one of these in the microwave and it's a square, balanced meal."

Since connecting with Iona, Larry has also felt a change in his attitude. "I really am feeling positive. I feel good that I'm addressing a medical need. And that, hey, this is really working."



Larry H. is feeling healthy and happy now that he is receiving Iona's Home Delivered Meals, which help him manage his high blood sugar.

Additionally, Larry has also started to visit Iona's free Farmer's Market, which has helped ease his concerns about affording fresh produce. "At Safeway, an apple goes for \$1 or \$2 a piece," explains Larry. "If you're on a fixed income, you aren't going to buy the fruits or vegetables you need, even if it's hurting your nutrition. You just can't afford it."

Though he may have initially worried about connecting with Iona, Larry is now glad that he did. "I really am at a loss for words," he says. "I'm just so appreciative of what you have done for me. I'm looking forward to a long, peaceful, and happy life." 

#GivingTuesday is Around the Corner

Here's How You Can Help!



Did you know there is a global day dedicated to giving back? On November 29, just a few days after Thanksgiving, people all around the world will be showing their support for their favorite nonprofit as part of #GivingTuesday. But, before the big day, Iona needs your help to build momentum. Here's what you can do:

1. Mark Tuesday, November 29 on your calendar

2. Follow us on Facebook

(www.facebook.com/IonaSeniorServices) and help build the buzz by sharing our posts and telling your

friends why you believe in our work.

3. Spread the word! Talk to your family and friends about why you give to Iona (and why they might want to also!)

We hope with your help, we will be able to reach our #GivingTuesday goal of \$5,000, which will provide holiday meals to our older neighbors who would otherwise have empty refrigerators and pantries on Thanksgiving and Christmas. We can't wait to celebrate the difference your support will make on November 29!

The Lois and Richard England Gallery at Iona: Meet Our Artists!

Special Guest Artists (husband and wife duo!) James Landry, painter, photographer, and musician, and Nicole Burton, author, share their inspiration and creative processes. Enjoy their artworks on display through January 9, 2017.

Q: When did you first start creating art/writing?

James: I always wanted to “do” things: take pictures, make music, make paintings. For me, these activities all seemed like the same thing. I’m a photographer, painter, musician (keyboards), blogger, poet, performer, husband, and father.

Nicole: I started writing as a child and have kept a journal my whole life. I was relinquished as a baby and grew up in an adopted home. Writing stories, I could be truthful and explore the mysteries and possibilities around me.

Q: What is your artistic/writing process?



“Mona Lisa,” by James Landry

James: I use the materials at hand in my studio. When I was painting large canvases, I’d plan out the painting meticulously. I’d enlarge and “pixelate” the image, print it out,

and create a grid on canvas before I painted.

Nicole: I set aside a few mornings a week for uninterrupted time. I can really focus when I let myself. I usually wait until a subject taps me repeatedly on the shoulder before I commit to writing a play about it because we’re going to be living together for years. Many of my plays have been historical and involve research. I generally outline and write character histories before I begin but at some point, it’s time to put away all notes and research, and write.

Q: Has your process changed as you’ve aged?

James: I’m painting smaller and quicker pieces now, usually works on paper with acrylic paint, spray paint, or pastels.

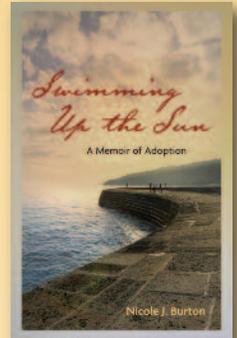
Nicole: Yes and no. Writing a play always feels like jumping off a cliff, but now I know I’ll survive. There’s still so much I don’t know about playwriting but the

constant learning makes it fun. I’ve rejiggered my definition of success. I try to make my own success through self-production and by starting my own publishing company, Apippa Publishing Company, to publish our books.

Q: What does “creative aging” mean to you?

James: It means you keep on working. Artists cannot stop. The only time you stop is when you’re dead.

Nicole: Art is a never ending inspiration and teacher. The older I get, the more I enjoy the process of writing.



“Swimming Up the Sun: A Memoir,” by Nicole J. Burton

Want to hear more from our featured artists?

Join us at Iona for these upcoming events.

Lunch and Learn with James Landry
Wednesday, October 26, 12:30 pm

Lunch and Learn with Nicole Burton
Wednesday, November 16, 12:30 pm

Film and Q&A: “Adoption Shorts,” by Nicole Burton & Friends

“Adopted: For the Life with Me,” by Jean Strauss
Sunday, November 20, 2:00 pm

Memory Music Live with Our Guest Artists
Tuesday, December 13, 7:00 pm

Meet the Artists Reception
Friday, December 9, 5:00-7:00 pm.
Featuring live music and delicious refreshments.

Special thanks to Sunrise on Connecticut Avenue for supporting our art events.

RSVP for any of these upcoming events by calling (202) 895-9407 or email pdubroof@iona.org.



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IONA was thrilled to host three generations of the England Family at our dedication for "The Lois and Richard England Gallery at IONA" on September 23, 2016 (Lois is pictured in the middle, surrounded by family and IONA Executive Director Sally S. White).