Message from the Executive Director

I read a cover story in a local magazine recently about aging gracefully. As I read the profiles of the women aged 30–65, I was disappointed that much of the focus was on their physical beauty. In this issue of The Voice you’ll read about people who are aging gracefully by focusing on their life journey, tapping into their strengths and positive outlook on life. I hope that by reading about their journeys you see their true beauty and grace the way I do.

At Iona, we know that another way to age gracefully is to recognize that we are all part of a community of care and that we need one another. The cover story about Sergio Docal illustrates so beautifully how opening oneself up to some assistance in later life can lead to a greater quality of life. On page five you will see pictures of one of the most amazing Saturday meal deliveries I’ve ever seen in my 25 years of working at Iona. Since this time, Iona staff and I have fielded thank you calls from all over the city in the past two weeks — thanking us not only for the over 300 emergency food kits that were delivered to homebound seniors, but also from people who were thanking me for the opportunity to be of service.

On behalf of the staff and volunteers at Iona, I thank you for the opportunity to be of service to you.

Sally S. White
Executive Director
Making a Difference after Retirement

John Giacomini is a man of rare energy and drive. When he retired from his position of Director of Programs at George Mason Law School where he managed more than 20 competitive educational programs a year for federal judges, he wanted to put his skills to use in helping an organization reach its goals. He came to interview as a pro-bono volunteer at Iona. He met Lylie Fisher, Director of Community Engagement, who gave him the “first interview I had where I thought — this person really knows how to interview a prospective volunteer. I can really do something here.” Lylie matched him with Meg Artley, Director of Development, who was looking for a volunteer to lead and energize the Member Council, a group of representatives from faith communities that serves as a conduit of information and advice to and from Iona and local congregations.

When Meg met John, she knew that he was the right person for the job. John not only had the professional skills, but he is an active and involved member at Holy Trinity Catholic Church and a busy volunteer in the Palisades Village. “John is a connector. He reaches out to people and is constantly looking for ways in which people and organizations can work together to achieve a goal,” she says. Within the last fifteen years, Iona’s Member Council’s representative membership had shrunk to just a handful of people. “We needed someone like John to reconstitute its representative membership. It is a vital part of Iona’s outreach to the community, ensuring that we are providing the services congregations need to support their people.”

In addition to asking clergy and staff to choose a person from their congregation to join the Member Council, John spends time each week connecting them with the programs and services at Iona that can help people in their communities who are experiencing the challenges of aging. As he fills his blue Iona bag with information packets and prepares for another visit, John explains that his work at Iona is mutually beneficial. He believes that aging well is about continuing to develop and grow. “We’re never done learning, and I’m learning a lot here.” he says with a smile.

Would you like to serve as a representative from your congregation? Please call Meg Artley at (202) 895-9401 to learn more about the benefits of this group and connect with John Giacomini.
language Mr. Docal and his second wife Elena, who is from Romania, speak to each other. Mr. Docal has lived in the same house on Albemarle Street for over 50 years—a house that boasts several pianos, holds beautiful memories of his children growing up, and good neighbors on both sides of the street.

When asked about whether he thought he ever would live to be 93, Mr. Docal chuckles. “When I was a young man, I thought I was indestructible.” When he began to encounter challenges in recent years, Mr. Docal began to switch this thinking. His wife works as a nanny during the week and Mr. Docal was beginning to encounter problems getting in and out of his house without her assistance. “I walk fairly well, but I was afraid of the steps.” After he fell on two occasions and was hospitalized, his neighbors reached out to Iona on his behalf.

Iona Social Worker Randy Smith first came to visit Mr. Docal last summer. Mr. Docal says, “He’s a big help. I don’t know how I managed before.” Elena has one word to describe Randy: Angelo—“angel” in Esperanto.

One of the early ways Randy helped Mr. Docal was to introduce him to Dr. Mark Strong, an internist from the Sibley Physicians Group, who has offices in Iona’s Breckinridge Building. He also arranged medical transportation for other doctor’s appointments in the city, in-home physical therapy and meals on wheels delivery on weekdays.

As their relationship grew, Mr. Docal and Randy tackled the hazard of the front steps. A member of Iona’s care management team is a great resource for this type of problem solving, and Randy shared his ideas on ways to improve the front steps, suggesting a sturdy iron banister from the front door to the sidewalk. Mr. Docal took charge of the situation, calling contractors. “Not only did he arrange for the railing to be installed, but he had the contractor completely re-do the steps and the front stoop, which were also a hazard,” Randy is quick to point out. Soon after the work was completed, Mr. Docal was able to resume his daily walk around the block.

“This Randy also got this for me,” Mr. Docal reports as he lifts his special footed cane and Randy quickly adds that the rolling walker from the Iona medical equipment loan closet is now at the house for Mr. Docal’s use. “Our next goal is to get him an electric scooter,” Randy says. Mr. Docal smiles at the thought. “I want to be able to get all the way up the hill to the new library,” he adds as he and Elena walk down the new steps for his daily constitutional.

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**This is Growing Old?**

The world-renowned band and chorus, Young@Heart will give a concert to benefit Iona on Thursday, October 20, 2011 at 8:00 pm at the Warner Theatre. “We are thrilled that they are coming to DC again. There is no better way to rally our community around the idea of positive aging than to see incredibly talented people smashing stereotypes—and having outrageous fun doing it,” explains Blair Kutrow, Iona Board President. “Be prepared to dance in the aisles.”

The last time Young@Heart came to Washington they performed for 1,200 people, helping Iona raise $90,000 to support vital programs and services such as home delivered meals for the homebound, transportation to and from grocery stores, intensive one-on-one counseling and support for people who are in crisis, and day programs for people who are experiencing memory loss and the people who care for them.

The concert is family friendly and groups are welcomed. Tickets are already on sale and will go fast. Go to [www.youngatheartdc.eventbrite.com](http://www.youngatheartdc.eventbrite.com).
On July 26, Iona will host a panel presentation for new author, B.W. Read, and a book signing of the debut novel Fourth Sunday. B.W. Read is the pseudonym of six talented women who penned the book—it stands for “Because We Read.” Most of the authors will be at Iona to speak about their journey from a book club that reads to a book club that reads and writes novels together.

Allita Irby, one of the women of B.W. Read, explained that a portion of a large and active book club began to discuss their common feeling that the books that they were reading didn’t describe their reality as strong, capable, professional African American women. Amy Tan’s Joy Luck Club was the inspiration for them to begin to write their own novel, weaving enlightening stories of women of a book club that meets on the fourth Sunday of every month. The novel, Fourth Sunday, chronicles the individual lives of six women—from professional triumphs and struggles to romantic highs and lows—and their evolving and deepening relationship with one another as friends through the book club.

Chyla Evans, another member of B.W. Read, describes their long journey from authors to published authors: “We completed the first manuscript about twelve years ago but we were unsuccessful in marketing it.” Their lives as mothers and busy professionals kept them from focusing on getting a manuscript accepted by a publisher so they shelved it. But last year, the call came in from Strebor Books, an imprint of Simon and Schuster, that they were interested in bringing it to print. The six women of B.W. Read are floored by the positive response to the book. “The mark of success for me is when a complete stranger likes the book,” Chyla says.

Iona’s Patricia Dubroof met Allita Irby at an art reception at a Hyattsville gallery and when she heard the story of Fourth Sunday suggested a book signing at Iona. “I thought that these women are the living examples of what it means to age well. They are tapping into their creativity, building a supportive community that allows them to continue to become who they truly are. I really want to support their endeavor and hopefully inspire others.”

The women of B.W. Read are aging well. Chyla, in addition to her busy life as a project manager for a company that is helping businesses go green with energy sustainable lighting, is filling her leisure time as an empty-nester with Bikram Yoga three to four times a week, tennis and golf with friends on the weekends and offering support and comfort to her mother who is the primary caregiver for her father.

Yolanda Yates, another author of B.W. Read, joined the book club in her late 30s. She describes her pet peeve about aging: “That saying—‘Age is just a number’—well, it isn’t just a number, it’s a reality.” An avid gardener when she isn’t at her management position at Verizon or working as an adjunct professor at Strayer University, Yolanda says, “I’ve been told I don’t look my age, but I don’t get caught up in all that. I just focus on my health.”

Allita Irby is the oldest member of B.W. Read. For Allita, being with an intergenerational group like her book club is one way she has found to age well. The character she writes in Fourth Sunday, Allana, is experiencing minor challenges of aging. “When I wrote of Allana’s experiences that was 15 years ago and it was pretty far from my own experience. Now I’m living it.” The character finds loving support from her friends in the book club, as Allita has found in her real-life book club. Another important way Allita has found to age well is to rediscover her creativity as a visual artist. It was her passion for visual arts that led her to the gallery in Hyattsville, where she met Patricia Dubroof, director of the Gallery at Iona. “When Patricia described the mission of the gallery to me—showcasing professional artists who are 60 or better—I knew we had to collaborate on this project. That’s exactly the way I view growing older.”

A Caring Community Responds

After Iona put out an email to friends and neighbors with a call for emergency food kits, we received over 400 kits. Thirty-one volunteers delivered 240 kits over the next two weekends to the homebound seniors we serve. Iona shared 100 kits with other community-based agencies serving seniors in other parts of the city. Iona will continue to distribute these shelf stable groceries to people who are in need. Thank you for your quick response and your generosity.
July 19, 2011
12:30-1:30 pm

July 26, 2011
Panel Presentation and Book Signing of Fourth Sunday by B.W. Read at Iona. Free. (See article on page 4 for more information.)
5-8 pm

August 8, 2011
Hands-on Art Workshop with Resident Artists Gwen Aqui and Bernard Brooks. Active Wellness at St. Alban’s. Lunch is provided.
12:45-2 pm

September 6, 2011
Exercise and arts classes begin at Iona. Call (202) 895-9448 if you would like to receive the schedule electronically.

October 14, 2011
Meet the Artists Reception for Mickey Klein and Sue Garten at Iona. Free.
5-8 pm