

Elderlaw & Estate Planning Update

A Few of Our Favorite *Things* People

The best thing about the holiday season is that it helps us slow down and think about the passage of time, and the things that matter most in life. And so, this year, we want to use our newsletter to shine a spotlight on a few of the people we know who seem to do a better job, throughout the year, of remembering what it's really all about.

Edith Forth and the Fountain of Youth

Edith Forth is a force in Jackson County and has been since she moved to the area with her husband nearly seventy years ago.

During those intervening decades, Edith raised her two children in Jackson, and they have now given her 7 grandchildren, 2 step-grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren. Besides being a wonderful mother/grandmother/great-grandmother, she is a role model for her family.

Slowing down? Not hardly. Currently she is a member for Retired Seniors Volunteer Council and TRIAD for protecting vulnerable adults from exploitation, a board member of AARP, and active in her church. And in addition, she attends and participates in many other community causes. Just hearing about her schedule would make most people want to take a nap, yet Edith forges on in order to serve her community and the seniors around her.

Edith's motto is "keeping busy and serving others leaves no time to feel the aches and pains." Her secret to staying young. And when you're around Edith you can see it on her face and feel it in her actions.



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You can't say "no" to Al

"Charming," "clever," "entertaining" . . . all good words to describe Al Swain, Associate Director of the Capital Area Center of Independent Living But let's add one more superlative ... "relentless."

Once Al identifies you as someone who will help his cause, he's not afraid to ask for more. And how do you say no to someone who believes and cares as much as Al does? You don't.



CACIL advocates for people with disabilities and seniors. Their efforts help provide access to affordable housing, transportation, and equipment so that people who might otherwise be institutionalized can stay in their homes and in the community. They also help people navigate the process of paying for these services, including assisting with obtaining benefits. Al is an integral person in this quest.

Blind since the age of nine, and in a wheelchair since the age of seventeen, what strikes you when you meet this incredible man is not what he can't do - but what he can do. As Al would put it, "life is about possibilities, not disability".

Al came to Lansing as a child and attended the Michigan School for the Blind. There, he was the MVP of his wrestling team and the valedictorian of his class. He attributes a lot of his success to the fact that he was given the supports that he

needed at the time that he needed them most. This is the inspiration that motivates Al to help others who are in need of support. If he can get them support at the time that they need it, they can succeed as he has.

Al feels that "in the end, the goal is the same." He never feels like he can't do something that other people can do, he just may need to go about it a different way. He travels around the country motivating people to see his vision.

Recently, Al was honored by his alma mater, Olivet College. He was given the Distinguished Alumni Award for his work in the area of diversity and respect for all people. He and his wife enjoyed a ride in a mint condition, yellow Mustang convertible during the Homecoming Parade.

Gratiot County's All Around Good Guy

It's not just a job to Craig Zeese, Director of the Commission on Aging for Gratiot County. In and out of his position with the Commission on Aging, Craig is dedicated to serving the seniors of Gratiot County. Craig says that when he moved to Gratiot County, he was struck by the "sense of community." He says that in Gratiot County "if you need help, people are there for anything and everything." But maybe that perception has just a little something to do with the way Craig approaches people and problems – with a smile and the belief that we all share his desire to contribute to making our communities better.

For example, this year, as in past years, Craig was in charge of the Community Thanksgiving Dinner. This program has grown from 3 turkeys and a potluck to 40 turkeys and 400 meals. So many people, who would otherwise go hungry at Thanksgiving, now have a reason to give thanks.

Craig is also involved with a major home repair project in the St. Louis area call "Group Work Camp". Next July, over 400 youths from across the nation will descend on St. Louis for a week and repair the homes of the needy. He's also on the local foundation board, helps out with the Red Cross, and involved in the local theater.

