



# FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER

## Connecting Elder Neighbors

### How to Play the Courage Card Under Stress

#### »»» Debbie Thompson McLean

Mercy Care Friendship Volunteer

What do you do when you face fear? What do you do when you face a huge challenge?

At 75 I find I have more fears than I ever did. Fear of falling, fear of dying, fear of losing loved ones.

When these fears happen, I pull out my “courage card”. Ahhh you say, what is a courage card? Let me see if I can put light on my secret weapon. Hint: It’s a mindset.

When I was in my late 20’s, I dated a fella who was a skydiver. Skydivers live life on a totally different level than most of us. Think about it, they jump out of airplanes for the thrill of it, risking their life on every jump. Each day may be their last. Fear is such an integral part of their lives that they have to live with a very different kind of mindset.

Over drinks one night, the man I hoped could be my boyfriend asked if I wanted to go skydiving. My mind leaped into collision mode. If I say no, I thought, he’ll dump me. If I say yes, I may die. What am I to do? Sheepishly, I answered the death defying question: “Sure, that sounds like fun!” I replied, my stomach turning over with the utmost of fear.

When skydiving day arrived, I went through a half day class on everything that can go wrong while skydiving. Can you tell me what was wrong with this picture? With each minute of training, I felt the fear creeping up and up and up... “Oh, I thought, I just want to go home and make the fear go away!”

It was too late for that, however. It came time



to go up in the plane. Of course, fear began to take over my mind and body. All I wanted at that moment was to cut and run, but instead I prayed: “Lord please give me courage, let me live one more day...”

As the only woman skydiving that day, I made a decision: If I am doing this, I am going first and getting it over with. I had to be the first one jumping out of that plane, I told myself. The jump instructor must have heard my silent thoughts because he stood there with a cheshire grin and said: “Which of you newbies is going first?”. Without hesitation, I raised my hand. “I am”, I said. The jump instructor leaned down for my ears only and asked: “Why?” “Well, I answered, that’s easy. If I go first, the other four guys can’t woozy out.” He smiled and nodded in agreement. “So let’s do this, he said calmly”.

He proceeded to hook me up to the stag line and instructed me to place one foot on the strut of the airplane wing. My stomach tightened and fear overwhelmed me. Then, he said: When I say go just push away from the plane and enjoy the ride.” And there it was. The Go. I did exactly as the instructor said

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and time stood still. I fell for about 10 seconds, which felt like an hour. When the rush of the parachute suddenly opened, I was falling gently out of the sky. I looked around. All was beautiful, eerie quiet and calming. So calming, I almost felt relaxed. Not for long, though, as I remembered I was supposed to head for the big circle on the ground. So I told myself, “OK, I’ve got this.” Still, landing was harder than in practice. And I was alive. Thank you God!

At this point, I’m sure you’re wondering where this story is going. Well, that jump out of a perfectly good airplane changed my life. Now, when I come face to face with fear or a huge challenge, I look back on this experience and say to myself: “You jumped out of an airplane. You can get through this challenge too.”

Whether it be skiing the deepest powder down the steepest slope you’ve ever been on, or holding a loved one’s hand as they pass away to the other side, there will always be fear. Fear is powerful. So, when it hits me, I pull the courage card and think back to the moment I jumped out of that airplane. If I can jump out of an airplane, I can push through this fear just like I’ve done before. And so can you.

Find a memory that is your “courage card” and move through your fears and challenges, let life become a beautiful adventure. Grab that courage card and go for it! ♦

## Newsletter Submissions

**We Want To Hear From You!**

- What is the most wondrous thing you have seen in nature?
- Tell us about a historical event and the effect it had on you and/or your family?
- Where were you born? What is your most significant memory?

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## ZEHLENDORF

### ➤➤➤ Renate Schneider

Mercy Care Elder Friend and Author

Excerpt from “Hardships and Magic: Memories of Growing Up In Germany 1939-1955”



Cover Design by Rainer Doost, based on original art by Barbara Doost. (Renate’s brother and mother.)

I am almost four years old. It is early summer in Berlin, Germany, in 1940. My Aunt Adelheid (maternal great-aunt really) has taken me to Zehlendorf to visit Aunt Mieke (Adelheid’s second cousin). Aunt Mieke is quite old, with snow-white hair always neatly waved and held in something like a French twist at the back of her head with a thin net over it. She holds herself very straight and reminds me of a queen. She is dressed meticulously and, like all old ladies, in dark, drab colors.

The neck-line is lightened with a starched or crocheted white collar. We always find her sitting at her elegant secretary near the window of her large, comfortable, mysterious living room in her big house, all dark with heavy wood paneling. The window, one of two high and wide ones, looks out upon a majestic, ancient tree, which overshadows a plush lawn studded with uncountable Gänseblümchen (small daisies). I am told the tree is a copper beech. At the far end of the sizeable lawn rises the lovely rock garden of the Thielens, with their light-colored house to the right of it. The house looks to me as if it were made of glass with its many windows and French doors. Frieda Thielen is Tante Mieke’s daughter. I like to go there when Frieda’s little granddaughter Gudula is visiting. We love to sit on the patio and play with the big, black cat. Then we can look across the lawn at Aunt Mieke’s great house

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## A Day in the Life

### ➤➤➤ Katherine Rhodes

Mercy Care Elder Care Manager



Hi friends! I hope you enjoyed the warmth and beauty of another Adirondack spring and are ready for a gorgeous summer. If getting your hands dirty sounds like fun, join us at our new plot in the Lake Placid Community Garden to cultivate the veggies, herbs, and flowers

that Elders and Volunteers planted together at the end of May.

We had a busy spring here at Mercy Care, including training TWELVE new Friendship Volunteers on May 15th! This group is a mix of lifelong locals, transplants, and part-time residents, but they all have something in common: they love this place we call home and want to make sure it's a great place to live for their neighbors, too.

It has been wonderful getting to know them and seeing their enthusiasm for their communities. Many dove right in, already building relationships with other Volunteers and the Elders they've begun to assist. Each of them is a great addition to the Mercy Care family and we could not be more excited to have them on board!

As summer kicks off, the flowers bloom, and the black flies (hopefully) calm down, I hope you are able to get some fresh air in your lungs, sunshine on your face, and breeze in your hair.

--Katherine

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of dark stucco and wood nestling among good-sized trees.

But today we are visiting Aunt Mieke. I am sent outside to gather Gänseblümchen, lots of them with stems as long as possible, which is at best three inches. Aunt Adelheid is fashioning a wreath from them for me to wear upon my head. The wreath is more than an inch thick, so it takes a great number of flowers. I try to find as many Gänseblümchen as possible with pink tips on their tiny, white petals. These are the newly opened ones whose stems are often not yet long enough. I have to settle for mostly white ones.

The wreath is lovely. I feel like a princess. When I get home, the wreath is placed in a soup plate full of water to keep it fresh for a few days. But now it is soaking wet and I cannot wear it again. I can only look at it and feel how special it is, I am, and the afternoon was. ♦

## SOCIAL IMPACT EVENTS

**For all social impact events below:  
RSVP to Katherine at 518-523-5585 or  
[krhodes@adkmercy.org](mailto:krhodes@adkmercy.org)**

**Technology Assistance Workshop  
August 14th; Basic Level - BOCES  
Learn the basics and better utilize your  
phone and iPad/tablet.**

**Annual Friendship Picnic  
September 5th; Camp Guggenheim, 1468  
County Rte 18, Saranac Lake**

**Build Your Own Terrarium  
September 12th; Saranac Lake Hot House,  
50 Bay Blvd., Saranac Lake**

#### iPad Program

**If you would like to be involved in the  
iPad program, or want more  
information, please contact Lexi  
Bevilacqua at 518-523-5446, or  
[abevilacqua@adkmercy.org](mailto:abevilacqua@adkmercy.org)**



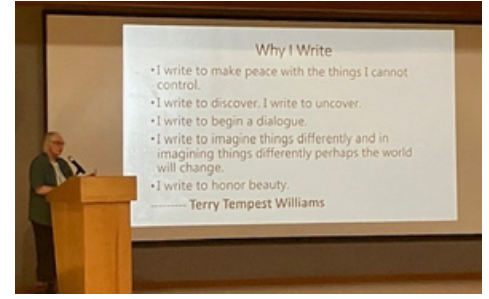
## ♥ Mercy Care Garden Club Finding Community in the Garden Club



Mercy Care Elders and Volunteers planting in the Lake Placid Community Garden.



## ♥ Spirituality Retreat Caring for the Human Spirit in Times of Crises



## ♥ Educational Forum Creating More Livable Communities for People of All Ages: Climate Impact, Resilience & Restoration

