



Finding a Balance

For more than 40 years, Gina Lyons continuously advanced her radio career and finally started to see the professional finish line over the horizon. What had seemed like steady sailing towards retirement hit stormy waters as her husband, John Lyons, started exhibiting signs of dementia.

“I was at my wits’ end more than once,” Lyons says. “I felt like my life and career was over and that I wasn’t going to be able to take adequate care of John. You can imagine how tired and frustrated I was becoming.”

Gina and John had been married for 38 years; nearly the same amount of time Gina had worked in radio. In 2005, the symptoms of John’s dementia became obvious, as he began struggling to remember where he left things and forgetting groceries when he went shopping. He received a diagnosis in 2011, forcing Gina to balance caring for her husband with her job as an operations manager at Total Traffic Network. As John’s dementia progressed, Gina scaled back on hours and began to work exclusively from home.



Gina and John Lyons

Despite the accommodations from her company, it became clear something had to change when John went missing one afternoon. He took the dog out for a walk, which normally wasn’t an issue because of a GPS device that allowed Gina to navigate him home after 15 minutes or so. Unfortunately, Jon misplaced the device on that trip and went missing for eight hours. Gina called the police, who issued a Silver Alert before finding him. She realized they couldn’t continue the same way, yet it seemed all her possibilities left terrifying tradeoffs.

“I was 63 when all of this happened and I needed to work until I was 66 for retirement,” says Gina. “I’m paying all the bills myself. I don’t know what

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Finding a Balance

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would've happened if I couldn't keep my job. We would've lost the house."

Fortunately for Gina and John, they discovered Full Life Care. John began attending the South Seattle Adult Day Health Center and quickly took to the program. Attending provided a sense of purpose for John, who often referred to trips to the center as "work" because he would volunteer to sweep and help clean between scheduled activities. He especially enjoyed discussion groups related to current events and music sessions. Knowing that John was being taken care of allowed Gina to spend more time focused on work and taking better care of herself.

"I like my work and it's important for me to feel like I'm doing a good job for the company and the people that rely on us," Gina says. "I oversee a staff of 25 people, and they are wonderful, but it isn't fair to them if I can't come in enough to take care of them adequately. I wasn't giving enough to them or John and it was starting to depress me. Now I know my future isn't destroyed and it's been a life changer."

"Full Life has been a life changer. . . . They're really advocating for their clients."

One of the biggest blessings comes from not having to constantly check on John because of the faith she has in Full Life Care.

"I can't speak highly enough of them," Gina says. It's more than just a job for everyone there. They're really advocating for their clients and making sure everything is taken care of."

John originally joined Full Life Care through one of its adult day health centers. As time passed, the disease progressed and John required 24-hour care. Still, Gina remains positive and notes a silver lining.

"He's living in Buchanan Place now," she says, referring to one of Full Life Care's memory care assisted living homes. "It's been such a blessing to have him there. I didn't know how he would do living away from our house

but the staff has just been incredible. To be able to come to work, be comfortable with the fact that John is safe, and have this life – it's just amazing."

To find out more about enrolling at one of Full Life Care's adult day health centers, contact 206.528.5315 (King County) or 425.355.1313 (Snohomish County).

Nora's Corner: Stronger Together

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Presbyterian Retirement Communities Northwest (PRCN) — recently changed its name to align with its vision: *To Transform the Perception of Age.*

We have had a long-time, friendly, collaborative relationship with Transforming Age, providing behavioral health support for residents of its communities, and admitting a few of its dementia care residents into our smaller assisted living homes, Gaffney House and Buchanan Place.

This formal affiliation allows both organizations to build on our respective strengths. Full Life Care is one of the region's leaders in home and community-based services, and Transforming Age has a proven track record developing and operating quality residential care. Our shared values, complementary expertise and resources allows us to grow the impact of our services to help older adults across the economic spectrum live independent, full lives. We are, indeed, stronger together.

We remain committed to serving low-income elders and adults of all ages, and Full Life Care will continue to raise funds under our own 501(c)(3) not-for-profit classification to support our essential services for these vulnerable adults. I hope you will join us at our annual benefit luncheon this October 5.

Meanwhile, I'm sure I'll run into Jacqueline, and I'll pause to reflect on her and the thousands of Full Life Care participants and families who rely on our programs to support their lives. With or without the Cheetos.

Among Friends

A Sweet and Simple Story

“My life is very simple, so you will have a simple story and a sweet story,” says Nina Newell.

Nina was born in Manila, trained in musical comedy at the American Theater Wing in New York, and lived and performed all over Asia during her singing career as a young woman. She then worked for the US Army in Thailand during the Vietnam War, where she arranged banquets for the officers and met Bob Hope and many other USO performers. She also served a brief stint as assistant to a princess in the Middle East, before returning to teach English in Thailand. In 1982, she decided to put down roots near family in Seattle, proudly becoming an American citizen after five years.

“A simple story,” she said? Nina agrees she’s been blessed with a full life!

But in recent years, following her husband’s death and her stroke, life has become simpler. When her health status changed, she felt isolated in her life and in her home. And Nina married later in life and didn’t have children of her own. “I’m just at home all the time – because of the stroke, I cannot move as much as before.”

Enter ElderFriends volunteer Katie Russell.

“ElderFriends arrived for me out of the blue,” says Nina. “I thank God for ElderFriends and Katie. Our friendship is really special – I’ll be 79 next month and she’s just 23. It’s just like having a daughter. It’s really a miracle, isn’t it?”

Katie had experience as a volunteer companion in her home state of Indiana. She came to Seattle in the summer of 2016 to join Full Life Care’s AmeriCorps team and sought an additional opportunity to volunteer with ElderFriends during her service year.

“Being away from family and not knowing any older adults here, it was great to meet Nina, we hit it off from the beginning.” Noting Nina’s love of jazz, on their second visit, Katie brought over her record player and they listened to



Katie Russell and Nina Newell

Ella Fitzgerald records together. Katie knows that her visits are reducing Nina’s isolation and feelings of loneliness. Katie’s gaining something too. “I love hearing Nina’s life perspective, especially when it’s different from my own. She’s so encouraging to me, and an inspiration too.”

Recently, with Katie’s encouragement and company, Nina ventured out to her first ElderFriends party. “I don’t step out; it was the first time for us to go out, after knowing each other six months. I enjoyed all the people I met, I had a lovely meal. I had a ball!”

Nina measures success in the simple and sweet: being able to live in her own home, walk with a cane, care for her cat, make a meal for herself, and receive a visit from Katie Russell.

“For me to meet Katie it’s like a gift. ElderFriends is a blessing to me. And I mean that with all my heart.”

JOIN WENDY LUSTBADER FOR LUNCH OCTOBER 5

“You have to be as alive as you can while you’re alive!” proclaims Wendy Lustbader, MSW. A nationally renowned author, educator, and clinician in the field of aging, Wendy brings a social worker’s lived experience to her writing, teaching, and everyone she meets.

Wendy will share generously from her wealth of wisdom, insights, and experiences at Full Life Care’s Benefit Luncheon at the Seattle Sheraton at Noon on Thursday, October 5, 2017.

Wendy says, “I’ve learned that life doesn’t get much easier, but it most certainly gets better.” Her newest book, *Life Gets Better*, explores how life improves in unexpected ways as we age.

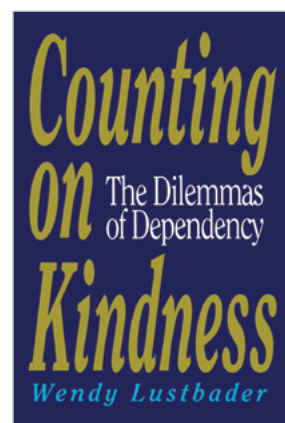
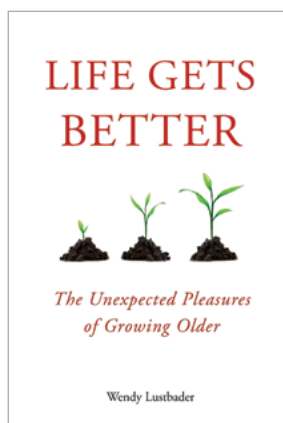
She also has a deep understanding that we need to take care of each other to live a full life. Two of her other books shine light on the complex and often unspeakable feelings that arise when we become dependent on others for help, and how to take care of aged family members.

Wendy is a master storyteller, weaving life experiences with her expert knowledge about how best to respect dignity, protect autonomy, and celebrate the resilience and preciousness of each person’s life.

Please join us and Wendy Lustbader on October 5 in support of Full Life Care. RSVP online at fulllifecare.org/lunch or contact Erin Rohan at 206.224.3749 or erin@fulllifecare.org.



Wendy Lustbader





Stronger Together

By Nora Gibson, Executive Director

This summer, not far from Full Life Care's offices at Jefferson Terrace on First Hill, I met with my development manager and grants consultant at an outdoor café. As we sat in the sun, I recognized an elderly woman, Jacqueline Franklin, as she passed us with her walker. She saw me as well, and we waved a greeting to each other.

I explained to my colleagues that I frequently see Jacqueline at Jefferson Terrace, picking up her mail or heading to the laundry room. She's often accompanied by her Full Life Care home care aide, who helps her with essential tasks such as laundry, cleaning, shopping, and transportation to doctor appointments. She's been able to stay living independently with support of our aides for the last 10 years. She's now 92-years-old.

As Jacqueline continued on, I noticed a bag of Cheetos sticking out of her walker bag. It made me smile to know that she's still able to live as an independent adult and allowed to make simple day-to-day choices. In a more restricted, institutional care setting, access to Cheetos would likely be controlled, and even strolling alone in what some consider a "sketchy" part of town might be questioned. My own father, who loves his new life at Providence Mount St. Vincent, talks about the heavily structured aspect of living in a licensed facility. It reminds him of his days in the military, where there are similar requirements – like signing in and out – that are enacted from above out of concerns for safety.

FULL LIFE CARE AND TRANSFORMING AGE

- We have many shared values, including a focus on cultivating opportunities for adults to live independently.
- Our affiliation leverages our collaboration to grow our impact, reaching more older adults through deeper resources, more diverse expertise, and expanded networks.
- Full Life Care continues operating as a separate 501(c)(3) entity.

For more information about our affiliation with Transforming Age, please visit www.fulllifecare.org/transformingage.

Almost all of Full Life Care's services are designed to support people who wish to stay living in their communities for as long as possible. Our agency has grown significantly over the decades, with our strong foundation in adult day health care, and recent growth in our home care program. As one of numerous home care providers in Washington, I know that it is the fastest-growing service option in the state. When given an array of community-based options, many people choose home care.

With the population of older adults growing at its fastest rate in history, and as we look forward to meeting increased demand for supportive community-based services, Full Life Care has entered into a strategic affiliation with another, larger organization which shares our values, Transforming Age. This 60-year-old not-for-profit organization — previously known as

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The Full Life Times is a publication of Full Life Care, a registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

YOU ARE INVITED TO FULL LIFE CARE'S

Benefit Luncheon

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2017 | NOON – 1:30PM
SHERATON SEATTLE HOTEL | 1400 6TH AVE, SEATTLE, WA 98101

EMCEE: Enrique Cerna
EVENT CO-CHAIRS: Frances Holtman and Christopher Henderson

FULLLIFECARE.ORG/LUNCH

To sponsor Full Life Care or attend this event, please contact
Erin Rohan, 206.224.3749, ErinR@FullLifeCare.org

Join Us!
Our featured speaker is
WENDY LUSTBADER, MSW

All are welcome. We will request a donation of \$200 or more from each guest.

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