

Linking ‘reservoirs of wisdom’ to community

Reed Browning *January 14, 2015*



Senior citizens are one of the great untapped resources in our country today. Men and women in their seventies and eighties have spent their lifetimes cultivating skills. They have managed and coordinated organizations as close as families and as large as companies. They have learned how to negotiate their way through complicated situations, developed the gift of making balanced judgments, and learned to distinguish between what is valuable and what is not. Having retired from their official “careers,” these seniors are reservoirs of wisdom, with much to contribute to the community they live in.

On Jan. 21, Kendal at Granville will launch the Kendal Institute on Community Engagement. The purpose of the institute is to find and publicize ways in which senior citizens of Licking County can connect with service and recreational organizations in the county. At the same time the institute will alert county organizations to the potential for good that is available in the pool of seniors in the county.

From its founding almost 10 years ago the residents of Kendal at Granville have been giving time and support to an array of community activities. The county’s school systems, cultural organizations, houses of worship, and service organizations have all been beneficiaries of the time and labors of Kendal residents. The residents in turn have added meaning to their own lives through these contributions.

But Kendal believes that there are still many seniors, both at Kendal and in the wider county community, who would like to find ways to connect with these networks of activity.

A month ago Kendal at Granville received a small grant from Kendal Charitable Funds to implement a program “to enrich the lives of older adults,” whether living at Kendal or not. To figure out how best to accomplish that goal, we want to consult with many organizations in the community. So we have created the Kendal Institute for Community Engagement. Denison University has accepted an invitation to partner with us as this initiative moves forward.

In 2015 the Institute will focus on three broad areas that offer opportunities for volunteer or recreational engagement: social services, the arts, and education. In future years we are considering exploring possibilities for intergenerational engagement; examining the county’s rich cultural, industrial, and archeological heritage; and testing the interest in creating “road shows” on specific topics for schools and social organizations.

The kick-off event on Jan. 21 will occur in the Amelia Gathering Room at Kendal. Speaking at that introductory occasion will be Adam Weinberg, president of Denison; Connie Hawk, director of the Licking County Foundation; Jeff Brown, superintendent of Granville public schools; and Jeff Gill, pastor of the Newark Central Christian Church. There will be question-and-answer opportunities, refreshments, and musical

entertainment. Persons with particular interests in the role of social services, the arts, and education are invited to attend. The musical program begins at 3:30.

Looking further ahead, the Institute will offer events focusing specifically on social services (Feb. 11), the arts (March 11), and education (April 15). A capstone gathering, allowing us to celebrate even as we plan for future years, is scheduled for May 13.

Kendal seeks through this initiative to widen opportunities for seniors to contribute to the vitality of Licking County. Because that is a goal we can all applaud, we hope there will be wide community interest and participation in this project.

Reed Browning is a resident of the Kendal at Granville retirement community.