Board Member Supports Masonicare as a Mason, Doctor, and Donor

As one of the most respected radiologists in Connecticut, Dr. Sherwin Borsuk has spent his life serving patients and the Greater Meriden community. In addition to his exemplary medical career, Dr. Borsuk is a Trustee of Masonicare and serves as Chair of its Organizational Excellence Committee. He has also been a Mason for the past thirty years. “In the late 1980s, I was raised a Mason by my wonderful friend and medical colleague, Dr. Matthew Campione,” recalls Dr. Borsuk. “Upon joining Meridian Lodge No. 77, I became part of a brotherhood that deepened my understanding of what it means to be of service and give to others.”

His remarkable life, both as a tireless medical professional and dedicated Mason, gives Dr. Borsuk a valuable perspective about Masonicare and helps explain why he gives so generously each year to the Masonicare Annual Appeal. “As a physician, my experience, of course, has always been healthcare related,” remarks Dr. Borsuk. “So I understand why it’s vitally important that Masonicare offers services not only to older adults when they are ill, but also provides quality care for residents and patients who are dealing with chronic conditions or the everyday challenges of aging, which happen to us all.”

Dr. Borsuk thoughtfully recalls, “I personally understand the value Masonicare provides to residents and families. My mother was one of the first residents of Masonicare’s Pond Ridge Assisted Living facility after she suddenly became paraplegic and needed full-time assistance. “As a physician, I see the gap between government reimbursement and the real cost of healthcare. Our mission is to fill that gap.”
Your Dollars at Work

Tower Garden Yields Healthy Food, Fond Memories at MHC

Thanks to your donations to the Annual Appeal, the new hydroponic tower garden at the Masonicare Health Center provides a sensory experience for residents, with its bright colors, earthy smells, and tactile sensations acting as a touchpoint for memory recall.

“Gardening can spark residents’ memories about something they enjoyed from their younger days or even their more recent years before they moved in,” Michele Ackerman, Director of Nursing, said. “And the process of gardening itself results in a sense of accomplishment for residents.”

These fond memories of meaningful life events also provide an opportunity for residents and staff members to form a bond around common experiences.

“Residents and staff are able to interact around something that’s familiar to most people,” Ackerman said. “Either they had a houseplant or cut flowers, or they had an actual garden or wished they had a garden. It does bring back fond memories, and it’s nice for reminiscing.”

By engaging with an indoor garden, rather than a traditional one, residents are able to enjoy these experiences without compromising their safety. All of the plants are carefully selected, and they are grown through seed pods and an internal watering system, without the use of any harmful chemicals. Everything is safe to eat, and this past winter, residents were able to enjoy a salad grown, harvested, and tossed with their own hands.

Even beyond safety, the tower garden helps residents maintain their autonomy, balancing independence and social interaction.

“Because the garden is in the social area, some of the residents will go up to it and pick things on their own. Others will do it in a group setting, like when they harvested the salad,” Ackerman said. “It allows residents to come and go as they see fit. So if someone doesn’t feel comfortable in a group activity, it doesn’t require them to be a part of it, while still allowing them to enjoy what the garden has to offer.”

Resident Joan Desopo (left) and Director of Nursing, Michele Ackerman (right), enjoy the tower garden.

The tower garden’s second harvest includes arugula, bok choy, and tomatoes.
For Betsee Osborn, volunteering is a way of life. Even before she and her husband Dick moved from Fairfield, Connecticut to Masonicare at Ashlar Village in 2012, Betsee has always been someone who raises her hand when help is needed.

“Even though raising our five children kept me plenty busy, I always found time to volunteer. I especially loved working in local politics because I believe this is where we see the best of our democracy in action. This volunteering instinct came from my parents, who were very active in our church and fundraising for local hospitals. My grandmother was a real groundbreaker in that she started her own welfare agency to help families in need. So, a charitable spirit was passed down to me from all of them.”

When Betsee and Dick arrived at Masonicare at Ashlar Village they had big dreams for their wonderful new life. Unfortunately, however, Dick was diagnosed with esophageal cancer and needed all kinds of care the year after they moved here.

“Frankly, I would have been lost if we hadn’t been living at Ashlar Village,” Betsee remembers. “I received so much support and guidance from the staff on everything from medical issues to rehabilitation to insurance matters. Before he passed in 2013, Dick was in and out of the Masonicare Health Center, and we had Masonicare Home Health and Hospice come here to us in our apartment. Since I was new to Ashlar Village, I didn’t know much about The Masonic Charity Foundation and how it supports many of the programs and services at Masonicare Health Center. I didn’t know how much we were benefiting from the Foundation, but I understand now that we did benefit.”

“The Annual Appeal supports so many wonderful things at Masonicare Health Center, such as strolling musicians and newspaper subscriptions that brighten the days of our long-term care residents,” observes Betsee. “My sister-in-law lives at Masonicare Health Center, and The Foundation funds an

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As a son, I was so grateful for the wonderful staff and the knowledge that my mother had access to all kinds of healthcare right on the Masonicare campus. At the time, I was already on the board of directors and was proud of our mission, but my personal experience cemented for me just how important it is that we support healthcare services that meet people where they are.”

“I’ve also learned through my medical practice and serving on many governing committees at Masonicare that, unfortunately, a gap exists between what the government pays in reimbursement for care and what it actually takes to provide care to those who need it. Often, patients must rely on the goodwill of donors to make up for this lack of funding. Charitable contributions can make a world of difference. Giving to the Masonicare Annual Appeal means that instead of a ‘bare bones’ kind of service, we are able to provide a greater quality of life and fulfillment to residents and patients. I am so proud to be part of an organization and a brotherhood that is devoted to this higher standard of compassion and excellence.”

Dr. Borsuk goes on to reflect, “I came to Meriden many years ago from New York City. In an anonymous big city, it’s easy to think that someone else will give, or someone else will help support residents or patients in need. Here at Masonicare, we’re different. We know and care for each other. Many of my patients and friends now reside at Masonicare. In a small community like ours, it’s up to us to fill the gap. Giving to the Masonicare Annual Appeal is the perfect way to support our extraordinary healthcare continuum and make sure our friends and neighbors live with the dignity and quality of life they deserve.”

Osborn

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out-trip program that escorts her to medical appointments out in the community.”

“In addition,” Betsee says, “The Foundation helps ensure that residents in need of financial assistance can continue to live at Masonicare even if the unexpected happens. Above all, I feel confident about giving because everything is transparent, and all the funds go directly to Masonicare residents and patients.”

With this kind of enthusiasm and commitment, it’s no wonder Betsee has been named Chair of The Foundation’s Annual Appeal drive for Ashlar Village residents this coming fall. This role is added to work as an Ashlar Village Op Shop volunteer and helping out the Ashlar Village Administration. Yet, Betsee doesn’t seem to mind. “My favorite psalm is the one that goes: ‘Here am I, Lord. I come to do your will.’ It’s something I learned from my parents and have passed on to my children. Here am I. And I’m so lucky that I can be!”