

Caregiving: Communication Matters

by Michelle Haub, Community Programs Leader

For the third article in our series highlighting November as National Caregiver Month, communication is the goal. We all use communication in some form or fashion numerous times a day. This communication might be made with our hands, face, spoken words or sounds, writing and typing, pictures, and/or emojis. We also need to be able to understand and interpret these expressions from others in order to have true communication. What happens, though, when part of this system is challenged by speech, language, hearing, or cognitive difficulties? This article provides supports for these changes.

A key principle of effective communication is connectedness. We are able to share our thoughts, ideas, fears, needs, and wants with others and listen to theirs. When we are heard and understood, and we, in turn, hear and understand our loved ones, we feel confident and more comfortable in these relationships.

What can we do to help increase the likelihood of these positive interactions? The first step is to examine the environment to maximize input. The list on page 2 provides the key environmental components and issues to consider, especially if your loved one has difficulties with communication or cognition.

Once the environment is ideal for communication, then we need to consider *how* we communicate. Think about non-verbal communication first. Get on the same level as your loved one (if he/she is in a wheelchair, sit beside), make eye contact, and listen with your heart. It can be challenging as a caregiver to focus on these details when you have so many other demands for your attention (i.e. medication, safety, fatigue, daily tasks); however, these details set the tone for interactions. Additionally, when the ability to process and understand language becomes more

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Environmental Considerations to Optimize Communication

- ☐ Lighting: Is the space well lit? Is the sun shining in his/her eyes? Is he/she wearing glasses? Are there shadows that confuse or distort one's perceptions (for example a coat rack in a corner may be perceived as person)?
- ☐ Sound: Limit distractions like a loud TV or music playing. Is he/she wearing hearing aids and are they working?
- ☐ Visual Clutter: Can he/she see what you are sharing, or are there stacks of papers or other items that interfere with visibility? Are there too many busy pictures on the walls?
- ☐ Temperature: Is the environment too hot or cold so that one is unable to fully focus on communication?
- ☐ Personal Comfort: Is the person seated in a comfortable manner? Is he/she hungry or thirsty? Does he/she need to use the restroom? Are his/her clothing items comfortable? Is he/she in pain? It is hard to focus when uncomfortable.

COMMUNICATION, from page 1

challenged, these non-verbal actions bring feelings of safety, security, and comfort to your loved one. Below are suggestions for improving communication with an individual who has a neurological deficit such as dementia.

~ *Stay calm and give yourself grace*—you don't have to be perfect to show you care. Be patient with yourself and your loved one.

~ *Use gestures or show what you mean to improve understanding.*

For example, if assisting with teeth brushing, model or even brush your teeth at the same time.

~ *Use short sentences, questions and/or instructions:* Tell him/her what to do rather than what not to do. For example say "Please turn down the TV" rather than "Please don't turn up the TV."

~ *Use a gentle, audible voice with positive uplift.* Consider how the tone of voice affects how one feels and perceives language.

~ *Use writing, pictures, and simple gestures* as much as possible with spoken words. To help supplement verbal information and assist with memory (recall), write down important details. This increases understanding and enables one to process and even remember better. If hearing or memory are challenged, text and pictures provide another form of input and increase connection and understanding. Gesturing is mentioned again as it is such a strong partner to speech.

~ *Validate your partner:* Engage with your loved one where he/she is now. BE with him/her in the moment. When cognitive challenges increase, one's recall or orientation does not have to be accurate. For example, if he/she is living in a memory of childhood, engage. Ask questions about emotions and activities rather than trying to orient to the current environment. His/her brain may not have the capacity for processing the present.

The above topics all help to encourage person-centered communication and set the tone for interactions. Realize that there are times when we can't establish all of those principles in settings or interactions, and that is part of life. However, keeping them in mind and practicing them is what helps us grow.

The next part of communication is *what* we say to our loved one. It is important to use specific language. These suggestions can help improve understanding.

~ *Ask simple questions:* "Would you like a cookie or a donut?"

~ *Provide gentle instructions with context:* "It's time for the service to start; I'll walk with you to church."

~ *Provide one question or direction at a time.*

~ *Pause:* Count to yourself for five to 10 seconds to allow your partner time to process and respond.

~ *Repeat:* Try to repeat verbatim rather than changing the wording.

~ *Adjust:* If he/she persists with difficulties responding, use visuals or yes/no questions. As cognitive challenges advance, making decisions and choices are more overwhelming and confusing.

Therefore, if one is not able to answer a binary choice (cookie or donut), then present both items for seeing, smelling, touching to make the choice. Additionally, you could ask “Would you like a donut?” which may be easier to answer with a yes/no.

Daily communication between the caregiver and the person with a disability is fluid, so keep swimming and adjust your stroke for different environments. Try evaluating the items discussed here over time. If something doesn’t “work” one time, try again later. No two experiences are going to be exactly the same, so keep trying.

Other areas of communication to address are caregiving from afar and relationships with others (other family members, friends). In regard to caregiving from a distance, it is critical to establish connections with other local people who are involved with your loved one. For example, neighbors, doctors, and church members may have more frequent contact with your loved one. Additionally, consider all of the items for improved communication noted earlier in this

article. When engaged in phone or video conversations, ensure your loved one has materials needed to take notes of the conversations and ask him/her to read it back to you. Too often, caregivers will call with multiple questions or instructions, and the loved one isn’t able to remember all the details or misunderstand a date, time, or other important detail. By asking one to take notes, you are empowering your loved one to be more independent, confident, and engaged.

Lastly, model the positive communication strategies discussed here to friends and social groups. This can help alleviate some of their worries or insecurities of how to communicate with your loved one with a communication or cognitive difficulty. Leading by example is powerful in every part of life. *Your loved one is still the person you have known and loved; however, his/her ability to interpret the world and react to it may have changed. Join him or her in the moment and remember, **keep heart at the center of communication.***

cheers to
90
years

DON & MARY DIBBLE

Invite you to Celebrate with them

FRIDAY NOV 28 2 TO 4 PM

STOP BY THE MEADOWLARK
COMMUNITY ROOM AND
WISH THESE YOUNGSTERS
A HAPPY 90TH BIRTHDAY!

Lite apps and cake will be provided
All are welcome!

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE

Meadowlark
HOLIDAY CLASSIC

DECEMBER 3rd AT 3:00 PM

Refreshments & Holiday Entertainment

MEADOWLARK HILLS
PRAIRIE STAR EVENT CENTER

Call 785-323-3820 or sign up at the Prairie
Star host stand to reserve your seats!

RSVP Required!

Hosted By:
THE TRUST
COMPANY

Veteran’s Day Quiz Answers! Congrats to **DAVID FRITCHEN** for correctly answering the quiz questions! Please visit the Hospitality Desk to claim your prize. **1. Where was the first Veteran’s Day Parade?** *Emporia, Kan., has been recognized as having the first Veterans Day event in 1953. In 2003, Congress passed a resolution declaring Emporia, Kan. to be the founding city of Veterans Day.* **2. Who was the US President to sign into law the bill declaring 11-11 to be Veterans Day?** *President Dwight D. Eisenhower, also from Kansas, signed the bill into law on May 26, 1954.* **3. What is the significance of “11-11-11?”** *WWI officially ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918.* **4. What was the original name for the 11-11-11 day?** *Armistice Day.*

EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Hospitality Desk: Thanksgiving Day

The Hospitality Desk will be open from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day.

Message from the Outdoor Committee

It is getting close to Christmas. If you are looking for a healthy and affordable gift, consider buying a cute teddy bear-shaped bottle filled with our extra special Meadowlark honey. They are only \$6.45 each. Inquire at the Hospitality Desk!

Additional note from resident Sue Hunt: Meadowlark has bee hives on campus! They are located in the south meadow near Kimball Avenue. These hives are maintained and harvested by Valor Honey.

Medicare Open Enrollment

Now to Dec. 7, 2025

It's time to review your Medicare coverage! Some insurance companies are dropping Medicare Advantage plans this year, so be sure to read any mail from your provider carefully. Dropped plans will roll into Original Medicare, but you may need to add Part D or a supplemental plan.

Meadowlark's Finance Team and resident SHICK volunteer, James Beck, are available to help you navigate changes. Check Beck's availability in the Blue Book at the Hospitality Desk to schedule a time.

Heart Strings Band

Friday, Nov. 21, at 7 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 21, at 7 p.m., in the Event Center, Meadowlark welcomes back the Heartstrings Band! Joe and Kathy Hopeck are a husband/wife duo who have been performing in Topeka, KC, Manhattan, and Wichita areas for the last 10+ years. They play a variety of songs from the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, including favorites from the Beatles, Elvis, Eagles, Jimmy Buffet, and many other artists.

Celebration of Life: Ron Janasek

We honor the life of Dr. Ronald E. Janasek, a beloved member of our community, who passed away on Nov. 12, 2025, at the age of 86. Ron will be remembered for his kindness, steadfast integrity, and deep love for his family.

The family will greet friends during a visitation

Friday, Nov. 21, from 6 to 7:30 p.m., at Yorgensen-Meloan-Londeen Funeral Home in Manhattan.

A Celebration of Life service is planned for Saturday, Nov. 22, at 10:30 a.m. at First United Methodist Church in Manhattan, led by Courtney Fellers. Meadowlark residents are invited to join the family for coffee and cookies from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22, in the Community Room at Meadowlark.

Memorial contributions in Ron's honor may be made to the Good Shepherd Hospice House, Meadowlark Foundation's Good Samaritan Fund, or First United Methodist Church.

KSU Football Watch Party

Saturday, Nov. 22, at 3 p.m.

Join us on Saturday, Nov. 22, at 3 p.m. in the Kansas Room, Prairie Star Restaurant Pub, and Event Center as our K-State Wildcats take on the Utah Utes. Go Cats!

Worship Services

Sunday, Nov. 23, at 10 & 11 a.m.

Join Rev. Melanie Nord, Spiritual Life Leader, for worship at 10 a.m. or 11 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 23, in the Community Room/Chapel. This week, Melanie will explore Psalm 86.

All are welcome to enjoy coffee and fellowship before or after worship in the lobby between 9:30 a.m. and 12 p.m.

Creative Arts Therapy Group

Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 2 p.m.

Drama games, music, and art activities are all great ways to exercise your brain, learn new art forms, and connect with others. A Creative Arts Therapy Group will meet in the Community Room from 2 to 3:15 p.m. every Tuesday through Dec. 2.

Registration is not required. If you have questions, please contact drama therapy graduate student Alex at agmcdonald@ksu.edu or Katie and Michelle at (785) 323-3899.

Piano Music with Barbara Rees

Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 3:30 p.m.

Join in the Flint Hills Room on Tuesday, Nov. 25, at 3:30 p.m., as Barbara Rees performs music from the 1930s and '40s on the piano!

EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

KSU Football Watch Party

Saturday, Nov. 29, at TBD

Join us on Saturday, Nov. 29, in the Kansas Room, Prairie Star Restaurant Pub, and Event Center as our K-State Wildcats take on the Colorado Buffaloes. The time of the game is TBD. Go Cats!

Meadowlark Travelers Meeting

Monday, Dec. 1, at 10:30 a.m.

If you've registered to join the Meadowlark Travelers for the "Christmas in the City" adventure in December, plan to attend a meeting on Monday, Dec. 1, following the monthly Town Meeting. The meeting will begin at approximately 10:30 a.m. in the Bison Room. We'll review the itinerary and share information about the performances we'll see and the attractions we'll visit. Trip dates are Wednesday through Friday, Dec. 17-19.

If you paid a deposit of \$150, but have not paid the balance of the trip fee, the second payment is

now due. The balance for single occupancy is \$872; the balance for double occupancy is \$648. Please pay by check or credit card. Residents may add the total trip fee or payment for the balance to their next monthly statements. Please contact Monte Spiller, Resident Services Leader, at (785) 323-3801 to submit payment or with any questions.

Blue Christmas Service

Tuesday, Dec. 9, at 6:30 p.m.

This time of year can be overwhelming or bittersweet when you're not exactly filled with Christmas joy! Maybe you're missing a loved one, coping with a big life change, living with a tough diagnosis, or experiencing the winter doldrums? All are welcome to join Linda Montgomery, Social Worker, and Melanie Nord, Spiritual Life Leader, in a service that will provide tips and tricks for acknowledging and coping with the "winter blues" through readings, songs, and a practical video.

Art Engagement *from the* Beach Museum of Art



Jeff Mataruso (United States, born 1967), Title unknown, 1998
Oil on canvas, KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of
Richard Olson, 2011.209

As you look at this painting of a pastureland scene, notice where your eye begins, and where it moves to next. The artist may use shape, color, and line to guide you around a composition. The repetition of a **shape** becomes a motif that creates a visual rhythm. The distance between the placement of the motif sets the tempo in which you move through the composition. The use of bright, broken **color** will move your eye from spot to spot, while smooth strokes of calm tones will hold your gaze. **Lines** may also lead your eye in a certain direction. Do you observe any of these techniques being employed? Where is the artist using them?

RESTAURANT **SPECIALS**

Sunday, Nov. 23	Sunday Brunch Brunch Menu available from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	\$14 Dinner BBQ Meatballs Scalloped Potatoes Roasted Broccoli
Monday, Nov. 24	\$11 Lunch Baked Fish Tacos Cilantro Lime Rice	\$17 Dinner BBQ Ribs Ranch-Style Corn on the Cob Baked Bean Cornbread Casserole
Tuesday, Nov. 25	\$11 Lunch White Chicken Chili Cornbread	\$15 Dinner Beef & Italian Sausage Lasagna Garlic Bread Caesar Salad
Wednesday, Nov. 26	\$11 Lunch Meatloaf Sandwich Pub Chips	\$15 Dinner Chicken Cordon Bleu Rice Pilaf Roasted Broccoli
Thursday, Nov. 27	\$25 Thanksgiving Lunch <i>Reservations required.</i>	\$10 Box Dinner Delivery <i>Advance sign-up required.</i> <i>Please register at the Hospitality Desk.</i>
Friday, Nov. 28	\$11 Lunch Potato Bar	\$26 Dinner Oyster Rockefeller Garlic Parmesan Pasta Grilled Asparagus
Saturday, Nov. 29	\$13 Lunch Clam Chowder <i>served in Bread Bowl</i> Caesar Salad	\$11 Dinner Boneless Wings Tator Tots Carrots & Celery Sticks

Weekly Opportunities Calendar Nov. 23 to Nov. 29

Sunday • Nov. 23 *Put your trash at the curb!*

8:45 a.m. ~ Transport to College Ave UMC, ME
9:30 a.m. ~ Sunday Morning Fellowship, ME
10:00 a.m. ~ Transport to College Ave UMC, ME
10:00 a.m. ~ Worship Service, CR
10:30 a.m. ~ Transportation to FUMC, ME
11:00 a.m. ~ Worship Service, CR

Monday • Nov. 24 *Trash pick-up*

9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, CR/**1960**
9:30 a.m. ~ Memory Care Partners Group, **STM**
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, CR/**1960**
11:00 a.m. ~ Rock Steady Boxing, **PF**
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, CR/**1960**
1:00 p.m. ~ Parkinson's Exercise Class, CR/**1960**
1:30 p.m. ~ God Talk, KSU CL
2:00 p.m. ~ Tai Chi, **1960 only**
4:15 p.m. ~ Hable Espanol, FHR
7:00 p.m. ~ Community Bingo, CR

Tuesday • Nov. 25

10:00 a.m. ~ ARTful Memories, BR
10:00 a.m. ~ Mat Yoga, KSU CL
10:30 a.m. ~ Steady Yourself, CR/**1960**
11:15 a.m. ~ Chair Yoga, CR/**1960**
2:00 p.m. ~ 10-Point Pitch Group, GR
2:00 p.m. ~ Social Circles, PS
2:00 p.m. ~ Water Media Painting, KSU CL
3:00 p.m. ~ Coffee Corner, EC
3:30 p.m. ~ Piano Music with Barbara Rees, FHR

Wednesday • Nov. 26

9:00 a.m. ~ Messenger Team, KSU CL
9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, CR/**1960**
10:00 a.m. ~ Walmart/Dillons Shopping Trip, ME
10:00 a.m. ~ Memory Care Partners Group, FHR
10:00 a.m. ~ Memory Café, KSU CL
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, CR/**1960**
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, CR/**1960**
2:00 p.m. ~ Tai Chi, **1960 only**
3:00 p.m. ~ Rock Steady Boxing, CR
3:00 p.m. ~ Sing-a-long, FHR
4:00 p.m. ~ 4th Floor Social, FHR

Thursday • Nov. 27 **HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

10:30 a.m. ~ Steady Yourself, **1960 only**
11:15 a.m. ~ Chair Yoga, **1960 only**
1:00 p.m. ~ Parkinson's Exercise Class, **1960 only**

Friday • Nov. 28

9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, **1960 only**
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, **1960 only**
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, **1960 only**
2:00 p.m. ~ Don & Mary Dibble 90th Birthday, CR
2:30 p.m. ~ Fanny & Furby, KR

Saturday • Nov. 29

9:00 a.m. ~ Tai Chi, **1960 only**
9:30 a.m. ~ Band Bust Exercise Class, **1960 only**
TBD ~ KSU Watch Party, PS

Room Abbreviations

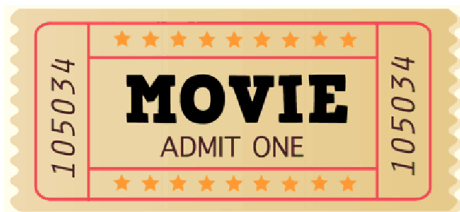
1960 , TV Channel 1960	ME, Main Entrance
BR, Bison Room	MM , 120 Scenic Drive
CR, Community Room	MR, Manhattan Room
CY, Courtyard	PF , Peakform Wellness Center
EC, Event Center	PR, Patriot Room
FHR, Flint Hills Room	PS, Prairie Star Restaurant
GC, Grosh Cinema	STM , St. Thomas More Church
KR, Kansas Room	VBL, Verna Belle's Lounge
KSU CL, KSU Classroom	WPL , Wamego Public Library



Gifts benefiting the Good Samaritan Fund, Helping Hands Fund, Meadowlark Parkinson's Program, and Purpose in Motion capital campaign were received by Meadowlark Foundation during the month of October.

Memory of

Mary Lou Basham
Donna Dotts
John Selfridge
Billy Swofford
Heinz Wallace



GROSH CINEMA SHOWTIMES

MONDAY TO SATURDAY 1:00 P.M. / 4:00 P.M. / 7:00 P.M.
SUNDAY 2:00 P.M. / 6:00 P.M.

SUNDAY: Nov. 23

RESIDENT REQUEST

THE WAY WE WERE (1973) PG, 1 hr. 58 min. *Period Drama, Romance*

Cast: Barbara Streisand, Robert Redford, & Bradford Dillman

During post-WWII McCarthyism, a diametrically opposed couple come together only to find that genuine friendship and physical attraction is not enough to overcome fundamental societal beliefs.

MONDAY: Nov. 24

RESIDENT REQUEST

HAMILTON (2020) PG-13, 2 hr. 40 min. *Historical Epic, Musical*

Cast: Daveed Diggs, Renee Elise Goldsberry, & Jonathan Groff

The real life of one of America's foremost founding fathers and first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Captured live on Broadway from the Richard Rodgers Theater with the original Broadway cast.

TUESDAY: Nov. 25

LIZ & DICK (2012) TV-14, 1 hr. 28 min. *Biography, Drama, Romance*

Cast: Lindsay Lohan, Grant Bowler, & Theresa Russell

The torrid relationship between Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton.

WEDNESDAY: Nov. 26

TURNER & HOOCH (1989) PG, 1 hr. 37 min. *Buddy Cop, Comedy*

Cast: Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, & Craig T. Nelson

A detective must adopt a rambunctious dog in order to help him find a killer.

THURSDAY: Nov. 27

YOU'VE GOT MAIL (1998) PG, 1 hr. 59 min. *Romantic Comedy, Feel-Good*

Cast: Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan, & Greg Kinnear

Book superstore magnate Joe Fox and independent book shop owner Kathleen Kelly fall in love in the anonymity of the Internet, both blissfully unaware that he's trying to put her out of business.

FRIDAY: Nov. 28

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET (1994) PG, 1 hr. 54 min. *Holiday, Family*

Cast: Richard Attenborough, Elizabeth Perkins, & Dylan McDermott

A lawyer and a little girl must prove that a man claiming to be Santa Claus is the real thing.

SATURDAY: Nov. 29

RESIDENT REQUEST

GO TELL THE SPARTANS (1978) R for violence, gore, & language 1 hr. 54 min. *Drama, War*

Cast: Burt Lancaster, Craig Wasson, & Jonathan Goldsmith

During the early 1960s, U.S. military advisers in South Vietnam discover the same challenges that plagued the French army in Indochina 10 years prior.