A GRAND Evening

Friends of Saint Simeon’s enjoyed a splendid evening at the Polo Grill on Sunday, March 20 called “A Grand Evening,” a special fundraiser in which patrons donated “a grand” to go towards new beds in the Memory Center.

Chef Robert Merrifield, Trustee, Saint Simeon’s Foundation, and his team at The Polo Grill prepared a splendid meal for the attendees. The seven-course menu centered on a Biblical-theme and included items such as “Loaves and Fishes” Salad with Citrus Cured Arctic Char, Tenderloin Medallions “Trinity” with steaks marinated in Mushroom Jus, Oscar, and Three Peppercorn Melange, and a Chocolate Gran Marnier “Sunday Sundae.” Each course was accompanied by a specially paired wine from Grgich Hills Estate.

The evening opened with remarks from Will...

Continued on page 7
“Ernie Pettie took Resident Bob Snow to see former Wellness employee Ashton Phillips’ graduation from the Tulsa Fire Department Training Academy. This was definitely ‘above and beyond’ the responsibilities of a Floor Tech. Bob had been talking to Ernie, knowing that Ernie is a retired firefighter himself, and they shared many conversations about the training and graduation event. It was extremely important to Bob to show support for Ashton and congratulate him on his accomplishment. This provided an untold amount of pleasure and self-esteem for Bob, to interact with Ashton ‘man-to-man,’ a provider of good will rather than a beneficiary.” —Mary Nole, Wellness Center Director

“I came to work at Saint Simeon’s in 2014 after I retired from the Tulsa Fire Department with 30 years of service. From driving the big fire trucks, riding as Captain when needed, fighting fires, assisting other companies, shopping and cooking the meals, yard work, cleaning the truck and station – I loved it all. I especially enjoyed the comradery of my co-workers. We worked 24 hours straight and then were off for two days. It became our home away from home.

I was a member of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team. After the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, I was one of the people sent to debrief the firefighters who had been involved. They had to see some things that they sometimes couldn’t let go. We also helped civilians. It was important that everyone be able to tell their story about what they had seen and how it affected them. It was important that they hear from us that what they were feeling was perfectly normal and that if they had any kind of problems, we were there to get them the help they needed.

I was born in a little place called Buford Colony, not far from Prattville, which is south of Sand Springs. Buford Colony was established in 1923, built by Blacks for Blacks. In fact, Oklahoma had more all-Black towns than any other state. Stella Reynolds, who retired recently from Saint Simeon’s, also grew up there. We both attended the all Black Booker T. Washington School (1st through 12th grades) in Sand Springs until the schools were integrated and it was closed.

I have four brothers and two sisters, and I was exactly in the middle. I have two older
brothers and one older sister. I have two younger brothers and one younger sister. My mom, Lula Pettie, was a housewife, and my dad, Frank Pettie, worked in a janitorial business. When I was in the 9th grade, my family moved to Los Angeles, and I graduated from the Los Angeles Manual Arts High School.

When I got out of high school, I enlisted in the Navy – both my dad and one brother had been in the Navy. I got to travel all over the Western hemisphere! It was a great experience for the four years I served. After getting out of the Navy, I came back to Tulsa on my way to New Orleans where I planned to become a longshoreman. I would ship out from there and see the other half of the world – the Eastern hemisphere! That is what I would have done, but I lost my wallet. It had my Longshoreman license in it. Instead, I brought my parents to Tulsa, which was home for us, and I ended up becoming a fireman with the Tulsa Fire Department. In the Navy, I was trained to fight shipboard fires and achieved that rating. Both the military and the fire department are para-military organizations, and there is a clear chain of command. There are designated positions/officers (captains, chiefs, etc.) and even divisions. It was a good match for me.

Now I'm a floor tech at Saint Simeon's, and I love my job. I get to meet a lot of people. Also, being a fireman is all about solving problems, and that's also what we do here. When something comes up, we can pretty much take care of it.

I've been married to my wife, Olaura, for 38 years. She works as a customer service rep. We have three children. Earnest II and his twin sister, Shalesha, both graduated from Central High School. He took Japanese in school even though I told him he should take Spanish. He now works for Fusion TV, a Spanish news and satire channel in LA. Shalesha works for EMSA. Our youngest, Elliott, lives in Bedford, Texas and works for eBay. He has given us our two grandchildren, Roman (4 years old) and Viveen (2 years old).

We have a home in north Tulsa, just five minutes from here. I also live near my last fire station. Since the fire department is a first responder, we used to make runs to Saint Simeon's all the time. Sometimes we would even get here before EMSA.

I also have a second job. In the evenings, I work for Fire Watch at the BOK Center. Sometimes, because of the nature of the event or performance there, they have to temporarily shut down the alarm system. We become the alarm system! As an extra benefit, I get in free. That means that I get paid to see everybody from Cher to Paul McCartney. I'll soon be seeing James Taylor, one of my favorites, and Barry Manilow.

I am working most of the time with my two jobs, so I don't have a lot of free time. We do like to visit our grandkids. I enjoy doing crossword puzzles and Sudoku. The Kansas City Chiefs are my favorite football team. The OKC Thunder is my favorite basketball team. Yes, I will be seeing the Thunder play again for free the next time they are at the BOK Center!
Dear Residents, Families, and Friends of Saint Simeon’s

Have you ever found yourself worrying about something that you thought was happening or was going to happen, but turned out to be only in your mind? Perhaps you thought someone was angry with you. You even had an entire conversation in your head defending what you said or did. Later, you discover, there never was a problem. As far as the other person was concerned, everything had always been just fine! Or perhaps you turned in a project to your boss, professor, or other person with responsibility for receiving it. You don’t hear anything back from them in the time you expected. Then the whole scenario starts with anxiety and second guessing your efforts. By the time you’ve gone through every angle, you are convinced that the person hated what you turned in and you are going to be fired, flunk the class, be publicly ridiculed … the list goes on! Of course, you hear from the person, and they thought your work was excellent!

If you have been through this – congratulations! You’re a normal human being. If you’ve never done anything like this – congratulations! You’re an enlightened being and should be writing this article instead of me! The truth is, most of us are people with many, many problems that never happened. The real problem is that when we create these “problems” for ourselves, we add to the anxiety, fear, and pain to our lives. We waste so much emotional and psychological energy on that which isn’t real.

Our minds are constantly creating these scenarios. They are dramas that take us away from our lives in the present moment to an illusory life in the future or in the past. They siphon off our creative energy that is appropriately used and much better enjoyed in the here and now! Don’t be swept away by mind dramas. The solution is to stay grounded in the present. As you discover that you are being or have been carried away by your mind, ask yourself a simple question: “How am I feeling right now?” This does two things. It brings you immediately into the present, and it focuses your attention on your feelings. You now are aware of how you feel, not simply carried away your feelings. Since you may be stopping a speeding train, it might be difficult to unhook yourself from the negative feelings you have generated. It’s all right. Just experience the feeling alone, not associated with any drama, and it will begin to dissipate. Simply act as an observer of the feeling.

Jesus said, “Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit.” (Luke 12:35) This and many other sayings of Jesus point to our need to be more aware and present in our daily lives. By doing so, we can remove much of that which distracts us from awareness of ourselves and God’s presence in our lives. We can remove much negativity from our thoughts and feelings which cloud our understanding and deplete our creativity. God will give us all we need, but … we do have to show up!

Blessings to you,
Fr. Bill Holly †
"Only if we understand can we care.  
Only if we care will we help.  
Only if we help shall they be saved."
— Jane Goodall

Isn’t it wonderful when our beloved state of Oklahoma excels at something!

Of course we excel at sports — football and basketball, for example. No surprises there. For a state with our small population, we also have a higher number of world-class artists, entertainers, composers, writers, etc.

April issue of “Tulsa Pets Magazine” - a magazine that Tulsa is certainly proud of! Marilyn King, the publisher, is a long-time friend of Saint Simeon’s. Simone I was on the cover of her very first issue of the magazine (January 2007), and several years later, Simone II also was a “cover girl”. Are you someone who didn’t know that Simone was Saint Simeon’s second Golden Retriever? We have a beautiful framed photograph of the two of them in the hall across from the Gazebo Courtyard.

The March/April issue of “Tulsa Pets” has a wonderful article highlighting the Kirkpatrick Foundation’s recent publication, The Oklahoma Animal Study. It is an extensive three-year research document attempting to answer the question: “What is the condition of animals in Oklahoma?” They have sections on Companion Animals, Livestock, Equines, Wildlife, Exotics, and Laboratory & Research Animals. Each section concludes with recommendations, and there are 12 top overall recommendations for 2016 and the foreseeable future. As far as is known, Oklahoma is the first state to undertake such an effort! This study is a first step toward their goal “to make Oklahoma the safest and most humane place to be an animal by the year 2032.” The photographs are breathtaking, and the book is FREE!

Here’s something that Oklahoma is the first at that you may not know. I found this out when I read the March/

Cover of the book The Oklahoma Animal Study.

Available online: kirkpatrickfoundation.com
In print by request: office@kirkpatrickfoundation.com
Simone Turns 7

Our beautiful Simone, the Golden Retriever "Chief Executive Cuddler" of Saint Simeon's, had her 7th birthday on April 1! We celebrated by throwing her a big party, like we do every year!

The party was complete with a cake both for humans and a separate cake for Simone! Simone's cake was made by staff members and Memory Center Residents and filled with things dogs love, like peanut butter, carrots, dog treats, and more!

The partygoers enjoyed hearing the story of Simone I and Simone II from Kathy Hinkle, Simone's "Mom." Partygoers were encouraged to bring dog food to be donated to the dogs of the homeless, since Simone's birthday wish is always to help dogs in need. Each Monday, Saint Simeon's Residents gather in the Wellness Center to bag 50 pound bags of dog food into smaller baggies to be given to the homeless population of Tulsa and their dogs. Altogether, we collected 150 pounds of dog food at Simone's party!

Thanks to everyone who attended!

Easter Memories

Our Residents were greeted on Easter with visits from the Easter Bunny! Many of them also enjoyed Father Holly's Easter service in the Chapel.

Attention Veterans!

The American Red Cross, in cooperation with the Library of Congress, is bringing the Veterans History Project to Saint Simeon's. Veterans' stories will be recorded and kept as historical documents at the Library of Congress. And, each veteran who makes a recording will receive a free commemorative DVD to keep.

An interview team will be here MAY 16, 2016 to film vets who would like to share their stories. It does not matter when or where or for how long someone served, they would like to hear about your life and your service.

This opportunity is available for vets who reside at Saint Simeon's or vets who are friends or family members. Vets needs to be able to be interviewed for at least 30 minutes. For more information, or to make an appointment, please contact Chris Gruszczki at 918-794-1940 or cgruszczki@saintsimeons.org.
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...Continued from page 1

Farrior, President, Saint Simeon's Foundation and a prayer by Father Bob Wickizer which focused on the idea that Saint Simeon's is a place that allows adult children to truly "honor (their) father and mother" (Ephesians 6:2). In total, the event raised $35,100. George Dotson, Saint Simeon's Home and Foundation Trustee, made remarks thanking Robert and Donna Merrifield and announcing that as a thank you, Saint Simeon's will be dedicating a willow oak tree on their behalf.

George Dotson closed the evening with these lovely sentiments: "Father Bob Wickizer said it best this evening, 'We want the best for our parents.' Our thanks to Robert and Donna Merrifield and the Polo Grill Staff for the perfect pairing: Saint Simeon's and the Polo Grill! It has been a Grand and memorable evening!"
Thank you, Volunteers!

Saint Simeon’s recognized our wonderful volunteers during a Volunteer Luncheon on April 8 at Philbrook Museum of Art. Prior to the luncheon, volunteers enjoyed a tour of the Philbrook’s exhibit “The Essence of Things.” Chief Curator Catherine Whitney hosted our volunteer group for the interesting tour.

Following the tour, the volunteers were thanked for their service through a luncheon at La Villa Restaurant. Our volunteers help enrich the lives of our Residents and the community each month through the following activities: helping with Resident parties and outings, Flora and Fauna activities, monthly Ladies Luncheons, bagging dog food for the dogs of the homeless, sing-a-longs in the Memory Center, and more.

We are so thankful for the extra joy each volunteer brings to our campus!

If you are interested in becoming a Saint Simeon’s Volunteer, please contact Lindsay Morris at 918-794-1945 or lmorris@saintsimeons.org.