When we were asked to lead this year’s Western Days event, we knew it would be eye-opening and exciting. Since the first Western Days in 1996, the event has grown to become not only an incredibly successful fundraising event for Saint Simeon’s, but quite a social event as well! This year, however…Wow! We had no idea how exciting it would be! Due to circumstances beyond our control, the committee and advisors had to completely re-imagine Western Days. We hoped to be celebrating Saint Simeon’s 60th anniversary live at the newly opened Cox Convention Center. Plans had been made; tours had been taken—we were planning the celebration of all celebrations! However, circumstances changed and thanks to the tireless work of many people, we were able to present a video tribute honoring Saint Simeon’s history, residents, heroes, and saints.

It was certainly a different Western Days, but thanks to your unwavering generosity and support, it was another huge success. Because of you, Saint Simeon’s has been able to grow and expand its mission into many facets of senior care—including world-class Alzheimer’s care and Parkinson’s support.

From the valued leadership of this year’s honorary chairs, Phyllis and George Dotson, to all the dedicated Western Days leadership team, Hilary Clark, Patron Chair, Melissa and Mac Stallcup, Advisory Chairs, to the entire Saint Simeon’s staff, we want to say thank you for all you’ve done for this year’s event and for Saint Simeon’s residents day-in and day-out.

God bless you all!

Beth and Scott Brown
2020 Western Days Chairs
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WINTER 2020
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MEMBER
I want to wish Saint Simeon’s congratulations and say Cheers to 60 years! Saint Simeon’s is an incredible Tulsa institution and has been home to lots of remarkable Tulsans who have done great things for our community. Saint Simeon’s is also a very special place for my own family. My granddad, former Tulsa Mayor, Bob LaFortune, has been on the Western Days committee for years, and my great uncle Buddy LaFortune, Bill LaFortune’s dad, lived there for years. My predecessor, Mayor Jim Hewgley, was also a Saint Simeon’s resident. And, of course, so many great Tulsans are involved with Saint Simeon’s like my dear friends, George and Phyllis Dotson, who have done so much to improve the high standard of excellence we’ve all come to associate with this special place.

I’m also reminded that when we began our initiative to make Tulsa a dementia-friendly city—the first in the state of Oklahoma—one of the first entities to host a training session was, of course, Saint Simeon’s.

You do so much for this community. You do so much for the folks who live at Saint Simeon’s and for their families. So, on behalf of all the citizens of Tulsa, I want to say thank you and congratulations on 60 incredible years! ■
I am proud to honor the great work of love and care that is the hallmark of Saint Simeon’s and I’m excited to offer my congratulations on 60 wonderful years!

The mission of Saint Simeon’s—our goal—is not just to be a place one lives until they go through the end-of-life transition. Everyone at Saint Simeon’s has worked hard to make it a place where we are giving residents an experience of life itself, and however they are able to participate, it’s a joyful and meaningful time in their life. It’s a time that enhances their presence and their being and quality of life.

So many in our diocese support the ministry we are doing at Saint Simeon’s because they see how important it is not just to the people who are there, but the ministry it provides to the families and also to those who give the care—the front line people. Those people who do the work are truly special. Every day, they go above and beyond in caring for and loving the folks who are our residents.

My thanks to all who generously support our work here at Saint Simeon’s. And a special thanks to those who gave during this uniquely different Western Days event. Despite the obstacles placed in our way, you still provided thoughtful gifts of love and financial support to help us continue our legacy of caring.

The Right Reverend Dr. Edward J. Konieczny, Former Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma and Chairman of Saint Simeon’s Boards of Trustees

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP ED

Those who watched the Western Days 2020 video were witness to a special treat: the presentation of a well-deserved honor to the Right Reverend Dr. Edward J. Konieczny—or as he’s known to so many, Bishop Ed.

Presented during a Western Days committee Zoom meeting and recorded for the Western Days video audience, Bishop Ed and his wife, Debbie, were thanked for the 14 years of exceptional service they have given to the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma and, specifically, Saint Simeon’s.

“So many people don’t understand the scope of your work,” added George Dotson. “There are 70,000 square miles in the state…four million people…77 counties. The larger towns and cities have Episcopal churches, and that has been your flock for 14 years. It’s taken a lot of your time, but despite all of the requirements and responsibilities, you have found time to give to us, and we are most appreciative.”

George Dotson, on behalf of the Saint Simeon’s Home Board of Trustees and the Saint Simeon’s Foundation Board of Trustees, then presented Bishop Ed, virtually, with a framed Declaration of Appreciation. He also announced that the Resident Benevolent Fund would be renamed in the Bishop’s honor.

Bishop Ed was truly touched, sharing that Saint Simeon’s has been “an incredible blessing to us” as he fought back tears. “I can’t tell you how much this means to me. It’s been a joy and a blessing to be part of the SS family.”

Debbie and the Right Reverend Dr. Edward J. (Bishop Ed) Konieczny

HONORING 14 YEARS OF EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE
COURAGE AND COMMITMENT AMIDST THE CRISIS

There’s never been anything to hit our industry the way this pandemic has. We follow so many regulations already, we felt like we were prepared for anything. But nobody saw this coming. Every day has been a challenge. The information comes at you like it’s out of a fire hose, and it is constantly changing. As soon as you get something implemented, new guidelines come out or new information is learned. The biggest challenge we’ve had is consistency and clarity in our message and keeping everyone safe despite the misinformation they hear or the fact they may be remembering something they were told a week ago that has now changed.

The emotional toll it has taken has been profound. Early on, I heard some psychologists talking about the fact that this pandemic is like an extended PTSD. Unlike a normal PTSD event where there is one event that occurs and then you can start the healing process and move forward, the trauma with this just continues. There is no end. There is no “post.” It’s a constant drain on you physically, emotionally, and mentally. That’s where it’s been the hardest for our front line staff to maintain the energy and perseverance to get through all the challenges we face every day and continue to provide great care to the residents. But as always, the team at Saint Simeon’s never ceases to amaze me.

There have been so many bright spots in the last few months as we’ve faced all these challenges. Bishop Ed is a great example. When we were in dire straits, about to run out of face masks, he literally scoured the globe for a supply of face masks for our staff. And, of course, he came through.

Because of his perseverance, he found 10,000 face masks for us. They arrived the day before we would’ve run out! He was definitely our hero in that situation. So many heroes come to mind when thinking about our staff. Amanda Terrel, our Administrator, is a brand new Administrator. When she signed on for this position a year ago, she had no idea what was going to be presented to her. But she has absolutely soared! She has met every bit of this challenge head on and led with grace, clarity and confidence. She has done a beautiful job leading our team.

Cheryl Bates is another one who has really touched my heart. One of our residents, Mr. Kelley, is an avid chess player. In fact, he has played chess every day for 70 years. It’s part of who he is. It’s what he loves to do. Prior to COVID, a local student was coming to play chess with him once a week. He absolutely lived for that day when he got to play chess with his friend! But with COVID, no visitors were allowed. So, Cheryl jumped into action! She learned chess and coordinated virtual chess matches for Mr. Kelley and his friend, so he could continue doing what he loves.

I think about Life Enrichment and how all of our team has had to completely rethink how they do their jobs. None of the group activities that were so much a part of their daily responsibilities are even allowed…and haven’t been since March. So they have come up with socially-distanced bingo and remote control car races down the hallways.
Cheryl Bates, Mr. William Kelley, and Austin Green playing chess via Face Time

for the residents. They’ve organized a traveling mariachi band going through the facility, and they’ve dressed up in silly costumes just to make people laugh.

Our entire staff has truly amazed me with their creativity and drive. I am so thankful and so blessed to work with such a wonderful team.

Of course, the crisis reaches people far beyond the walls of Saint Simeon’s, and I want to express how especially thankful I am for our families. Their incredible support throughout this time has been a Godsend.

In the best of times, it’s difficult for you to entrust your loved ones to our care. But with COVID, that uncertainty has been compounded by the fact that you haven’t been able to physically be here for them. You’ve had to trust us even more than before.

I can’t thank you enough for the kind words of encouragement and support you have extended to us and the patience and grace you have shown me personally.

I also want to thank everyone who has helped sustain us financially through all of this. Due to COVID precautions, our operation expenses are higher at the same time our revenue has declined from temporarily halting our admissions. Your donations have helped us make up the difference, and we are so grateful for your ongoing generosity. You have made the difference. You have allowed us to continue to support the incredible staff we have and to provide the level of care that we hold in such high esteem.

Thank you, residents. Thank you, staff. Thank you, families. Thank you, supporters. You have made all the difference. And together, we will get through this!
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Mrs. Virginia Zimmerman*
*deceased
On behalf of my family, I would like to congratulate Saint Simeon’s on its 60th anniversary. Saint Simeon’s has always held a special place in the heart of my family as two generations have been residents of this fine facility.

We have also had the pleasure of personally supporting the activities and residents of Saint Simeon’s. The measure of a successful organization lies in the positive impact in the lives of other people. Saint Simeon’s has operated by this standard for the past 60 years.

I know with the continued support of our community that tradition will continue into the future. Congratulations to Saint Simeon’s on reaching this milestone.

Craig Deisenroth
Son of Malcom and Pat Deisenroth, longtime supporters of Saint Simeon’s
Malcom was a former resident and Board of Trustees member.
Saint Simeon’s, I wish you many, many congratulations on 60 years of great service to the community. And I wish you 60 more great years to come!

Will Smith

*Past-president, Saint Simeon’s Foundation Board of Trustees and past Western Days Chair*

Our mom, Dannye Sue, was a resident in the memory unit of Saint Simeon’s. We fell in love with it the first time we visited. We felt so blessed our Mom was able to live there. All the employees were so good to her. All the employees put their heart and soul into everything they did, and for that we’ll forever be grateful. Thank you, God bless, and cheers to 60 years!

The Garrett Sisters
Kristye, Kellye, and Kerrye

*Daughters of Dannye Sue, Former Resident*

On behalf of the Board of Trustees we want to congratulate Saint Simeon’s on 60 years. We also want to thank our staff and residents, their families and our supporters. With their help, we will continue the legacy on for 60 more!

Tom Schooley

*Executive Chairman Saint Simeon’s Home Board of Trustees*

Congratulations, Saint Simeon’s, on 60 years of providing exceptional care to your residents. That type of longevity speaks to the commitment and belief that the Tulsa community has in your mission. Saint Simeon’s has been a great partner for our family as we go through the progression of our mother’s medical condition. We are thankful for the wonderful staff and the quality of care our mother receives.

Annie and Philip Houchin

*Children of resident Jola Houchin*

Thank you so much to the staff for everything you do for my grandmother and so many others out there. I can’t wait for you to open back up. We can go out there and see the peacocks again, tell everybody hello, and have some ice cream. Cheers to the first 60 years and here’s to the next 60!

Wink Kopcyzynski III

*Grandson of resident Etolia “Tody” Kopcyzynski and member of the 2020 Western Days Committee*
The 24th annual “Western Days 2020: Cheers to 60 years” was an event enjoyed from the comfort of home. A Western Days video presentation premiered on September 15th, the date planned for the original in-person event.

The production celebrated six decades of excellence in senior care and our “heroes and saints”—the dedicated front line staff at Saint Simeon’s. It featured appearances by Saint Simeon’s residents, staff, Trustees, friends and supporters, and local dignitaries. The video presentation also included a historical overview of the past 60 years and some very special musical performances.
Putting on a live event like Western Days is daunting, and we tip our cowboy hat to the tireless efforts of committees and supporters who managed the last 23 events with such success. And while it’s not the same, producing a video like this is no easy task either. Especially during the unusual circumstances of social distancing, masks, and certain key locations being off limits to visitors—including film crews!

For the 54-minute video, videographers, script writers, audio technicians, editors, plus a host of on-screen talent put in many, many hours of hard work and preparation. But it was well worth the effort! Western Days 2020 was a great fundraising success, and the video presentation produced by RumbleDrum was the perfect celebration honoring those who make Saint Simeon’s such a special place.
One very inspiring story over these past few months has to do with my wedding. I got married in May, but before the wedding, I was discussing my plans with Patti Bonifazi, one of our residents.

I mentioned that my husband was a very awkward dancer. She said jokingly that her husband, too, had been a very awkward dancer. It was a fun moment, and we connected through the shared experience. Then she surprised me. She asked if she could give us dance lessons. As it turns out, in her younger years, she had been a ballroom dancer! Of course, with the precautions of COVID, we couldn’t get actual dance lessons. But the very next day when I saw her, she gave me a letter full of very detailed dance instructions. She even suggested a wedding song!

My husband and I got the biggest kick out of that. And Patti did too. To this day, she mentions it to her family and is so proud of that. It was great!

— Camille Ehrlich, Life Enrichment Coordinator
Another great story comes from Dan and Martha Potter, son and daughter-in-law of Dorothy Kellums.

“The very first person I ever interacted with at Saint Simeon’s was Joy. I asked her the same questions I asked at every place I visited,” said Martha. “I asked, ‘Would you put your mom here?’ and Joy said, ‘In a heartbeat.’”

From Joy to Commica, the next person I met, to Jeff who took care of Mom the very first night she came here and assured me that she was going to be all right and that she was in good hands, I’ve been so thankful.

Those people are all still here today and that’s part of the miracle of Saint Simeon’s. The staff is consistent, which tells me the management takes really good care of the staff. They want to be here, they’re compassionate, they care. They know us, they know her, and they care like she was their own mom—even during these difficult times.

Before we could do the window visits, it was really rough. We could visit by Skype, but being able now to see Mom through the window has been amazing. You should’ve seen her face when she actually saw us that first time. We didn’t know that it was going to get to happen, or how it was going to happen, and she didn’t know it was going to happen either. It was a complete surprise for her!

— Dan and Martha Potter, son and daughter-in-law of Dorothy Kellums
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SAVE THE DATE!

WESTERN DAYS 2021
SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

Co-Chairs: Beth and Scott Brown,
Melissa and Mac Stallcup

Saint Simeon’s is a mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma