

## ***Cards of Encouragement***

Have you received anything in the mail lately that was not a bill or solicitation? Can you think of how it feels to get a birthday card, a thank you note, or a letter unexpectedly? An uncontrollable smile appears and an uplifting feeling makes you feel good inside. Then you set the card in a prominent place and look at it for a few days. You have a sense of well-being knowing that someone remembered you and let you know by sending you the card.

La Plata Visiting Ministry (LPVM) sends cards of encouragement just for this reason. They brighten someone's day and the good feelings last for days. The blessings are a two-way street. It is truly a joy to experience first-hand an individual opening a card and seeing his or her reaction.



The cards go out once a month to individuals who have been referred to us. Most of the individuals are elderly, and we take care to make sure the handwriting on the cards is dark and large enough to read. Some of the individuals live in nursing homes, while others live in the community with family or alone.

Many elders do not have many visitors, and the cards let them know that they are not forgotten. They are reminded that God loves them and they are being remembered in prayers. Human touch is important even if it takes the form of a message in a card. The

following are suggestions to make a card of encouragement inspirational and uplifting:

- If there is not a preprinted Bible verse in the card, add one
- Write with dark ink in large letters
- Pray for the person and then let them know you are
- Encourage them with God's promises and how those promises have encouraged you
- Be real by sharing tid-bits from your daily life

Setting good boundaries is important to make the most of the correspondence experience. Many of the individuals are unable to reciprocate and you may never meet them. The following suggestions will help keep the content of the card in balance:

- Do not make long entries
- Make sure the tid-bits of your daily life do not turn into too much personal information
- Before you start, decide how long the correspondence will last- one time, six months
- Be consistent
- Relax and enjoy brightening someone's day

If you would like to participate in sending cards of encouragement, call the referral line 247-7777 ext. 206 and leave your name and number and we will get back to you or contact a LPVM participant.

## ***When Loneliness Creeps In***

Elderly individuals are especially prone to factors that lead to feelings of loneliness.

- Loss of health, hearing, or eyesight
- Death of friends and family
- Isolation because of illness

- No close family in proximity
- No social network such as a church

One such elderly lady lives in a nursing home. Mattie (not her real name) is legally blind and in a wheelchair. Her immediate family lives in another state. She has poor health and has lost interest in engaging in conversation. She usually sits with her head hanging down over her chest and her eyes closed. Mattie says that she is very lonely and feels unwanted.

Mattie's hopelessness and loss of interest in life is a tough challenge for caregivers in the nursing home especially with no immediate family close by. What can be done for Mattie and individuals like her? As a visitor to the nursing home, much can be done to show Mattie that someone cares:

- Greet Mattie with gentle hugs and words of encouragement
- Be as consistent as possible
- Give her cards of encouragement that can be read and re-read to her
- Pray with her and share Bible verses
- Ask her questions to help her reminisce and share past joys
- Invite her to join you in nursing home activities such as singing or socials
- Join her for a meal from time to time



*Begin the New Year with purpose and forethought.* Unknown