



**Life**  
essentials

Helping People & Transforming Lives

# CONNECTIONS



## Sowing the Seeds of Change

*New logo, New Website, New Connections*

For nearly 25 years, Life Essentials has been sowing the seeds of advocacy and independence for seniors in Montgomery County who struggle with mental illness. We have adapted through changes in location, logo, staff and programs. Our agency's resilience is illustrated in our new logo, which features a dandelion in its "puffball" state. *But why pick a weed in the final stage of its lifecycle?*

Well, many of us have fond, childhood memories of the end stage of the dandelion when the flower dried and the white fluff was left. We would close our eyes tightly and make a wish before blowing as hard as we could, sending the white seeds afloat. Filled with hope and anticipation of wishes come true, we sent the seed on its journey. This symbolism of new possibilities and new life is the first reason we selected the dandelion to represent Life Essentials in our new logo.

The second motive is the dandelion's representation of survival, longevity, hardiness and adaptability because of its method of propagation. Avia Venefica, creator of [whats-your-sign.com](http://whats-your-sign.com), says, "The dandelion in its 'puffball' state spreads billions of seeds with just the faintest of breezes. The cottony threads atop the seed insure take off, and allow its seeds to become airborne, spreading to the four corners of who-knows-where." So too, the number of people reached through our programs has multiplied, and Life Essentials has prospered throughout the years.

The final purpose behind selecting the dandelion is its medical properties which promote clarity, purity and cleansing. From dandelion teas which promote calming and a sense of well-being, to the roots which are a natural body-cleanser, and the dandelion greens that are packed with vitamins and nutrients, this plant is truly a healing tool. Similarly, the Life Essentials' staff advocate for the well-being of our community's forgotten, those living with mental illness, those who are alone, and those who have no voice.

Life Essentials provides services that enable seniors and people living with mental illness to have a greater quality of life, to live healthier, to prosper and thrive. *So, you see, the dandelion is a natural choice to represent Life Essentials.*



The logo is not the only change for Life Essentials!  
Be sure to visit our redesigned website at [www.LifeEssentials.org](http://www.LifeEssentials.org) for company updates and access to relevant information. Just another way we can connect with you!



Life Essentials is the community leader in providing professional, person-centered services to enhance the well-being of vulnerable adults.

## Linda's Lines...

*NEW! That's the word of the day. Happy NEW Year.*

By Linda Roepken, Executive Director



With this first NEWsletter of 2015, Life Essentials is launching a NEW look. Throughout the pages of our NEWly named newsletter, Connections, we're touting our NEW logo, NEW website and NEW blog too.

But with all this NEWness, we are still the agency that supports individuals living with mental illnesses in our community. Life Essentials will continue to be the leader in providing professional, person-centered services that enhance the well-being of vulnerable adults. We continue to provide guardianship services in Montgomery County, and our goal is to extend these services to an adjacent county during the NEW Year. We are committed to growing our Chums program too.

In addition, in 2015 you will hear much more about our two NEWest programs; Peer Academy and Guardian Angel Volunteers. Peer Academy will provide individuals, in recovery, the tools they need to become recovery coaches or peer supporters. This amazing program empowers individuals to become an active member in the community. The Guardian Angel Volunteer program trains adults to be friendly visitors who monitor the well-being, health and safety of adults under guardianship during monthly visits.

Life Essentials will also be expanding our boundaries into NEW communities by launching Chalk About It; a NEW fundraising event the likes of which this community has not seen.

Even though these are all exciting NEW ideas, the core and purpose remains the clients. The men and women who have struggled in our community with mental illness, those with no voice, individuals isolated and alone. Here at Life Essentials we are Helping People and Changing Lives and you help make that happen.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Volunteers, Staff and those who benefit from your generosity, thank you! Remember, NEW Years marks a NEW beginning. NEW people to meet, NEW adventures to enjoy and NEW memories to create. Here's wishing you the Happiest New Year ever!

## Student Reflections

*A Memorable Semester of Service*

By Mike Franeze

Over the past semester I have had the pleasure of working alongside a truly special group of individuals who make Life Essentials the organization that it is.



While every staff member is unique, they all share one thing: the never-ending desire to better the lives of each person they encounter through their work. Throughout my time at Life Essentials, I have tried to emulate this conviction through my shadowing Guardianship, co-facilitation of Chums, social media development, and capacity building.

My experiences with this organization have provided invaluable development of my interpersonal skills, work ethic, and personality as a young professional pursuing medicine. I have gained powerful insight into the healthcare system as well as my own desires in this field which will prove fruitful in the future. I want to thank everyone at Life Essentials for this incredible growth opportunity. Through their guidance, constructive criticism, and constant demonstration of selfless service, my identity and convictions have been radically changed for the better. I honestly would not trade this experience for anything.

## Seeking Students for Peer Academy

Life Essentials' newest program, Peer Academy (peer support training), is currently recruiting students. If you have one year in recovery in alcohol or drug addition (sobriety) or one year of stability with your mental illness, you may be eligible to participate in this class. Please call Life Essentials or visit our website to learn more.

## YOU Are the Person in Their Lives Who Cares

*The generosity our donors have shown to Life Essentials does not go unnoticed.*

You give for a number of reasons and at times wonder, “What impact did my contribution make.” A list could be compiled of all of the services Life Essentials is able to deliver to seniors suffering with mental illnesses with the help of our donors, but that’s boring. What better way to show how your gift helps than to share with you a “real life” story.

Meet Auska. When she came to the United States, she was a young military bride living with her husband George. During George’s military career, they moved around the country, until he retired from WPAFB. *Auska suffers with mental illness and George took meticulous care of her.* He made sure she took her medication and stayed as mentally healthy as possible until his death in the 1990s. After his death, Auska found herself alone. No children or other relatives. That is until Auska began to participate in the Life Essentials’ Chums program. And although she continues to struggle with mental illness, language barriers and vulnerability, through Life Essentials Auska now has a supportive network.



Auska and a member of the Life Essentials’ staff had a special connection that included regular check-in calls. During a recent call, *it became clear that Auska was in a crisis* that needed immediate attention. Thankfully, her involvement in the Chums program allowed a trusting relationship to be built, and she permitted our staff to intervene. She agreed to go to the hospital and receive the necessary treatment.

During a follow up, we learned that Auska had recently moved to a new apartment and had virtually no furniture! Although, upon her husband’s death, Auska had the financial means to take care of herself, it was apparent that because of her illness, she could easily *be exploited*. Our goal...to be an advocate to protect Auska, because that’s what we do at Life Essentials.

So how does this story end? Since her discharge from the hospital *we are happy to say that Auska is living independently in her apartment*. We have also secured a partnership with a local attorney to help Auska manage *and keep her safe from financial exploitation*.

This is just one example of how your gift is used at Life Essentials. Your contribution protects vulnerable people from abuse and exploitation and provides support and hope. Your donations transform lives. As Auska would say, *“Thank you for all you do. I don’t know what I would do without you. Thank you for being my friend.”* In essence, Auska is thanking YOU. By providing a contribution to Life Essentials, you are the person in her life who cares.

## Bidding a Fond Farewell to the Derby Day Dash After 16 Years

Since May 1998, the Derby Day Dash has been the premier fundraising event for Life Essentials. For 16 years, runners, walkers and volunteers throughout our community participated in a day of fun and laughter. While we cherish these warm memories, Life Essentials is taking steps away from the Derby Day Dash and towards a new event, Chalk About It!



On May 16th, 2015, professional, amateur and student artists will be “Chalking the streets at The Greene” for the inaugural Chalk About It! street painting festival. With nervous anticipation, we embark on a unique event bringing performance, fine and public art together to strengthen our local community by Talking About Mental Illness.

Life Essentials is forever grateful to the companies, participants, volunteers and individuals who made the Derby Day Dash a successful event over the last 16 years! We are looking forward to writing a new chapter in the agency’s story and cannot wait to partner with you at Chalk About It!

For more information about Chalk About It!, including sponsorship and volunteer opportunities, please call 937.586.0545 or visit [www.LifeEssentials.org](http://www.LifeEssentials.org).



# Life essentials

Helping People & Transforming Lives

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## CHALK ABOUT IT!

May 16th, 2015

### *Chalking the Streets at The Greene*

Life Essentials is proud to announce the 'Chalk About It' Festival at **The Greene May 16th, 2015**. This exciting new event brings performance, fine and public art together to strengthen our local community.

Street painting (chalking) has its roots in 16th Century Italy, when artists who adorned the churches were finished with a project, they would take to the streets and recreate the art in chalk for a living. Nowadays, images can be of anything, ranging from reproductions of great masterpieces to photos to 3D anamorphic art that tricks the viewer.

Using only pastel chalks (which are environmentally friendly), artists will transform the streets and sidewalks at **The Greene** into living art. Watch art come to life as every piece of work created with a uniqueness that can never be truly duplicated.

#### ***Sponsorship Opportunities***

*There are sponsorship levels for every budget with valuable marketing opportunities!*

#### ***Volunteer Opportunities***

*We are always looking for Event Volunteers and those interested in joining as a Volunteer Artist!*

CONTACT LIFE ESSENTIALS AT 937.586.0545 OR LIFEESSENTIALS.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION