

Bethany Life Communities—Foundation Mission

When we set an appointment with Bethany Life Foundation (BLF) Executive Director Larry Elphic, I naively asked for 30 minutes to learn more about BLF. After spending 75 minutes, it was clear we were just scratching the surface. There is an avalanche of planning and action underway at the Foundation.

Why even have a foundation? If you keep up with the news, you know it isn't unusual for a long-term care center to experience financial difficulties or care problems driven by a lack of funding. At the core of this reality is Medicaid reimbursement. Most care centers, including Bethany Manor, have a significant number of residents who receive Medicaid support. However, the Medicaid reimbursement rate does not cover the full cost of health care. The difference needs to be made up somewhere, and a foundation is a source of resources to help deliver high quality care while keeping private pay care rates from skyrocketing. The Good Samaritan Fund is BLF's top priority and it is 100% targeted to bridge the gap for Medicaid residents. Larry estimates that a successful established foundation needs to raise about 5% of a care center's annual operating budget. For BLF, this is roughly \$450,000 annually.

This is a daunting goal for BLF, which was established in 1999 and is still in its infancy. The short-term goal is to raise \$250,000, which is almost triple last year's total. Yet, when Larry looks at the successful million dollar capital campaign that was completed before he arrived, he is optimistic. The biggest challenge in order to meet long-term support goals is to enlarge the annual giving base.

Larry, along with the BLF Board and Bethany Life Communities President and CEO Betsy Warburton, has developed and adopted a Strategic Plan with action items through December 2005. The plan is built around four "cornerstones": 1) churches 2) individual donors, 3) business and, 4) program support grants. It contains specific objectives, activities and goals in order to succeed in these key areas. For example, one objective is for Bethany to expand its church membership from 25 to 30 churches by December 2005. In terms of resource development, the 2005 goal for congregational support is \$25,000. Although more than triple the level of past support, on average it would be only \$1,000. per current member church. The plan also emphasizes volunteer support. Besides the mutual rewards of volunteerism, it saves expenses, which is just as helpful as raising dollars.

The approach for individual donors emphasizes effective communication of needs and implementing a variety of donor recognition vehicles. The business segment includes a feasibility study to evaluate the operation of a business venture. Modeled after a successful operation in northern Iowa, it would acquire donated goods and market them to the public. This might initially be via auction, but ultimately be done through a "thrift store" with a small staff and extensive volunteer support.

An example of grant writing work underway is the effort to secure funding for CareTaker. This is a software-based program that enables nurses to more easily, accurately and efficiently document resident care activities. The goal is to secure a grant to fund CareTracker by February 2005.

It is clear that Bethany Life Foundation is a critical player in the long-term success of Bethany Life Communities and the quality of life in our area.