

# Like a Well-Watered Garden

How Encouragement Volunteers are Making a Big Impact on a Local Senior

Kind At Heart  
MINISTRIES



## Paul, Age 92

The summer time dinner table doesn't look the same as it used to in the "good ole' days" of married life and raising a family. Tomatoes stacked high on the table, fresh sauces stewing on the stovetop, and freshly prepared garden veggies being stocked away for the winter months ahead . . .

A flourishing garden has always been a symbol of provision for Paul, a retired engineer from the Tulsa area. A solid bounty of homegrown fruits & vegetables meant that there was plenty to share with neighbors. But it also ensured that his wife Leila had plenty of fresh ingredients on hand to prepare some of his favorite meals.

It's been a couple years since Paul lost his wife Leila—a precious woman who believed in treasuring the life God gave you. The loneliness has been a constant ache ever since, and he would be the first to tell you that companionship is his greatest need. And as time has gone on, and as Paul has grown a little older, the garden plot grows a little smaller; the yield a little less than the one before.

***But God's provision remains unchanged. It just looks a little different these days.***

Paul is able to live a quality life *in his own home* because of a community of individuals that has chosen to pour into his life.

Holly brings him a few freezer meals each month. Laura takes him grocery shopping every week to fill in the gaps. And Sally

makes sure he is spiritually fed by picking him up for church every Sunday.

Then there's the bus driver who picks Paul up every week to volunteer at the Manna Center—the same place where he and his wife volunteered together for 25 years of their retired life. Their legacy of love for one's neighbor lives on through him.

And ministry volunteers, Mike & Allison (*pictured above*), visit Paul every Friday and help him with needs around the house—including the harvesting of fresh tomatoes, okra, peppers, and squash from a small garden plot they've help him tend.

The bounty isn't quite what Paul might've envisioned for his garden in younger days. But I'm pretty sure his idea of "harvest" is a little different now than in times past.

After all, the table being prepared for him is unlike any summer time table he's ever experienced. The bounty is more than plentiful, and the company is fantastic! And if it's anything like we imagine it, there will be a special seat saved just for him . . . right next to his sweet Leila.

**FOR MORE INFO** | [servant@kindatheart.org](mailto:servant@kindatheart.org)  
on the Encouragement Program | (479) 373-6281 (Office)

## 1 ▶ **lean** INTO THEIR STORY

Become a student in the life of your Neighbor. Ask them about their family, their childhood, their hobbies, their work life, etc... Look at pictures, ask questions. You never know what you'll learn and how their life experiences will shape you! And share and share alike. Tell them about you, too! A healthy relationship is never one-sided.

## 2 ▶ **communicate** FREQUENTLY

Some Neighbors prefer a call a day (or perhaps a few hours) in advance of a visit. Find out what your friend prefers and respect that need. Be on time and be sure to call if something comes up and prevents you from visiting.

## 3 ▶ **give** CHEERFULLY

While gifts are not required, Encouragers may give small, appropriate gifts. Cash or monetary gifts should never be accepted from a Neighbor, and any financial assistance you feel led to give should be discussed with your KAH point person first.

## 4 ▶ **be present** OVER PERFECT

There's something powerful about just sitting with a person - showing up. Personal connection, having someone within arms reach is more important than having all the right words to say, etc..

## 5 ▶ **wash** AND REPEAT

Be careful not to expose your Neighbor to sickness, infections or contagious conditions. If you are sick or running a fever, trade out a visit for a phone call. They will thank you for it!

## 6 ▶ **keep it** ON THE DOWN LOW

We ask all of our volunteers to maintain confidentiality regarding personal information that a Neighbor might share. Always ask permission before taking pictures to share on social media or elsewhere.

## 7 ▶ **lighten up** AND HAVE FUN

A quality life is full of fun and good memories. Read together, watch movies, play board games. Enjoy one another's company!

## 8 ▶ **recognize** MILESTONES

Get to know significant events that have shaped your Neighbor through the years. Pay attention to the calendar, to anniversaries, to the Holidays, to times of celebration and times of loss. Mark them down on your calendar and send a card or make a phone call.

## 9 ▶ **hang up** YOUR CAPE

You don't have to be a superhero! Set boundaries for yourself and know that it's easy to get over-involved. Just determine how much time you realistically have available and stick with that. Aim for at least 1 hour a week.

## 10 ▶ **connect with** YOUR SUPPORTS

Remember that you are not alone in fulfilling the Encourager role for a Neighbor in need. The Encouragement Coordinator would love to hear about your visits and talk with you about how to maximize support while minimizing burnout!

# The Ten Commandments of ENCOURAGEMENT



## Encouragement Program Agreement

I agree to follow the Kind at Heart guidelines and conduct myself in a kind and courteous manner at all times. I will . . .

- Serve as a volunteer for the recommended minimum of six-months
- Make regular contact with my Neighbor through home visits, cards, and phone calls. (Weekly contact is highly recommended, with at least 2 connections per month being in-person).
- Protect my Neighbor's personal and confidential information and not post their personal info on Social Media.
- Notify the Encouragement Program Coordinator if i am unable to meet my obligations
- Establish personal boundaries on my time commitment
- Notify the KAH office on any significant health changes, unsafe conditions, or needs for your Neighbor.
- Report volunteer service hours to the Encouragement Program Coordinator.

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Printed Name

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Signature

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Date