

# Camphill Ghent

elders in community



## Harnessing our Courage to Meet New Challenges



On September 29, we celebrated our Fall Festival. The theme for this festival was courage. All of our residents were invited to write something regarding courage and then read it at the festival, and this invitation was taken very much to heart. The contributions at our festival were a genuine display of courage, both in the content that was shared and in the fact that many people dared to stand up in front of everyone and reveal their innermost feelings. Certainly, the current state of affairs requires that we all muster

our forces and rise to the occasion of our circumstances. The most obvious expression of bravery comes from those I see each day: the courageous elders who maintain a positive attitude and peaceful demeanor despite ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19.

The day was dark and gloomy; we all thought perhaps the festival would not be allowed to take place due to a downpour. Low and behold, while it did drizzle from time to time, the serious rain held off very courteously until we had concluded the event. Many of us turned out and braved the elements, well armed with rain slickers and umbrellas, just in case. The contributions on courage were bookended with music, and there was a lovely Harvest Table, which displayed all the fruits of the earth from our garden. The very heart of the festival was the manifold offerings on the theme of courage.

*Continued inside...*

*Our mission is to serve the needs of elders through caring for the body, soul and spirit in home settings within an inclusive community so that they may continue to live a life of wellness, dignity, joy and fulfillment.*

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Gail and Onat during the Fall Festival of Archangel Michael.

Dear Friends,

Gail and I sat together at the Fall Festival honoring the Archangel Michael. We heard many stories and poems, we listened to songs and music. We both enjoyed looking at the harvest table with an assortment of flowers, vegetables, and even a dragon bread.

One of the stories told was about the story of the four candles.

*The Four Candles burned slowly. Their Ambiance was so soft you could hear them speak...*

*The First Candle said, "I Am Peace, but these days, nobody wants to keep me lit." Then Peace's flame slowly diminishes and goes out completely.*

*The Second Candle said, "I Am Faith, but these days, I am no longer indispensable." Then Faith's flame slowly diminishes and goes out completely.*

*The Third Candle Speaks, "I Am Love and I haven't the strength to stay lit any longer. People put me aside and don't understand my importance. They even forget to love those who are nearest to them." Waiting no longer, Love goes out completely.*

*Suddenly, a child enters the room and sees the three candles no longer burning. The child begins to cry, "Why are you not burning? You are supposed to stay lit until the end!"*

*Then the Fourth Candle speaks gently to the little child, "Don't be afraid, for I Am Hope, and while I still burn, we can re-light the other candles."*

*With shining eyes, the child took the Candle of Hope and lit the other three candles.*

*Never let the Flame of Hope go out of your life. With Hope, no matter how bad things look and are...Peace, Faith and Love can Shine Brightly in our lives.*

What Gail and I would like to share is that during this time, we all need hope. Hope lives when we remember that school children sent us greeting cards to cheer us up during the early days of the pandemic. Hope lives when our family and friends are now able to visit us, even though we are physically distanced. Hope lives as we have a beautiful community where we can enjoy walking outdoors. Hope lives in the daily kindness we experience from one another. Hope springs eternal!

We wish you all peaceful holidays and keep on staying strong, healthy, and hopeful.

  
Onat Sanchez-Schwartz  
Executive Director

*Continued from front page...*

Many members of our community told their stories or poems on courage. Some were humorous, while others were of a more serious nature. One of our coworkers told the story of how she managed to obtain a visitors visa in order to come to the United States. It worked out well: that was 30 years ago! Someone else told the story of riding a donkey on a very high precipice. Well, it was all very alarming until she resigned herself to the fact that she must take courage and cherish each moment as it might be her last.

All the offerings together blended to create a communal sense of identity. This is who we are as a community: a cluster of courageous individuals. As the days grow shorter and colder, it is reassuring to know how much inner fortitude is present in our midst. We do not need to look further than each other for the inner light that will carry us through the coming darker months. (Written by Kristina Labaty.)



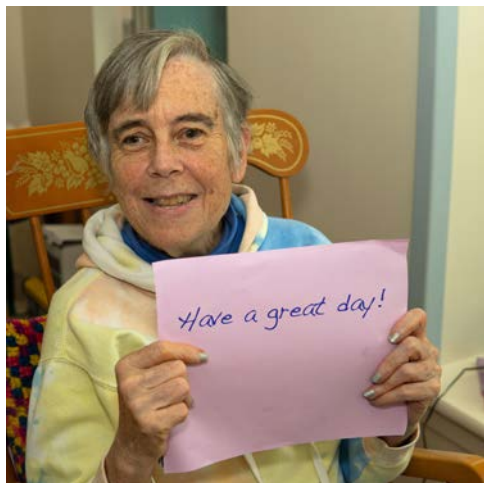
Below is a poem from Sean Vernon (Tourmaline House) about courage. Thank you, Sean, for this meaningful contribution!

### **Courage**

Night came on so quickly  
you could not catch your breath,  
and the stars will not grace a midnight sky,  
blind to even the whisper of light.  
Dawn is but a rumor,  
seeming ever more unlikely  
as the crickets play with silence,  
and the sea cradles the dock,  
disease now a ghost  
deep within the body's haunted house.  
When all this comes to pass  
let courage hold your hand  
and remind you how to breathe.



## Community Life at Camphill Ghent New Beginnings for Allyson Vazac



On September 11, we had the privilege of welcoming Allyson Vazac to our Camphill Ghent Hilltop House. Allyson is a stalwart Camphill woman, having been a pillar in each of the communities she joined. Her lovely smile and relaxed manner reveal the value of her lifelong path within the Camphill Movement. Here in Tourmaline House, Allyson's housemates appreciate Allyson's charming personality, as they sit together in the evening and chat, enjoying one another's company.

This is the third Camphill Community that Allyson has transitioned into. After having spent decades in Camphill Village Copake, Allyson chose to be a pioneer and move to Camphill Hudson with a group of her friends. This proved to be a good fit for Allyson, as she enjoyed about 10 years of small town life. Her friend Nathan McLaughlin - executive director of Camphill Hudson - has this to say: *"Allyson leaves behind a wonderful legacy. She is a hard worker who kept things tidy and on track, someone who enjoyed a nice dinner out with friends or visiting her family, and a native of Columbia County who felt her roots here and brought that impulse into Camphill. We will miss Allyson!"*

Sensing the need for a different pace and slightly new lifestyle, Allyson jumped at the opportunity to join our Camphill Ghent community.

Allyson's path of easy transitions from one Camphill Community to another demonstrates the inherent strength of the Camphill life; continuity of care, long term relationships, and a strong sense of our cultural heritage allow individuals to enjoy a lifelong path of learning and experience.



Allyson and friend Bill Rosecan on a recent visit to see their friends at Camphill Hudson, outdoors and distanced.

## Farewell, dear friend Madge Parcher, August 27, 2020



Alas, the time has arrived to bid farewell to our dear Madge Parcher. Madge died at 10:30PM on August 27th at St. Peter's Hospital in Albany. Madge was one of our original community ladies who decided to come and found our wonderful new community. Madge's glowing smile and keen interest in others helped foster that warmth and kindness necessary to any Camphill Community. Madge's legacy carries on, as caregivers and residents alike exhibit the warmth and generosity of heart that Madge made evident.

Madge was also a founding member of Camphill Village Copake, having moved there in her early twenties and remaining until her transition to Camphill Ghent.

Camphill Village recognized Madge's potential to become a master crafter and encouraged her interest in weaving. She became an avid weaver, creating intricate patterns and working diligently in the process. She also cultivated the art of hospitality, greeting everyone with warmth and often gifting them with items she had created. Madge, like many Camphillers, loved music. She played the ukulele and sang with a joyful heart. Madge's many worthy attributes made her an ideal individual to be a founding member of Camphill communities.

Those of us who had the honor to know and love Madge will forever miss her lively personality. Madge loved life and people and all that which accompanies the scope of joyful life experience. May her presence live on in our hearts and our work as we continue her tradition of hospitality and joy of life.



From "Terminus"

*It is time to be old, To take in sail; –  
The god of bounds,  
Who sets to seas a shore,  
Came to me in his fatal rounds  
And said: "No more!  
No farther shoot thy broad ambitious branches, and thy  
root.  
Fancy departs: no more invent;  
Contract thy firmament  
to compass of a tent.  
There's not enough for this and that,  
Make thy option which of two;  
Economize the failing river,  
Not the less revere the Giver,*

*Leave the many and hold the few.  
Timely wise accept the terms,  
Soften the fall with wary foot;  
A little while  
Still plan and smile..."*

*As the bird trims her to the gale,  
I trim myself to the storm of time,  
I man the rudder, reef the sail,  
Obey the voice obeyed at prime:  
"Lowly faithful, banish fear,  
Right onward drive unharmed;  
The port well worth the cruise, is near,  
And every wave is charmed."*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)*

Commentary on "Terminus" - written by Christiane Marks

This inspiring poem on positive aging, the work of prominent Transcendentalist poet, philosopher and lecturer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, is named for the Greek god of boundaries and endings. The god himself is speaking to those who might feel the first signs of aging, or be in the midst of it – in short, most of us; it's part of the human condition. I left out about ten lines after the break, in which we are told not to curse our ancestors or our human state for making us mortal. This did not seem essential to the main message of the poem, which is that while we need to be realistic and accept our limitations as we age, we can and should live joyfully and creatively, making the most of what we still have.

The mid-19th-century Transcendentalists focused deeply on the spiritual background of all that surrounds us, and knowledge derived from intuition, reacting against purely logical thinking, black-and-white judgments, and materialism. Transcendentalists were wary of burgeoning industrialization and commercialism, believing in simple lives lived close to nature. Perhaps the most famous member of this group is Henry David Thoreau, who, in his classic Walden reports on his life in the woods in a small cabin he built himself. The Transcendentalists often spoke of the Oversoul, a kind of cosmic unity formed by nature, human beings, and God which has its roots in Plato's thought.

What is refreshing about this poem is that it presents limitations as normal and healthy. Though vitamin manufacturers send us booklets filled with pictures of white-haired people running marathons, doing jumping jacks, or swimming an astonishing number of laps, this is not the elusive goal for most of us to strive for. We will be more realistic and much happier "economizing the failing river" of vitality, while continuing to "revere the Giver" of all life, searching for what He might still have in mind for us to do. Short walks, a little gardening,

spending time with and helping those less able, discovering that we have managed to acquire some wisdom or have some gifts and sharing those. The classic image is that of Grandmother sitting comfortably by the stove and telling deep, wise tales to the children clustered around her. If we are still unusually active at an advanced age, that is fine, but we shouldn't feel we need to be.

What a beautiful image: Living our last years navigating a gale with a wisely-trimmed sail, knowing that our lives lead not to a plunge into nothingness, but to arrival at a beautiful port. Yes – and on our way “every wave is charmed”. Every day can bring magical insights and opportunities.

*Christiane Marks holds a BA in Comparative Literature and an MA in German. She has translated historical letters, numerous articles, and two books. She has lived at Camphill Ghent since August 2017.*



## Supported by, and Supporting the Local Community

As the saying goes, every cloud has a silver lining. During this time of COVID-19 concerns, what has become apparent in many circles is an overwhelming sense of localism, a feeling of connection with those closest. Travel is at minimum, and many are feeling cautious to go beyond a certain range from where they reside. While such new restrictions does at times elicit a sense of frustration with the situation, being bound to our region comes with certain advantages: we can now, for example, explore more fully the relationships we have with those nearest us.

One example of such a movement here in Camphill Ghent is the huge outpouring of support we experienced when organizing our Silent Auction. Whenever we ventured out into the larger community of Chatham, Ghent, Valatie, and Hudson, we experienced pleasant faces and a very warm reception. Inevitably, vendors or individuals would respond by saying how they love Camphill Ghent and are glad to contribute to such a wonderful cause. Even in these trying times, local businesses and friends of our community exhibited tremendous gestures of philanthropy, donating products and services to the cause. Such support makes evident how well appreciated Camphill Ghent is within the larger context of our region.

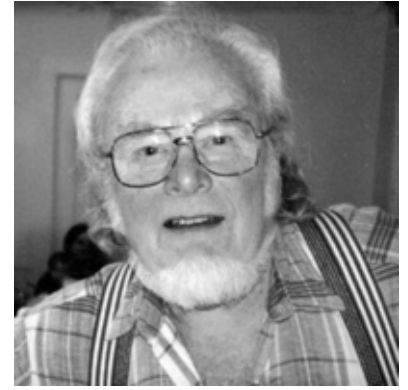
Fostering relationships with the larger community is something we hold as a significant goal. While this ideal has been compromised in certain ways by the Coronavirus, we have managed to innovate and meet the challenges of this peculiar time. A big shout out goes to our wonderful sponsors who have seen fit to donate their time and products to our Silent Auction. You are an essential part of our extended Camphill Ghent community. Thank you!!! (By Kristina Labaty)

# Invitation

## For Al

Dance with me through the clouds  
and we'll sail out of reach of the ghost-ridden world  
and its river of tears.  
The world is softer up here, quieter,  
home to horses grazing in a green pasture.  
I refuse to lock step with a parade of worn-out dreams  
that can only take me places I've already been.  
bankrupt of promise  
and the smell of adventure.  
I no longer believe the sky ever waves a fatal farewell,  
the clouds only turn corners on their way  
gliding through spectrums of ceaseless rebirth.  
I remember long-loved faces locking eyes with the world  
and days free from the snows of regret.  
My brain is papered with shapes of faces I have lost,  
but they were never really mine to lose,  
and aren't truly gone.  
I've known angels who lived well aware of their flaws  
but didn't let it stop them from reaching for the stars of love,  
my only ambition now is to follow them  
carrying the sounds of waves washing the sand  
and wind chimes calling me home.

By Sean Vernon



*Al McMichael passed away peacefully on September 6, 2020 at the age of 94. His passions were family, motorcycles, square dancing, and swimming.*



*Sean Vernon, MFA is a writer, poet, singer, songwriter and musician. Sean has lived at Camphill Ghent since January 2016.*

Camphill Ghent's mission is sustained by donors like you - thank you for making a difference in the lives of our residents!

To learn more about how to support Camphill Ghent, please contact

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