



## Circle of Support Helps with Life's Transitions



*Karishma Bindra, VHRC's Social Worker, facilitates the Circle of Support, a twice monthly discussion group.*

Loss is seldom a subject anyone wants to talk about. However, loss is a common feeling. The loss of a loved one is an immediate thought. But change can cause feelings of loss too. This past year – with the dramatic changes caused by COVID-19 – has caused feelings of immense loss. Karishma Bindra, VHRC's social worker whose office is just off the Vinson Hall lobby, facilitates a discussion group, called Circle of Support, that helps navigate these feelings.

The group was originally led by Mary Ellen Shelbourne, a hospice nurse, and met in the Fireplace Room in Vinson Hall. Karishma, who has been at VHRC since June 2018, was a co-facilitator. With the onset of COVID-19, Mary Ellen was not able to visit campus. Karishma became the sole facilitator of the sessions, which were eventually required to meet virtually.

"This group was initially called Grief and Loss," said Karishma. "When I first started work with this group, I immediately thought of death and dying and the grieving that accompanies that loss. Now, I think feelings of loss can occur with any transition in life. For example, downsizing from a house a person has lived in for decades to a new apartment can trigger feelings of loss."

With these thoughts in mind, Karishma changed the name to Circle of Support to capture the idea that as we transition through life – even anticipated transitions – these changes can cause big feelings that need time and space to understand, and during that time we all need some support.

Circle of Support is going through a bit of transition as well. Discussions, which had been completely resident-led with residents selecting the topics, are shifting to discussion topics selected in advance. A recent session focused on loss of touch with a loved one. "These sessions are a great opportunity to air out thoughts," added Karishma.

Karishma continued by saying, "I love the sessions. I love the connection with the residents. And I love this job. When I started, Randy [Fowler] told me something that I think of often. He said we are privileged to walk beside our residents. I really love that statement."

***Please See Other Side for More Good News!***

## From the Coalfields to the Kennedy Center



*John Duran's career was broad and varied, but focused on his love of the theater.*

When John Duran was in high school near Pittsburgh, he knew he wanted to go to college, but that was all he knew. "I knew nothing about colleges," he says. "My father was a coal miner who didn't read or write, and none of my five siblings went to college." He wanted to be an astronaut and narrowly missed a placement in the Air Force Academy, but "if I couldn't ride the rockets, I wanted to design them." A chance meeting with an alum of Wabash College got him admitted there – and a full football scholarship. "When I got there I discovered the closest major to engineering was physics, so I chose that."

Life is often full of twists and turns. In college, he got involved in the drama club, and a theater professor told him about a new master's program at Yale in Theater Engineering. "I said, 'Sign me up!'" After graduating from Yale as a theater architect, John was hired as an architectural advisor to the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. "I became the handicapped accessibility guru for

government-funded buildings long before I became handicapped myself." Then after the oil crisis hit in the 1970s, he pivoted to help organize the Department of Energy.

Yet another life turn brought him to the National Park Service. "All federal agencies had to reduce energy use by 20 percent, and my job was to make that happen in the Park Service – in 400 parks and 20,000 buildings," he says. As energy manager, he visited over 100 parks in 10 years, "cajoling people to improve what they were doing." One of those national parks was the Kennedy Center, which ended up hiring him as the facility's general manager. Now married with two daughters, his path had come full circle. "I finally got to manage a world renowned facility with the expertise I had in theater and architecture, and go to their events," says John, who also dabbled in acting as a movie extra until he retired in 2006. "My years at the Kennedy Center were probably the highlight of my career."

### *The Campus Voice*

This publication is created for Vinson Hall Retirement Community in an effort to inform and delight. This publication is produced by the Office of Philanthropy and Engagement, but attempts to reflect the work and efforts of all VHRC residents and staff.

Please direct inquiries, corrections, suggestions, or brief submissions to Amiee Freeman, Communications and Public Relations Specialist, [amieef@vinsonhall.org](mailto:amieef@vinsonhall.org) or 703-538-3069.