

## Cultivating gratitude and hope

by BRIANNA GARRISON, MSW, LCSW, *Family Services Director*

*“In the face of demoralization, gratitude has the power to energize. In the face of brokenness, gratitude has the power to heal. In the face of despair, gratitude has the power to bring hope. In other words, gratitude can help us cope with hard times.”*

— ROBERT EMMONS

Gratitude is a conscious decision that allows us to gain perspective by viewing a situation through an alternate lens. Cultivating gratitude can help individuals cope.

### How gratitude can help

Practicing gratitude gives people the ability to accept whatever their current challenges are while still finding joy throughout their struggle. Research shows that there are many benefits from practicing gratitude. Gratitude can:

- **Impact our physical responses**, including lowered blood pressure, increased immunity and reduced stress, lowering our risks for health complications
- **Bring an increase in healthy behaviors**, such as regular exercise, preventive health care and healthy diet
- **Contribute to more satisfying relationships** with friends, family and our respective communities

### How to cultivate gratitude

Here are some ideas to practice of gratitude.

- **Gratitude journal:** write down what you're grateful for daily or weekly.
- **Four minutes of gratitude:** Set a timer for four minutes and write down everything you are grateful for now.
- **Gratitude reminder:** Pick something you see every day in your bedroom, office, etc., that redirects you towards gratitude.
- **Gratitude hot seat:** Take turns during get-togethers with family and friends this month to verbalize your gratitude towards each other.
- **Gratitude letters:** Write a letter, send a note or mail a holiday card to someone who has had an impact on you.
- **Situation reframe:** Identify a negative situation and try to identify any positive aspects or benefits that have resulted from it.

With consistent use of these exercises, you may begin to make gratitude part of your daily routine and see the positive impact gratitude has on you and your family members. The best aspect of practicing gratitude is that you can do it anywhere, any time, and it is never too late to start.



Brianna with Joan B. and Luther J. in the beautiful AP Chapel