

I'd like to begin with these few lines from Gwendolyn Brooks' poem: "Paul Robeson". Perhaps they are familiar to you.

"We are each other's  
harvest:  
we are each other's  
business:  
we are each other's  
magnitude and bond",  
Gwendolyn Brooks, "Paul Robeson"

Community. These lines from Gwendolyn Brooks' poem came to me as I thought about our life together at Kendal and in particular how it is expressed through KORA. They remind us of the fundamental reality of our life at Kendal. Her words are reminiscent of the values from our Quaker heritage that define both our vision and our way of being together. A review of where we are and what we have done together is testimony to the reality of the community which brought so many of us here.

When we take a look back at the years just past, it's good to begin by asking "what's our vantage point?" "How are we positioned and what perspective does that give us?"

Talking about this with a friend, the word "midpoint" came up. We are at the mid point between two significant anniversaries. The 20th Anniversary in October of 2013 lifted up the story of the founding of Kendal at Oberlin, told so well in Dick Baznik's book, *History of Kendal at Oberlin: "an entirely new way of life."* Many of the men and women who had the foresight to know that a community like this would be needed and the persistence to make it happen were still among us then. Almost 50 of our Founders were celebrated in a special event in the Auditorium. Now, with the 23rd Anniversary just behind us, we are indeed midway between the 20th and the 25th.

We are keenly aware of the passing of most of those Founding residents, and many others. Carol has just called to mind 2 friends and companions who have died since the last Annual Meeting. And.... we turn, to welcome all who have joined us, bringing their presence, gifts, and participation to the renewal of our community life.

The 25th Anniversary of Kendal at Oberlin is on the horizon, and it will surely have its own story to be written, its own story to tell. I think it will be a story about a pioneering community in changing times. How will we take hold in the next two years? set a course through shifting currents? and write the foreword to a compelling story for the next quarter century?

From our present vantage point, we look back over high energy, productive work. Some groundwork-- quite literally -- as we made decisions about cottage remodels and community spaces and then lived with waves of construction. Some of it tackled long standing concerns --

the need for more transportation, particularly medical transportation, or the sound system in our dining area, or planning and decision making for quality of life in our last years.

We have demonstrated flexibility, making a lot of transitions in the last couple of years. I recall some distress over crowded Auditorium seating. We worked out some new rules for organizing it to accommodate our growing numbers. Organizing and moving into our new community spaces was accomplished, and we celebrated with an “Open Spaces” event, complete with tours. The Thoughtful Medicine Committee shed its old skin as one committee and reorganized into three working groups. The Transportation Commission completed its work and has moved to implementation, with the Ride-Share program currently getting underway. Despite our fears, the “newbies” of the previous year and a half have found their niches, giving significant energy and leadership across the Association. Four of them are nominated today for KORA leadership. Committee Chairs are inviting new residents to share leadership with them and mentoring them into these roles. There have been significant transitions in a number of our committees and service groups.

Vision has given rise to new ventures. In 2015, with the help of a Kendal Charitable Funds grant we tried a new way of community outreach, resulting in four “Keep On Moving Oberlin” Mobility Fairs, three at different community locations and one here on campus. This year, 2016, again with the help of a Charitable Funds Grant, the John Bartram Arboretum was born! Essentially the whole of our campus is a certified Arboretum, belonging to all of Kendal at Oberlin. The work involved includes meeting certification requirements, moving ahead with tree identification labeling and care, educational programs, and joint projects with the town of Oberlin and the OSU Extension Service. The bulk of this work is carried by a group of skilled residents, functioning as a subcommittee of KORA’s Horticulture Committee and with the assistance and support of the Kendal Facilities Department.

Throughout, the infrastructure hums along-- our 90 plus committees, service groups and interest groups. They provide programs, celebrations, care for environment inside and out, volunteer in the Stephens Care Center, and so much more.

The journey forward will be guided by the Strategic Plan, developed this year with the participation of the entire community. 200 people participated in the World Cafe, over half of them residents. Many participated in subsequent S.W.O.T. sessions, and as the plan took shape, gave feedback to the committee. In this process, we’ve learned that the landscape of our 25th Anniversary may be very different. We will likely have to adapt to changing needs in aging services -- health care, economic resources, housing, and markets.

At this point in time, the road ahead may look pretty rocky. The historian and writer James Carroll, speaking about the future of a communities in some ways similar to ours suggested that they will be like the abbeys of Christianity during the Dark Ages. In a time of uncertainty, violence, and tribalism, those abbeys kept alive their story, rooted in a faith tradition, offering hope and vision for generations to come. We have a story to keep alive. It’s the story of a community together transforming the experience of aging. We have a vision -- for a vibrant, intergenerational community that pools its resources for education, community service, and

healthcare. We have hope, rooted in values inherited from our Quaker founders, that we can be the change we want to see in this world.

We have done a lot of groundwork. There are challenges before us as we move on from this midpoint.

We are learning to live together in a full house. We've experienced some of the growing pains of 93% occupancy, and we know what it means to be, in Gwendolyn Brooks' words, one another's business! The old neighborhoods may not have new names (remember that doomed undertaking?!!) but they have new life -- lots of it!

We will arrive at the 25th year a very different community than the one that began this journey after the 20th. In two and a half years we have welcomed 74 new residents, with their own histories and ways of participating that will keep us moving forward. We will experience some changes in our culture.

We have some housekeeping tasks before us. The Archives Task Force is asking important questions about which records to preserve, and how. Our Bylaws need to be reviewed and synthesized.

New technology is a challenge and an opportunity. We're lucky to have residents as well as staff who are helping us to grow in this area. The new interactive website will, in time, be an essential tool in managing our program.

We are challenged to create a culture of philanthropy, appreciating that giving to Kendal at Oberlin -- in dollars, yes, but also in all the ways we serve -- is to invest in the richness of life we enjoy here now, and to invest in its future as a strong partner with the wider community in aging services.

May we be a center of vision and hope for that wider community.

Throughout the journey, let us be guided by the values inherited from our Founders who created the organization and processes by which we order our community life in keeping with our mission.

Here, at midpoint, looking out toward our 25th year, we have solid accomplishments behind us and plans for meeting the challenges we see ahead of us. Again, in Brooks' words: "We are each others harvest."

Here at midpoint, we understand that the Promised Land is always just over the next rise, just across the river -- rising on the horizon. Do we also understand that the Promised Land is here? Now? That "We are each others magnitude and bond?"

KORA. The Kendal at Oberlin Residents Association is the warp and woof on which the story -- the tapestry--of our community life is woven. We are the weavers. We are also the ones who must keep the Association strong. It is the frame for our work.

The design is the richer for the collaboration and teamwork with our Administration, Staff, and Board of Directors. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with them.

I thank you for your kindness and support shown to me in these two years that I've served as your President. I rejoice with you in our new leadership going forward, and wish all us good travels on the way ahead.

#### Note to the Board of Directors

At the Business Meeting of KORA on Nov. 10, 2016, Resident Ann Francis, President Elect was designated KORA's representative to the Kendal at Oberlin Board of Directors, *ex officio*. Ann has served in a variety of leadership roles in the American Society of Friends. She brings strong skills in community engagement, passionate commitment to diversity and inclusion, a delightful wit, and a gift for friendship. I know you will enjoy her participation with you on the Board.

Ardith Hayes