

## Home Harvest Open House: Lindsborg Elder Reaps Benefits

At 83 years old, life-long farmer Ingrid Larson\* missed the sights, sounds and routine of Kansas wheat harvest time after moving to a local nursing home. Staff at Bethany Home in Lindsborg noticed Ingrid growing irritable during the evening hours of late spring. The independent resident appeared restless, wanting to go outside during supper. Caregivers knew they had to learn why she was acting this way and how they could help make her happier and more content. A few questions and a quick phone call later, the problem was solved. As part of Bethany Home's culture, the facility believes in the importance of person-directed care; in other words, letting the residents make choices in their care and maintain a lifestyle similar to the one they've always enjoyed. So, staff talked with Ingrid about why she was agitated and how they could help. Up until the two years prior to coming to Bethany Home, Ingrid had prepared supper in the field for her late husband and three sons during wheat harvest time. With a strong Swedish background, Ingrid still felt the need to continue to provide for her family. After learning of her wishes to remain a part of harvest time, nursing staff made arrangements with Ingrid's daughter-in-law to do just that. About three times during the harvest season, she would pick up Ingrid and take her out to the field with her sons, where she would lay out supper for her family. The change in Ingrid's behavior was immediate and noticed by all staff and family members. Director of Nursing, Shiela Boyers, stresses the significance of this type of open culture that is centered on the residents. All too often, the person's needs and previous lifestyle are pushed aside by unaccommodating staff. They (residents) don't need to change. We're (staff) the ones to do the changing. Boyers note the importance of trying to find innovative care solutions as alternatives to medicine. She strongly believes that, like Ingrid, getting to the heart of the behavior is key to understanding treatment options. But that isn't always an easy way for nursing home staff to think. Many homes haven't been educated on this new approach to care and are struggling to adapt. That's where the Kansas Foundation for Medical Care, Inc. (KFMC) steps in. KFMC is working with long-term care facilities across the state bringing the importance of culture change to the forefront. Through this work, KFMC provides education and resources to staff as they transition from the institutional model to person-directed care. Bethany Home is just one of the homes that KFMC is working closely with in this endeavor. Boyers credits Bethany Home's open culture to the integration of home life and community into care practices. Community is a big part of us here. The home has an open door policy and holds community events, such as ice cream socials and holiday parties, throughout the year. There is no disconnect from the community to us, says Boyers. This place is like grand central station all the time. Culture change requires a lot of hard work, dedication, and support from all levels of staff. Boyers firmly believes that all homes are capable of making this change if they can remember that elders in their home are people first and residents second. It (culture change) has to come from within. It's not just doing a task. They (staff) have to believe in basic respect for elders. They aren't just old people. Basic respect has to be there or culture change just won't succeed.

\*Name has been changed to protect privacy.