

Resident Kathie Staniec Continues to Rediscover Herself at Walnut Village

In her memoir, “Common Threads,” Walnut Village resident and author Kathie Staniec remembers how as a young mother of two, her life was not very adventurous. She wrote ... “I had never been adventurous. I had always been comfortable with the things that I was used to, only coloring between the lines with the classic Crayola colors.” But in the summer of 1982, everything changed for the Illinois native. Her husband got a job in Southern California and Kathie and her family began a new adventure in Orange County, CA.

Her memoir shares the story about the interwoven threads among three generations of mothers — Kathie, her mother and her grandmother — their journeys from Poland to Illinois to California and the important lessons learned along the way. A 40-year journey of hope, sadness, laughter, excitement and many other emotions in between, is what made Kathie who she is today, a strong, confident woman who chooses to live at Walnut Village because it is a positive reflection of herself.



Kathie Staniec loves relaxing in her patio garden.

Kathie’s next metamorphosis took place following her husband’s death in 2015. To get over her sadness, she felt she needed to reinvent her identity and rediscover her passions. She took college classes, engrossed herself in landscape design and enjoyed hobbies like oil painting and crafting. She also began writing her memoir, an exercise that re-energized her life. But something was still

missing. Kathie was living alone and yearned for more companionship and social connections.

“I was so lonely,” Kathie said. “I could not imagine continuing on this path so I started searching for a retirement community. I need to be around people. I checked out several but they all seemed very cold and hospital-like, except one ... Walnut Village.” Kathie discovered Walnut Village after remembering a Walnut Village TV commercial that talked about how the continuing care retirement community celebrated individuality and how residents could be themselves no matter what their lifestyles. She soon visited and everything she saw and heard was true.

“During my first visit I felt such a connection,” Kathie said. “I’m a glass half-full kind of person, but when I moved to Walnut Village I realized my glass was brimming over. The residents and staff were so welcoming and warmhearted. I was so grateful for that. I had some doubts I could make a move like this but everyone here made it so easy. Walnut Village is more than a community, it’s truly a family. Making friends was so easy. I didn’t even have to try. Everyone is beyond friendly and helpful. I would actually say ... inspirational. That inspiration has definitely rubbed off on me.”

Kathie loves oil painting and crafting, two hobbies she continues to enjoy at Walnut Village. Her friends are teaching her new card games and Mahjong. “After moving here I learned some new things and rediscovered a lot of old interests including landscape design,” she said. When Kathie moved into her two-bedroom garden apartment, the landscape surrounding it was basic. Knowing that Kathie was an experienced landscape designer, the Walnut Village landscape crew worked with her to customize just the right flora on and around her back porch.

She also joined the chorale. “I had not sung in 50 years and I do not read music, but the leader of the chorale told me it did not matter. She said if I liked music and enjoyed singing, I was welcome. No experience necessary. That’s what I call inclusivity!”

“Everyone has a story to share and if you can find your unique story to tell it’s a blessing,” Kathie said. “Writing this book was the first step to finding out who I am and coming to Walnut Village added to that journey.”