

# Guest Story

## Family of the Heart

*“Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor...  
A cord of three strands is not easily broken” (Ecclesiastes, 4:9a, 12b).*

Marci Harris offers this passage of scripture when describing her caregiving journey with her dad Ralph. She explains, “Often, this support comes from family. However, one of the most important lessons I learned as a child is that some family is chosen rather than related by blood—the family of the heart.”



Family was always top priority for Ralph. A hard worker, he always found time to be at every event: school, sports, band, and scouts. When grandchildren started arriving, he was equally hands-on. “Grandpa’s here!” became a frequent cry of joy around Marci’s house.

After Ralph was diagnosed with Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD), his greatest change was loss of communication skills followed by a gradual decline in his ability to function. In January 2015 he moved in with Marci and her family. According to Marci, Ralph was still the same family-loving man. The extra time they spent together gave her the opportunity to hear stories she had never heard growing up. Even with FTD, his love for his family still shined through.

Still Waters is now a comfortable part of Ralph’s daily schedule. He gets up every day, ready to head to the “senior center.” The predictability of this routine is important to his sense of security. He has built relationships with the staff. Activities such as the weekly visit by Pastor Tod as well as visits from children of staff members are highlights in his week.

Ralph’s family is grateful that Still Waters is part of their “cord of support”. Marci receives valuable encouragement in her caregiving role. Most importantly, however, is that Ralph has found an extended family at Still Waters. “FTD has robbed my dad of so much in his life,” says Marci, “but underneath it all, he still maintains his connection to family. Still Waters holds an important place as part of Dad’s family of the heart.”