Patience Is a Culture Change Virtue
By Keith Schaeffer

“This regulation, and indeed all others, were made for military hospitals in an ordinary state...but these rules when brought to bear in...that unprecedented time of distress, became...positively injurious.”

--Francis Taylor, Eastern hospitals and English nurses: The narrative of twelve months’ experience in the hospitals of Koulali and Scutari – By a Lady Volunteer, 1857.

Frances Taylor and Rich Newman would probably agree: the challenges of culture change can try a person’s soul.

Newman, Executive Leader for Pennybry at Maryfield, is helping his continuing care retirement community in High Point, NC, convert to the Household Model.

Taylor, founder of the Roman Catholic Order that established Maryfield, worked to improve the culture of care for the downtrodden in mid-19th Century England and abroad, established orphanages, old age homes and hospitals.

She learned the frustrations of regulations and environmental factors while working with Florence Nightingale as a nurse for wounded soldiers during the Crimean War. Her book published in 1857 describes how men burning with fever cried for a drink. Unfortunately, any liquid, had to be signed and counter-signed up and down the line of command. That and scarcity of potable water led to needless suffering. Taylor patiently persevered, working with doctors to smooth out the procedures and boiling water so that men got their beef tea.

Newman’s culture change challenges are no doubt less formidable than Taylor’s, but nonetheless frustrating at times. Like construction delays caused in part by the “degree regulators require us to do certain things...taking a different or stricter interpretation (than when plans were first submitted) that requires us to go much deeper into upgrading,” says Newman. While the organization originally planned installation of sprinklers in the 40 year-old, un-sprinkled building, and a full, commercial-grade kitchen in every household, both brought with them a myriad of additional regulations that must now be met. Delays were also caused when walls of the old building—constructed in phases over a number of years—were pulled out, laying bare decisions and mistakes from the past and the need to correct them.

His advice to others on how to minimize problems and endure:

- Work closely and communicate often with regulators to clearly understand their expectations in detail.
- Go as deeply as you can during the planning stage to identify renovation issues in your old building.
- Cultivate patience not only with regulations and surprises that arise, but also with the natural evolution of change.

There is temptation, says Newman, to short-circuit the team decision-making process and “just get it done.” But now he’s convinced all the investment in training, planning, group discussions and visits to other culture change organizations are paying off. “We created an environment where teams have come together time and time again, issue after issue, to do problem solving,” he says.

In the beginning, that approach seemed extremely slow with little to show for the effort. But over the long haul it empowered staff and brought creativity to the entire process. The changes will be much deeper and longer lasting than if formal leadership directs them to happen, he concludes.

Summer Blockbusters!

Forget about superheroes and action archeologists, this season’s movie blockbusters are all about culture change. Shot on location at nursing homes across the country and featuring today’s hottest change leaders, these new DVD based tools will have viewers itching to roll up their sleeves and make changes in their own organizations.

Catalyst Clips Vol. 1 explores the topics of team,
When her position as admissions coordinator in a nursing home was eliminated due to declining resident census, 55-year old Donna Everding decided it was “now or never” to make a dramatic change in her life. So, she made the decision to use her savings and take one year to further her education to have a career in nursing home administration.

Donna recently visited Oelwein Health Care Center in Oelwein, IA for an assignment to visit a facility that is undergoing culture change as part of her coursework. “The facility has not been remodeled,” Donna said, “and their culture change primarily stems from the loving care and respect of their staff and the relationships staff have with their residents.”

She was impressed by Administrator Deb Schaefer’s work.

“I like to write my poems based on a phrase or inspiration from someone else,” Donna said. “One of the last things Deb told me was that a state inspector was so impressed with her facility that she told Deb, ‘With culture change, you can’t see it, but you feel it.' Those words stuck with me and I wrote the poem a couple of days later as a reflection of what I experienced from Deb’s great facility.”

She shares her poem with us below:

---

### Ode to Culture Change

When her position as admissions coordinator in a nursing home was eliminated due to declining resident census, 55-year old Donna Everding decided it was “now or never” to make a dramatic change in her life. So, she made the decision to use her savings and take one year to further her education to have a career in nursing home administration.

Donna recently visited Oelwein Health Care Center in Oelwein, IA for an assignment to visit a facility that is undergoing culture change as part of her course work. “The facility has not been remodeled,” Donna said, “and their culture change primarily stems from the loving care and respect of their staff and the relationships staff have with their residents.”

She was impressed by Administrator Deb Schaefer’s work.

“I like to write my poems based on a phrase or inspiration from someone else,” Donna said. “One of the last things Deb told me was that a state inspector was so impressed with her facility that she told Deb, ‘With culture change, you can’t see it, but you feel it.' Those words stuck with me and I wrote the poem a couple of days later as a reflection of what I experienced from Deb’s great facility.”

She shares her poem with us below:

---

### Ode to Culture Change

When her position as admissions coordinator in a nursing home was eliminated due to declining resident census, 55-year old Donna Everding decided it was “now or never” to make a dramatic change in her life. So, she made the decision to use her savings and take one year to further her education to have a career in nursing home administration.

Donna recently visited Oelwein Health Care Center in Oelwein, IA for an assignment to visit a facility that is undergoing culture change as part of her course work. “The facility has not been remodeled,” Donna said, “and their culture change primarily stems from the loving care and respect of their staff and the relationships staff have with their residents.”

She was impressed by Administrator Deb Schaefer’s work.

“I like to write my poems based on a phrase or inspiration from someone else,” Donna said. “One of the last things Deb told me was that a state inspector was so impressed with her facility that she told Deb, ‘With culture change, you can’t see it, but you feel it.' Those words stuck with me and I wrote the poem a couple of days later as a reflection of what I experienced from Deb’s great facility.”

She shares her poem with us below:

---

### Ode to Culture Change

When her position as admissions coordinator in a nursing home was eliminated due to declining resident census, 55-year old Donna Everding decided it was “now or never” to make a dramatic change in her life. So, she made the decision to use her savings and take one year to further her education to have a career in nursing home administration.

Donna recently visited Oelwein Health Care Center in Oelwein, IA for an assignment to visit a facility that is undergoing culture change as part of her course work. “The facility has not been remodeled,” Donna said, “and their culture change primarily stems from the loving care and respect of their staff and the relationships staff have with their residents.”

She was impressed by Administrator Deb Schaefer’s work.

“I like to write my poems based on a phrase or inspiration from someone else,” Donna said. “One of the last things Deb told me was that a state inspector was so impressed with her facility that she told Deb, ‘With culture change, you can’t see it, but you feel it.' Those words stuck with me and I wrote the poem a couple of days later as a reflection of what I experienced from Deb’s great facility.”

She shares her poem with us below:

---

### Ode to Culture Change

When her position as admissions coordinator in a nursing home was eliminated due to declining resident census, 55-year old Donna Everding decided it was “now or never” to make a dramatic change in her life. So, she made the decision to use her savings and take one year to further her education to have a career in nursing home administration.

Donna recently visited Oelwein Health Care Center in Oelwein, IA for an assignment to visit a facility that is undergoing culture change as part of her course work. “The facility has not been remodeled,” Donna said, “and their culture change primarily stems from the loving care and respect of their staff and the relationships staff have with their residents.”

She was impressed by Administrator Deb Schaefer’s work.

“I like to write my poems based on a phrase or inspiration from someone else,” Donna said. “One of the last things Deb told me was that a state inspector was so impressed with her facility that she told Deb, ‘With culture change, you can’t see it, but you feel it.' Those words stuck with me and I wrote the poem a couple of days later as a reflection of what I experienced from Deb’s great facility.”

She shares her poem with us below:

---

### Ode to Culture Change

When her position as admissions coordinator in a nursing home was eliminated due to declining resident census, 55-year old Donna Everding decided it was “now or never” to make a dramatic change in her life. So, she made the decision to use her savings and take one year to further her education to have a career in nursing home administration.

Donna recently visited Oelwein Health Care Center in Oelwein, IA for an assignment to visit a facility that is undergoing culture change as part of her course work. “The facility has not been remodeled,” Donna said, “and their culture change primarily stems from the loving care and respect of their staff and the relationships staff have with their residents.”

She was impressed by Administrator Deb Schaefer’s work.

“I like to write my poems based on a phrase or inspiration from someone else,” Donna said. “One of the last things Deb told me was that a state inspector was so impressed with her facility that she told Deb, ‘With culture change, you can’t see it, but you feel it.' Those words stuck with me and I wrote the poem a couple of days later as a reflection of what I experienced from Deb’s great facility.”

She shares her poem with us below:
Change means doing things in a new way. And doing things in a new way means we must learn the new ways. But how do we find time for learning when we are already time starved? We learn as we go. Here's an excerpt from In Pursuit of the Sunbeam (p.109) that further explains the concept:

“You must make time aside from your job responsibilities to learn and grow, but ultimately you must also make learning a part of the job. Robert Quinn hit the nail on the head in Building the Bridge As You Walk On It. He wrote, ‘What we know from past experience is an asset, but what leads to successful transformation is our capacity to learn in real-time.’

And so, leaders must learn. Literature on leadership promotes “action learning” or learning on the job. The Household Model requires everyone to learn on the job. We can’t stop serving elders while we all go to school to learn how to better serve them. Instead, we must learn together with our elders in our midst. How do we learn? The same way we’ve always learned. The way we learned to do addition and subtraction in grade school or play the piano. We practice over and over. We practice talking to each other in ways we’ve never done before. We practice listening. We practice not making the decision but conferring with the new team first. If we are strongly opinionated, we practice keeping our mouths shut while inviting others to speak. If we are quiet, we practice speaking up and stating our points of view. We seek a new balance, and we get there by practicing day after day.”