

“Hear Our Voice; Residents of LTC Facilities Speak Out About Residents
Rights.”
Ivan Wheatly

Ivan Wheatly, is a Veteran living at Missouri Veteran’s Home-Warrensburg who is currently receiving Hospice services. He is more than just another Veteran living at our facility. He is an individual who has seen most of our beautiful nation behind the windshield of an eighteen wheeler. He has seen the wonders of nature that make up this beautiful country. When I first met Ivan, he very much kept to himself, and was not very interested in getting to know me, or anyone else for that matter. It took several weeks for him to open up to allow someone in his life. Ivan has communicated to me that he is a man who has struggled his entire life with building relationships and socializing. After spending a great amount of time with him, I have come to know that he is an incredibly intelligent, wise and perceptive human being. I have also come to know that he now looks forward to spending time with those people who care for and respect him.

Over the course of the last few months, Ivan and I have spent many hours talking, reminiscing and partaking in trivia questions. While spending time together, we have discovered that we are from the same hometown, Leeton Missouri. Ivan was born and raised there, as was I. The more we spoke with one another, the more congruencies there were in our lives. He graduated from Leeton High School, as had I. One afternoon while visiting with Ivan, he spoke of a young lady who had attended Leeton High School and went on to become a Science Teacher in Lee’s Summit, Missouri. Ivan was very intrigued by the accomplishments this young woman from Leeton had achieved. He also added that this particular young lady had become involved with the study of space and was actually 1 of 60 teachers selected throughout the entire nation to attend a “Zero-Gravity” flight sponsored by the Northrop Grumman Foundation. Ivan, beaming with pride, being so proud that someone from his hometown could do something so wonderful with their lives, wanted to know more about who this woman was and what she was doing with her career. As luck would have it, the woman he was speaking of was my Aunt, Chris Buehre. I gave him as much information as I could about her and her career(which includes teaching, flight on the G- Force One, Publishing a children’s book about space and speaking at conferences around the country), but that did not seem like it was enough. I could see the pride and astonishment in his face that someone from his home town, a little country town, that doesn’t even have a stoplight, could accomplish such great things.

That very afternoon, I called my Aunt and spoke to her about Ivan and how he has impressed by her accomplishments and very much wanted to meet her. That evening, I had a plan in place for her to come to Missouri Veterans Home-Warrensburg, to meet Ivan. Two weeks later, Chris Buehre came to Missouri Veterans Home- Warrensburg to share her story with him. She sat down, introduced herself and it seemed the conversation didn’t stop for hours. Reminiscing about the locals from the Leeton area, farming and most importantly reminiscing about Ivan’s life. While visiting, Chris brought Ivan a signed copy of

her children's book, "Space Explorers". This gathering seemed to last for several hours. I don't think any of us were ever at a lack of topics to discuss.

Today, when I remind Ivan of that afternoon with Chris, he states, "I still can't believe you did that for me that was so unbelievable. I would still love to hear from her today!" I also asked him what it means to him "when someone listens to your opinion or asks for your advice. He responded, "You talk to me like I am just another regular person not someone who is handicapped and on Hospice Care. You really care about what I want and then you get it going, whether I want a cheeseburger from a local restaurant or just to talk. It means the world to me when somebody wants to hear my opinion or is interested in hearing my two-cents." He also stated, "I still have my rights that our people fought and died for, but I know one day I will lose them. So, observe my rights and observe me for the person I am." At that point, I knew I had enabled Ivan to do something for himself that he would never forget and always be grateful for. Not only that, I knew what a wonderful feeling it is to treat an American Hero with the dignity and respect they deserve. I also knew it was a fabulous feeling empowering this Veteran who at times, could feel so lonely. I also realized how important it is to give a voice to each resident by listening and valuing their opinions. Ivan Wheatly has taught me more about life than one could ever imagine. He is a person whom I will appreciate while he is still here, and remember fondly when he is gone.