



A LIFE "WELL" LIVED

Will Cobb Remembered: His life, legacy and the loss experienced by those who knew him best. Learn how Will's life and death were a testimony to the fact that individuals with severe mental illness can and do lead lives of significance.



YEAR-END GRATITUDE

Reflections from our Executive Director, on a successful year, including insight on gratitude, lessons learned from community members and call for your continued support.



COMPASSION IN ACTION

A look back at the Well's hard work in 2014. Includes a list of major accomplishments, important events and examples of compassion in action - how the Well continues to make a difference.

the Well Community

A Place to Belong



December 2014

Finishing Strong

Making a Difference Together - All Year Long

A LIFE "WELL" LIVED: Remembering Will Cobb

Referring to the Well Community simply as "the Well" has become ubiquitous in both print and phrase. However, sometimes I wonder if dropping "Community" doesn't cause one to lose sight of what the Well Community really is. Too often, I worry the organization is seen simply as a provider of social services. While it is true, the Well does in fact provide much needed services to individuals with severe mental illness, viewing this as our sole mission greatly diminishes what the Well Community is fully about. The Well does not serve clients. Instead, it empowers and encourages "Community Members" to care for one another.

No one understood this concept more than Will Cobb. Even in his final days, while battling multiple health problems, Will told his wife of 29 years (Rita), that he felt he needed to start making it to the Well's Community Life Center every day. This was no easy task. To get to the Well, Rita & Will had to take two buses, navigate a transfer and wait at two different bus stops - some days in the rain, others in the scorching heat. No matter how bad he felt or how terrible the Texas weather, for the last several months Will faithfully made it every day. Looking back, I think deep down he knew he didn't have much time left and because the Well had meant so much to him, he wanted to experience the community he loved as much as he possibly could.



On July 29th, Will had just boarded the DART bus with Rita en route to the Well when he had a massive heart attack and collapsed, hitting his head on a metal rail. After trying to revive him for 45 minutes, the paramedics transported him to Baylor Hospital. Later that evening, doctors pronounced him brain-dead and recommended taking him off life support the next morning. I was holding Rita's hand when the doctor delivered the news and I wept with her and then for her. After the doctor left, Rita began rocking forward and through tears repeated, "he was a good man... he was such a good man".

Will did not have any biological children of his own, but Rita already had two young daughters when she and Will married. Both daughters told me Will was the only father they ever knew and that he always treated them as if they were his own. He was a loving husband and father and everyone who knew him agrees - the great joy of his life was his grandchildren. Will regularly took delight in dancing with them to the music of his R&B records. He was a huge fan of Al Green, Sam Cooke and Marvin Gaye. However, he was an even bigger fan of his grandchildren. I never got to witness the spectacle, but just imagining that big/gruff man, who in the 1970's became radicalized during his college years, eventually dropping out to flirt near the fringes of the "Black Power" movement and heroin addiction, dancing in his living room with two blond-headed little white girls, makes me smile. Every time I talked to Will, he always found a way to work his grandkids into the conversation... (continued on next page)



Merry Christmas!

from your friends at the Well

Join us Thursday night, December 18th, for a night of fun, fellowship & food at our annual Community Christmas party. Thanks to Trinity Church of Cedar Hill, every community member will receive a \$50 Target card. If you would still like to make a donation, we are accepting \$50 Visa/MC gift cards, which we plan to use to purchase programming supplies, etc... If you missed CTBC's Community Christmas Concert on the 7th, the Well performed, singing two songs. Visit our website for a video clip.



Year-End Gratitude: A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What a difference a year makes. Ten months ago, the issue of mental illness was not something I thought about on a daily basis. However, I was open to the idea. I suppose that sounds unusual. The truth is, I have followed the work of the Well for many years and when I learned that the Well would be looking for a new Executive Director in 2014, I knew that is where I wanted to be. I have served as the Well's Executive Director for 10 months and now, every day I think about mental illness. But more than just thinking about the issue, I have begun a journey alongside our Community Members. And as we walk together, I am being taught what it is like to live with mental illness. They also teach me about living with poverty. They teach me much more, such as how to live with gratitude and grace - even when life is not simple or easy. They have taught me so many lessons about life and I am so grateful that they welcomed me into their lives and have accepted me as a member of the Community.

This year has been eventful in the life of the Well Community and there has been joy. We have helped to plan and facilitate two weddings between Community Members; celebrated member's sobriety dates, birthdays & anniversaries; forged deep relationships at our semi-annual, overnight spiritual retreats to Mt. Lebanon; provided meaningful daily activities at the Community Life Center; and had fun taking members on monthly outings such as the State Fair of Texas, The Dallas Museum of Art, the dollar movie theater and the annual summer swim party - just to name a few. We maintained a safe and decent boarding house for men - Jacob's House and continued to worship & fellowship together on Thursday nights. We have watched as Community Members share what little they have with one another and delighted to see many grow in grace and health.

On the other hand, we also witnessed many continued to suffer and as best we could, suffered along with them. Our staff sat beside Community Members as they were told their loved ones were dying, helped some of our female members who were in situations involving domestic violence find safety, found shelter for those who otherwise would have remained homeless, comforted those in the hospital facing illness or major surgery, etc. We have provided bus fare for members who needed to get to the doctor, assistance for others applying for benefits, relationship counseling, crisis intervention, and advocated for members facing injustice and discrimination from slumlords or indifferent social service workers. And these are only a few examples of the difference the Well makes in the lives of Community Members in need.

When you go to bed at night, I doubt you think about whether your heat will be on in the morning or from where your next meal may come. Or how you will get your medication because your money has run. Or whether your family is still alive because they abandoned or rejected you in the past and you haven't seen or heard from them in years. The majority of us take such matters for granted. But, our Community Members don't - because they can't. The Well works diligently to meet the needs of our Community Members. However, their lives are fragile. Even minor situations can lead to crisis and pain. For most of us, we can count on family and friends when storms arise. But sadly, our Community Members often do not have that luxury and lack the support most of us take for granted. That is where the Well comes in.

During this Advent season, please stand with us as we continue to journey alongside our Community Members. Your continued financial support is crucial as we come to the end of 2014. We are so grateful for our many faithful supporters, without which the important work of the Well Community would not be possible. There is no gift too small or too big! Every contribution helps to ensure our Community Members will receive the assistance, interventions and spiritual care they so desperately need and deserve. I want to wish you a wonderful holiday season and once again, express how grateful I am for all that you do for the Well Community.

Alice Zaccarello

Compassion in Action

Your donations at Work - Money "Well" Spent!
Here's some examples...

- \$1.50 - Provides one Community Member a hot lunch at our Community Life Center.
- \$10.00 - Pays for one Community Member to go on the Well's semi-annual retreat.
- \$25.00 - Provides one hour of Case Management.
- \$50.00 - Feeds 40 Community Members lunch at the CLC.
- \$100.00 - Covers the costs of transporting Members to Thursday Night Life.
- \$250.00 - Provides 210 meals over 10 weeks at Jacob's House.
- \$500.00 - Pays for one Thursday Night Life.
- \$1,500 - operates the Community Life Center for 1 week.
- \$3,000 - pays for our bi-annual, overnight spiritual retreat.

For more details visit our website - www.wellcommunity.org

"Will's was a story of hope & redemption - proof that hope & healing (through the power of community) are possible for those with mental illness"

A Life "Well" Lived continued...

The generosity of Will's spirit extended beyond the love he had for his family. Along with Rita, Will was one of the first community members of the Well and in fact, was one of its first leaders. He was loved and respected by all. Throughout the years, he looked out for every community member who came through the doors, no matter their status or length of membership. He was constantly doing for others, whether it was his family, a Community Member or one of his former co-workers from Dallas MHMR, where he served as a janitorial supervisor for 15 years.

In his final moments, Will was surrounded by his loving wife & fellow member of the Well (Rita), his younger brother, niece, and 90-year-old mother, as well as several friends from the Community, including myself. Encircling Will's hospital bed, we all held hands as the medical staff methodically removed his breathing tube. As the rhythm of his breathing slowed, visible by the rise and fall of his once sturdy chest, we cried and prayed and read a Psalm. At one point, overcome by emotion, I had to step into the hallway. I found myself covering my face with my hands, hoping to obscure the fact that I was weeping. It was then that I realized just how much I had fallen in love with this man. Will was not a client. He was a member of my community. He was my friend.

To this day, I am immensely proud that I had the privilege and great honor of bearing witness to the dignity and death of a good man - more importantly, a life "well" lived!

To hear Will's story in his own words, visit the Well's website where you can watch a video that features Will and Rita Cobb - www.wellcommunity.org.

Joshua Pulis, LCSW
Program Director

