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## “LIFE BIO” PROGRAM AT FAIRVIEW HELPS RESIDENTS TURN THEIR LIFE STORIES INTO KEEPSAKE BOOKS

*Downers Grove, IL (January 8, 2008)*... Deep down, most individuals have a book brewing inside of them just waiting to be written. Now, getting started on that novel is no longer the hardest part with an innovative new program called Life Bio offered at Fairview --a Vibrant Living Community. Fairview is an accredited Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) located on 40 pastoral acres offering several levels of living from independent apartments to skilled nursing and memory support. Through a Life Bio template of open-ended questions and the choice of writing long-hand or on the computer, Fairview residents can weave their stories and leave a legacy of family history for their loved ones.

“From a psychological standpoint, recalling and sharing life stories is a powerful activity,” observed Chris Fenn, Vice President of Elder Enterprises & PEP Coach. PEP stands for People Energized through Purpose. “Studies show that it can lower depression, exercise the brain, improve social interaction, increase a sense of purpose, and engage those with memory loss. Life stories also create new conversations and strengthen bonds between family members and others. Some people might not have taken the time to share this information without the prompting provided in this important new program.”

### WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE...

Fairview residents now have an opportunity to relive and write about their first dance, first job, or first date, among many remembrances. They can recall what life was like during World War II, share their spiritual journey, or amuse their grandchildren with tales of adventures in distant lands. Life Bio also helps residents see for themselves the BIG picture of their lives as they assess the past and how it shaped who they have become.

Using the computer to access interview questions supplied at LifeBio.com, residents can record their stories onto an audio CD, fill out a memory journal, or use the tools on the LifeBios.com website to generate a ready-to-print Legacy Book. They can also create a folder on the Internet so their family members can readily see how the autobiographical work is progressing. Scanning in photos or other documents add another personal touch. Residents choose to answer as many of the interview questions as they'd like for either a shorter or longer version of their life story. Residents who choose not to use the computer can work from a paper booklet of questions.

### MEMORIES & AMERICAN HISTORY

Lynn Sullivan, one of Fairview's residents, attended six classes held in Fairview's Internet Café where she was introduced to the Life Bio computer program.

"I was excited about this program and discovered that setting up a file on the computer was easy," Sullivan said. "I saw how this would be a great way to involve my six children and their families. The computer already does a good job of keeping families connected and this adds another dimension to that connection. I was never one for writing much, especially composition, but the system of questions in the Life Bios program makes it easy to do and more fun."

Sullivan stated that she writes about memories of her mother and especially her grandmother, who lost a son in World War I.

"My grandmother was active in the Gold Star Mothers organization," Sullivan recalled. "She attended many fundraisers to establish a large World War I monument in a cemetery honoring the servicemen who lost their lives. I learned how to operate a scanner so I could scan the newspaper articles of the many things my grandmother accomplished for fallen soldiers. My children's response has been, 'Wow, I didn't know that!'"

Sullivan's many recollections also include how her family's fortunes were affected by historical events, such as the sinking of the Titanic. "My family still boarded an ocean liner that same month, determined to see their family in Europe despite that tragedy at sea," she said. "To me, it is the historical aspect of my family's life that I want to preserve," Sullivan said. "I want to show how gutsy the women in our family were – how brave and hard working."

Another resident, Alice Pugacz, said she was impressed with what a great opportunity the Life Bio program presented in assembling her family stories for her children. She opted to write her memories by hand rather than at the computer.

"Remembering the first talking picture I saw, how my family survived during the Depression, how we managed the farm without owning a combine, how the men went from farm-to-farm to thrash the wheat, this was my life when I was a young girl – under 11 years old," she noted. Alice also recalled riding in a horse-and-buggy from the house to the field to take food to the field hands. "That was fun for me – that was history," she noted.

"The Life Bio program definitely activated my memory and is especially important as my children delve more into our family genealogy," Pugacz continued. "It is all about preserving tidbits of family history. Life was different back then. We didn't have all the distractions they do today, like owning a car, radio, TV, or the computer. It's nice to remind them of an earlier time."

## A MEANINGFUL FAMILY PROJECT

Both women noted that as young mothers, they were busy raising their children and running their households. As a result, family stories from their youth or of previous generations weren't necessarily passed down. The Life Bio program now offers them the opportunity to tell those stories to younger generations, sharing wisdom, courage, and insights.

"This can easily become a very meaningful family project in bringing families closer together," Liz Amundsen, Assistant PEP Coach, observed. "We also welcome adult children to sit in on the Life Bio instruction classes. Later, residents can work on their projects from their own computers, sharing files with their children or grandchildren. For residents who have physical impairments, we also

offer the choice for them to tell a staff member their stories by talking into a tape recorder or dictating to a staff member.”

Residents participating in the Life Bio program have several options to choose from for turning their stories into a lasting keepsake. They can store their “books” on the computer or actually order a hardbound book with their stories and pictures printed inside from Lifebios.com. Or, they can hand write their stories into their own choice of journals or notebooks.

Life Bio combines old-fashioned storytelling with today’s technology for lasting results. It offers residents the chance to leave a lasting legacy of treasured family stories of times gone by. ###

*Fairview, a VibrantLiving Community, is an accredited continuing care retirement community (CCRC) located on a beautiful, 40-acre neighborhood campus in Downers Grove, Illinois. Fairview has a rich heritage of serving senior adults for more than 100 years, with a strong commitment to enhance the quality of life in a Christ-honoring environment to those residents who seek fulfillment in living. As a senior living community, Fairview offers a variety of housing choices and a continuum of services that supports an energized community of fellowship. For more information, contact Fairview’s residential sales director at 630-769-6106.*

