

## The Relentless Pursuit of Happiness

*By Donna Bishop*

In our Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson penned the words declaring that “All men are created equal with the inalienable right to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.” A Wikipedia article states that in Jefferson’s writing the words “pursuit of happiness” he meant that feeling of self-worth and dignity you acquire by contributing to your community and to its civil life.

In today’s world our thoughts center on questions like, “What do I need or want to make me happy?” We tend to look outside of ourselves for something or someone to bring us happiness. The idea that happiness is an inside job just doesn’t make sense to many people. As our society has placed increased value on material possessions our thoughts have turned to acquiring things to make us feel happy. More and more things will bring more happiness doesn’t seem to be working.

A quote from Groucho Marx might set us on the right track. “I, not events, have the power to make me happy or unhappy today. I can choose which it shall be. Yesterday is dead, tomorrow hasn’t arrived yet. I have just one day, today, and I’m going to be happy in it.”

Windsor Gardens is fortunate to have an International Organization, The Optimist Club, which welcomes all people as members. The club’s goal is to spread optimism through their programs to support young people in the metro area. Most of the programs focus on school-age students, but the club also supports some charities that serve younger children.

The following words authored by Christian D. Larson in 1912 and adopted in 1922 as the Optimist Creed provide a successful guide in the pursuit of happiness:

Promise Yourself ...

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.

To make all your friends feel that there is something in them.

To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.

To think only the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best.

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.

To forget the mistakes of the past and to press on to the achievements of the future.

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s words make our pursuit for happiness not so relentless:

“It was only a sunny smile, and cost little in the giving/But like the morning light it scattered the night/And made the day worth living.”