

Learn how to leave a legacy

Take time to write down life's stories

Personality unfolds on pages

By LORI GRAY
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Live, laugh, love, leave a legacy.

Rosanne Gulisano, a member of The Welcome Club of the Fox Valley, recently shared this quip as she unveiled her hobby of memoir saving with fellow club members.

While the first three elements may sometimes be realized with minimal effort, leaving a legacy which will span future generations can seem a more daunting task.

"The written record is our opportunity to have our family know us as a person," she said.

Gulisano has first-hand knowledge of the value of memoirs. She relishes an eight-page document she received a few months ago after her aunt had passed away. The document portrayed the major events of her aunt's lifetime. It included stories of "the old country," refugee adventures during World War I, and what it was like to be an emigrant in the 18th century.

After reading her aunt's condensed memoirs, Gulisano said she wished there were a hundred or so more pages.

"How much do you know about your great-grandparents?" Gulisano asked the audience.

Wouldn't it be interesting, she asked, to know what they did for a living, what they wore, what they ate and how they reacted to major events?

"This hobby is not the same as journaling," Gulisano explained.

While journaling is a daily record of events, saving memoirs is not a chronological process. It also expands the boundaries of simply saving photographs.

Gulisano recommended starting out by writing a few pages once a month. Memoirs can be written and placed in a loose-leaf notebook or a dresser drawer where someone will find them, she said.

She encouraged Welcome Club members to chronicle their own unique and remarkable lives, even if they didn't feel they were that unique or remarkable.

To help get club members started with their writing, she passed out a brief exercise titled "Nuggets for Memory Nudging." The exercise included focusing on key words to help rekindle memories, including holidays past, glorious food, winter fun and personal bests.

She also suggested participants put a face on history by reliving where they were when a major event unfolded.

The club is starting a small group to further explore the world of saving memoirs. Group members will meet

once a month to share their written stories.

The Welcome Club of the Fox Valley is an organization for women new to the Fox Valley as well as those who have lived here for a number of years. Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month, except January and February, when meetings are held in the morning and baby-sitting is provided.

There is a half-hour of socializing before a short general meeting, which is followed by an informative program. In addition to the new memoir group, the Welcome Club has several other interest groups, including card games such as pinochle, bridge, mah jong and bunco; crafts; needlework; outings; sports, including tennis, golf, bowling; breakfast and lunch at various restaurants; a book club; a movie club; and a baby-sitting co-op.

Each year, the membership selects a local charity and hosts a benefit auction in November. Members and local merchants donate items to be auctioned. This year's recipient was the Crisis Line of the Fox Valley.

Club member also plan and staff the Old Settlers Tea held during Geneva's Swedish Days.

The Welcome Club also provides local residents opportunities to become acquainted.

For more information about the Welcome Club, contact Margaret Galbraith at (630) 513-0320 or Mary Salierno at (630) 232-6949.