

Insight from a Letter

Each month, the president of Life Care sends a letter to executive directors, as well as to regional and divisional leadership. It is a practice that has been in place throughout the history of the company. A few days after my letter has been received, a copy is posted on the Village Square.

The June correspondence had to do with people overcoming great odds to achieve their goals, and Jean-Dominique Bauby (1952-1997), a well-known French journalist and author and editor of the French magazine *ELLE*, was used as an example. On December 8, 1995, at the age of 43, Bauby suffered a massive stroke. When he woke up 20 days later, he found he was entirely speechless; he could only blink his left eyelid. This rare condition is called Locked-in Syndrome, a condition wherein the mental faculties are intact but the entire body is paralyzed.

Despite his condition, Bauby wrote the book *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* by blinking when the correct letter was reached by a person slowly reciting the alphabet over and over again. Bauby had to compose and edit the book entirely in his head, and convey it one letter at a time. The book was published in France in 1997. Bauby died 10 days later of pneumonia. In its first week of publication, the book sold 146,000 copies. Bauby did what he could with what he had, but it took patience and commitment for him to achieve this result.

On Tuesday of this week, I received an e-mail from Karen L. Medel, business office manager at Life Care Center of Yuma. She wrote, "I read your letter to the EDs, and although the commitment and patience it took from Bauby was amazing, I was more amazed by the person who read the alphabet time and time again before Bauby blinked the correct letter. This, too, took patience and commitment.

"I believe that this is a true tale of our CNAs, nurses, therapists, dietary and all staff," Medel said. "Our residents are Bauby, who work hard with patience and commitment to meet their goals. Our [associates] are the ones that constantly read the alphabet by encouraging and their never wavering faith that the residents can achieve the goal."

Medel is right on point, and it is an application of the Bauby story that I missed. I'm glad that she pointed it out, because our associates deserve such a great tribute to their work and their dedication to our mission.

Medel is leaving Life Care Center of Yuma on Friday, since she and her family are moving to the Tucson area. We wish them well as they begin a new era of their lives.

--Beecher Hunter

