We are living longer. The average life expectancy in the US in 1900 was 50; today it is 77. Living longer presents new challenges. A 90 year old woman for whom our Center cuts grass in the summer explained her financial struggles saying, “I didn’t think I would live this long.”

Bishop Sullivan Center provides a number of services to financially strapped elderly folks. One older woman who receives the minimum social security benefit, around $700 a month, said, “You get just enough to be at the poverty line.”

The typical profile of an elderly person we help is a woman who lives alone in the home she long ago paid for. She receives enough in social security to pay her utility bills, food and medicine – but not much more. Consequently, a home repair or replacing an appliance is typically out of reach. In many cases the elderly person we help has no family to turn to, so they call us. More often than not, they are embarrassed to ask for help, having been self-sufficient for so long. The main challenge that these elderly have is financial.

Another group of older folks have a different challenge. These are people who had successful careers and raised families. As retired empty-nesters, they have discretionary time on their hands. Fortunately, many of them choose to use that time to volunteer. The majority of our volunteers are from this age group. Were it not for them, freely giving of their time, our efforts to help those in need would be compromised.

God only knows what the last season of life will bring each of us. If it is financial need, may we be humble. If it is spare time, may we be generous. Then, the one hand washes the other and both are made clean.
There is a story in the Gospel of John where a paralyzed man is cured by Jesus. Jesus tells him, “Pick up your mat and walk.” Why would Jesus want this guy to take his no-longer-needed mat with him?

This picture on the right was taken last summer in our parking lot. This couple was homeless. They have since both found work and are renting a place. When we showed her this picture recently she asked for a copy. She said she wanted to remember how low they got. She also said the picture would remind her to be sympathetic toward others who were struggling.

Maybe that is why Jesus told the paralytic to take his mat with him – as a reminder of his hard times.

“Pick Up Your Mat and Walk”

Round up your friends for the Bishop Sullivan Center Auction & Trivia Night!

Saturday, March 7, 2015
Sheraton Kansas City Hotel – Crown Center
Silent Auction & Dinner begin at 6 p.m. • Live Auction begins at 8:00 p.m.
Cost per seat is $60 or reserve a table for $550.

Go to www.bishopsullivan.org or call Angela Fencl at 816-231-0984 to reserve a table now!