

## A Special Phone Call

Care Partner Corner

by Corrie L. Phillips, PAC Team Member,  
with Ken Keene, Jr, Care Partner

Being a Care Partner to someone can be tough! Not only are you responsible for supporting someone, but your other day-to-day responsibilities don't just put themselves on hold. We are constantly pressured with meeting our family responsibilities, professional duties, paying bills, navigating social calendars, media exposure, political climates, and our own personal values. Joy is an important component that we sometimes miss in the ebb and flow of life.

I recently was given the privilege of speaking with Mr. Ken Keene. Ken provides support and care for his father, U.S. Army veteran Kenneth Keene, Sr., who is living with Frontotemporal Lobe Dementia. Ken has been documenting he and his father's journey via social media and his [YouTube Channel](#) since 2017, in order to raise awareness by sharing their real-life experiences.

Ken and I spoke of the joy we get from creating and spreading joy to others and he sent me this account to share with you:

*I'm pushing the shopping cart in the laundry detergent aisle today at our local food store and my mobile phone rings. I see it's the Veterans Senior Center calling. I'm anticipating a woman's voice. Instead of hearing the head nurse deliver some good or maybe bad news, it's my Father on the other end and he says joyfully, "Hello"...I can't help but start laughing because while it's great to hear him say "Hello" it's a relief to know everything is ok and he just wanted to talk to his son.*

*Today his memory seemed sharper than usual and although he could not see me he seemed to know vividly who I am. No sooner after answering the phone I found myself in the middle of the supermarket singing along with my Father on speaker phone, "Love is a very splendid thing"...and "I'm a Drifter"...and a few other jingles we both know. Was I getting stares or odd looks from strangers? Probably, but when your Father calls you, and he remembers who you are, nothing else matters. Now every time I am in the laundry detergent aisle, I'm gonna think about the time he and I were singing in Shop Rite. Thanks for the phone call Dad.*

Now stop and think for a minute. What did you notice about Ken's interaction with his father?

For me, a phone call can be a trigger! Is it the kids calling? Did something happen? I'm so busy right now and it's so loud in this store! Ken wondered...is it bad or good? And maybe a million thoughts ran through his mind in that moment. But he took the call!

Why did he take the call? Would you?

We have no way of knowing what news awaits us on the other end of the phone. What are some things you could do to ensure that you're ready for whatever is waiting? Maybe you need to stop and take a few deep breaths or step outside the store to better focus on the phone call. Maybe you hand the phone to a friend or family member who can support your need for help in this moment.

For Ken, he was able to just jump right in and take the call. Oh, the reward he received in doing so. Now I realize that not everyone is going to start dancing and singing in the aisles of the grocery store. I realize that not every phone call is a good one – but you won't know until you answer the phone.

So, the next time you get a call, or someone yells your name (again!) from the next room, consider that there may be a moment of joy just waiting around the corner.

To learn more about Ken, his father and their journey, please consider connecting with them online.

### **[The Journey with ToughKenaMan Intro video](#)**

A son's effort to raise awareness and share real life experiences with the world while his Father, U.S. Army veteran Kenneth Keene, Sr. enters deeper into the many different stages of Frontotemporal Lobe Dementia.

### **[Father and Son connect with Music](#)**

Some of the most basic interactions with the help of music and words that are so simplistic can sometimes create a wonderful connection with those diagnosed with dementia.

### **[Sail Away](#)**

Sails have been hoisted some time ago and the wind is still at our backs. Our voyage continues as we drift further and further into deeper waters. While it's hard not to see where the ocean meets the sky, Ken is trying to pay more attention to the waves breaking in front of him.

On December 25<sup>th</sup>, Ken released the music video **[Your Smile](#)**, highlighting the journey of dementia. An estimated 50 million people worldwide have been diagnosed and this number is expected to double in the next 20 yrs.

Click here to subscribe to their **[YouTube Channel](#)**.