

'The Way of Flowers' Brings Happiness

Like most well-heeled young ladies in Japan, Fujie Twilling was taught the traditional Japanese arts of floral arrangement and the tea ceremony in her youth. Now, as a Resident of Willow Valley Retirement Communities, she's sharing her knowledge and passion for these art forms as a volunteer in the Residential and Supportive Living areas.

In the Residential communities, Fujie, who has lived in the Spring Run Community since 2004, teaches a course in Ikebana, the Japanese art of floral arrangement, also known as kadō, "the way of flowers." From time to time, she conducts traditional Japanese tea ceremonies in Supportive Living, where she also spends countless volunteer hours visiting with Residents.

Fujie acquired these skills when she was young, before she married and came to America nearly 40 years ago. "I went to a Japanese school for young girls, sort of a prep school for young women," says Fujie. "We learned floral arrangement and the Japanese tea ceremony. It taught us balance, self-control and discipline. It was a wonderful thing to learn."

Dressed in a traditional kimono, Fujie conducts the traditional tea ceremonies to bring beauty and peace to Supportive Living Residents. The Japanese tea ceremony is a ritual of preparing and serving green tea together with some traditional Japanese sweets. When preparing tea, her attention is focused on preparing and pouring tea with carefully choreographed movements. The whole process, she says, is not about drinking tea, but preparing a bowl of tea from one's heart.

Fujie leads monthly classes in the art of Ikebana, a highly disciplined art form of simple, asymmetrical arrangements. The distinctive style is based

on a triangle which represents heaven, earth and humanity. When practicing Ikebana, silence is a must. Working with the organic elements of the arrangement is calming as the participants take notice of things in nature that so often go overlooked because of the hectic pace of life.

"The triangle makes a home for the base flower: it comes to calm and soothe you," says Fujie. "It's so peaceful; it's not full of flowers with dozens of flowers in the same container."

The goal is to bring peace, relaxation and serenity to the artist, as well as to those who view the arrangement. Fujie says that's just what happens when the groups she teaches, which consist of no more than eight participants, each create an arrangement under her watchful eye.

"The students say, 'I'm so glad to come. I needed time with the flower'. They love it so," she says. "They just continue to come and learn. They're so happy to share their arrangement and what they've learned with others. The arrangements are so simple and serene, and they're peaceful. They bring so much happiness." The happiness and peace flows from the students back to the teacher.



Fujie Twilling says although her favorite flowers are roses and lilies, she has a special place in her heart for the chrysanthemum. "It lasts longer, and is a symbol of Japan, so I often use a large mum for the center flower," she explains.



"As I grow older, I think this is a very good thing for me to do. I am so happy to come here to Willow Valley and enjoy this time in life." Fujie Twilling