

Finding joy in life and ‘making memories’

By DR. CHRISTOPHER CIANCI

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Jack and Janice Smigo admit, straight out, that they don’t remember specifically why they first visited the office of Easton chiropractor Dr. Christopher Cianci.

“It was a long time ago,” said Janice. “and whatever hurt then doesn’t hurt now.”

Jack, who is 77, and Janice, 10 years his younger, long time residents of Marling Farms in Chester, are dealing with what one of them called “all the little things” that advancing age imposes on the human body.

To deal with those varied aches and pains, to keep them under control, they have been Dr. Cianci’s regular patients for more than a decade.

The Smigos readily admit that they look forward to those appointments with Dr. Cianci. “It’s a happy place,” said Janice. “People are getting well there. Patients get to know each other. There is conversation and laughter. And Dr. Cianci and his staff, Meg and Michele, are so nice.”

Here’s the background.

Upon the urging of some longtime friends, who happened to be patients of Dr. Cianci, the Smigos attended a lecture Dr. Cianci was giving in the fall of 1999.

As they recall, vaguely, for Janice it was “stiff neck” and for Jack “a back problem.”

But they figured, they also recall, that there was no harm in finding out what Dr. Cianci’s care was all about. They found themselves in his office on Nov. 23 of that year.

It was a challenge for Janice. Unfamiliar with chiropractic from the patient’s point of view, Janice said, ‘I was scared to death.’

It was an apprehension which Dr. Cianci and his care soon put to rest.

Jack Smigo has a half-century career as an educator in the Queen Anne’s County School system.

Starting out as an English teacher in 1959 in the then Stevensville High School, he has served the Queen Anne’s County School System, through the years, as a supervisor in the Queen Anne’s County High School; a supervisor K-12, for the county school system; the system’s director of finance; and the system’s assistant superintendent and deputy superintendent.

He retired – or tried to - in 1992 but was soon called back to serve first as a consultant, and then to fill in at various administrative positions including that at the county’s alternative school.

And no, he is not done yet. He now serves the Queen Anne’s County School System as an Ombudsman.

“I love what I do,” he said. “It’s that simple. And Dr. Cianci keeps me going.”

Janice Smigo also fills her days, happily and free of aches and pains. Employed once a week at the Country Pettaler, a country furnishings and accessories shop in Chester, she devotes her days to attentions to her home, her gardens and her family.

Underline family.

The Smigos have four children, two boys and two girls. There are 11 grandchildren and one great granddaughter, age three years.

Almost every Sunday, the family gathers at the nearly half-century-old home at Marling Farms, for dinner, served between 4:30 and 5 p.m.

There are, variously, between 20 and two dozen family members seated at the several tables. (The kids are allowed, if necessary, to sit in the family room and watch television.)

Janice has prepared the meal. If there is a birthday in the family in the coming week, the birthday child, or parent, as the case may be, gets to name the menu.

“Whatever the favorite is,” Janice says, “that’s what it will be.”

“I like to cook,” Janice said. “And we are so lucky to have everybody close by.”

After more than a decade in the care of Dr. Cianci, the Smigos have no thought of dispensing with their visits to his office. They have been too important in keeping them mobile and healthy.

There have been back pains and shoulder pains and neck pains and the like through the years and they have no intention of allowing that sort of discomfort from interfering with – or circumscribing – their lives.

That is particularly true of the Sunday dinners, with their entire family gathered around, and Janice’s ability to continue as chief cook (if not bottle washer) unhindered by any physical discomfort.

(Dr. Cianci even suggested she get what is called a wellness mat, a cushioned rug of sorts, which she slides under her feet as she moves up and down her kitchen counter preparing the Sunday dinner. “It’s wonderful for my foot comfort,” she said.)

The Smigos find great joy in their lives but they are not immune to thoughts of their mortality.

That is one of the reasons why the Sunday dinners are so important.

“We are making memories,” Janice said.

Dr. Cianci agreed. “Time spent with family is precious,” he said. “It is not worth being distracted by the ills of aging to miss out on those special times.”