



## *A special Village to Village event*

# Gawande to address what really matters as we age

Dr. Atul Gawande asks the big questions: What matters most to us as we near the end of our lives? What do we live for, and what can't we live without?

These, he says, are the straightforward questions that most doctors today fail to ask their older patients. Instead, Gawande believes that “lacking a coherent view of how people might live successfully all the way to the very end, we have allowed our fates to be controlled by medicine, technology, and strangers.”

Gawande is a distinguished surgeon, public health researcher and author. He has received two National Magazine Awards as well as a MacArthur Fellowship. He has frequently challenged our society's approach to medical care, focusing his sights on the overuse of medical technologies and our failure to integrate medicine and human values.

Recently, Gawande has turned his attention to how the medical profession, and our culture in general, approaches aging. His most recent book, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*, addresses the need to create a culture where people live fully and with meaning to the last days of their lives. Gawande argues that too often medicine focuses on extending the number of days we live without paying attention to the quality of those days.

He also argues for the importance of talking with our loved ones about what matters to us and how we want to live our last years. Gawande writes about a conversation that Dr. Susan Block, a respected palliative care physician (a branch of medicine that deals with improving quality of life during serious illness), had with her father after his diagnosis of lymphoma at age 74.



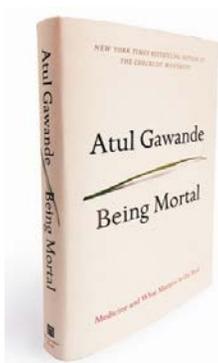
*(continued on reverse)*

TRAIL and the Iowa City-Johnson County Senior Center are hosting a **live televised conversation with Dr. Atul Gawande on September 25, 2017, at 4:00 p.m.** (please arrive no later than 3:45) at the **Coralville Public Library**, followed by a reception with refreshments. The event celebrates the 15th anniversary of the founding of Boston's Beacon Hill Village, which inspired the Village to Village movement of which TRAIL is a part. Gawande's presentation, entitled "*Being Mortal's* Villages: The Value of Community and Choice as We Grow Older," will be moderated by Robin Young, host of National Public Radio's *Here & Now*, and will feature a discussion on aging and living life with purpose. The event is free but registration is encouraged; visit <http://trailofjohnsoncounty.org/calendar> to sign up or call the TRAIL office at 319-800-9003 for more details. **We hope to see you there!**

## Gawande event, cont.

As a result of his illness, Block's father was faced with a surgery that could leave him paralyzed. Sitting with him the night before his surgery, she realized that she did not know what he valued and what was important to him as he faced this procedure. She asked him directly what he was willing to go through and what he was willing to tolerate to have a chance at life.

His answer surprised her. As long as he was able to eat chocolate ice cream and watch football on television, he would consider his life worth living. Block's father was a professor emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley, and, to her knowledge, had never watched football in his life!



Gawande uses this anecdote to underscore the importance of talking to our loved ones about what we want and what matters to us as we face our mortality.

Not only may the answers surprise us, but the questions can clarify our thinking and help our loved ones understand the decisions we make (or want made on our behalf) about our

lives and our medical treatment as we age.

While Gawande writes about mortality, his message is one of hope. He firmly believes that by addressing the question of what we value as we face aging and illness, "we have the opportunity to refashion our institutions, culture, and conversations to transform the possibilities for the last chapters of all of our lives."

\* \* \*

(Iowa City Hospice's *Honoring Your Wishes* program can help you start these conversations with family and friends; see <http://honoringyourwishes.org/> or call 319-351-5665 for more information.)

## Join us on September 25!

I often walk from my home to the TRAIL office and pass the time by listening to audiobooks. Last week, I became so engrossed in my book that I made an extra loop around the block just to get to the end of the chapter.



You see, I'm listening to *Being Mortal* by Dr. Atul Gawande. You can argue that Dr. Gawande single-handedly started a national conversation about the ability to make choices regarding how we want to live in our older years.

As noted on page 1, Dr. Gawande will be speaking to a live audience in Boston on Monday, September 25, and TRAIL will televise the conversation in front of our own live audience at the Coralville Public Library.

**The broadcast will start promptly at 4:00 p.m., so plan to arrive no later than 3:45.** Please park on the lower level of the adjacent Town Center Parking Facility, which includes a handicapped access entrance. If you have questions, feel free to call the TRAIL office.

I hope to see you in Coralville!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Hillary Ramaker'.

Hillary Ramaker  
Executive Director  
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