

THE VILLAGE VOICE

SPRING 2021

IN-PERSON—RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES VISIT TOGETHER AGAIN



*Resident Mary Ann Birch with her husband
Len Sotsky*

Len Sotsky sought out the help of The Village at Rockville—A National Lutheran Community when his wife Mary Ann Birch needed rehabilitation after her knee replacement did not heal properly. She then developed onset dementia and needed memory care.

Prior to the pandemic, Len would visit Mary Ann often in the Health Center. When the pandemic hit and it was no longer safe for residents and family members to visit together, Len was devastated when he could no longer see his wife of 16 years in person. “We visited virtually, and I was very grateful to the staff at The Village at Rockville for that,

but seeing her on an iPad just wasn’t the same,” Len remembers. He could barely sleep at night, worried about Mary Ann every day, and wondering if she would understand why he hadn’t come to visit.

Len and Mary Ann’s story is only one of many that is emblematic of residents who could not visit with loved ones in-person when the pandemic began. For many months, residents and families visited as they could — virtually and through window visits.

Residents who were well enough to leave the building enjoyed outdoor visits with family, but those visits were often brief due to weather.

In April however, Len and members of many other families were able to visit with residents in person due to changing guidance from the Maryland Department of Health, and the rise in vaccination rates, amongst residents and their families.

Len was even able to celebrate his 80th birthday with Mary Ann last month. “When I saw her I was able to touch and hold her face and tell her I loved her. She said: ‘You’re my sweetheart, and you’ll always be my sweetheart.’”

Seena Gudelsky and her family members were able to see her mother Peggy Sussman via virtual and outdoor visits prior to getting together in person recently. “But it wasn’t the same. We couldn’t see her smile because of the mask. However Mother’s Day was glorious,” Seena said. “We sat social distanced on the patio, and we could see Mom’s smile. Although she cannot speak, she tried to communicate to us with her eyes and her smile. So being able to visit in-person and see her face without a mask means so much.”

IN THIS ISSUE:

Learn more about residents and families visiting in-person again and enriching programs at The Village at Rockville through this issue of our quarterly newsletter produced by the senior leadership team. If you have feedback or suggestions, contact Phyllis Weaver at 301-354-8420.



A National Lutheran Community

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Village at Rockville has always been a thriving community where residents have enjoyed socializing together, volunteers have fulfilled needs of the community with their time and talents and team members have supported one another in their daily work and in our mission.

As COVID-19 restrictions have lessened, friends and neighbors are back together for programming and dining experiences, and families are visiting in resident's rooms. The joy and laughter being shared throughout the community are inspiring.

As we await the day we can welcome volunteers back to the community, we celebrated Volunteer Appreciation Month with a virtual program,

recognizing all volunteers for their commitment to creating meaningful engagement. Even when restrictions keep volunteers outside of the community, many remain connected by sending cards and supplies, creating virtual lessons and calling to provide a thought or prayer.

Team members continue to show their resiliency and collaboration, demonstrating their commitment to our We CARE culture. Based on feedback and insight from our team members, we have received the certification of A Great Place to Work® for the third year in a row.

In 2020, Larry Bradshaw, National Lutheran Communities & Services (NLCS) president and CEO announced his upcoming retirement. We are forever thankful for Larry's vision and stewardship of our mission, and we will have the opportunity as a community to recognize his efforts in July. Cyndi Walters, current NLCS chief operating officer, was selected by the NLCS Board of Trustees to succeed Larry as of August 1. I am excited for what lies ahead for our entire organization under Cyndi's leadership.

—Kyle S. Hreben
Executive Director

TEAM MEMBER APPRECIATION WEEK



Team members enjoying Team Member Appreciation Week.

Our Talent & Culture team created a week-long celebration to thank team members who go above and beyond each day to care for residents and their fellow team members. A few highlights included outdoor field games, food trucks bearing funnel cakes and ice cream, a paint and sip event and a summer jam featuring a live reggae band. “Our team members have really gone above and beyond, especially within the last year navigating the pandemic,” said Talent & Culture Director, Kristina Vaughn. “Our goal was to create a memorable team member experience on the heels of our Team Member Appreciation Ceremony that team members will appreciate for years to come. It was wonderful to see team members come together in celebration and enjoy the warm weather and appreciation events.”

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: BONNIE FIELDS

When Glenmere resident, Bonnie Fields was a preteen, she remembers riding around with her brother in his teal-colored, early generation two-seater Triumph. She loved his fast driving with the top down and feeling the wind in her face. Although she was not driving herself, that was when she fell in love with fast cars and became attracted to the open road.

After raising her children and working as an office manager at her husband Larry's dental practice, Bonnie decided to follow that passion for the open road. So at the age of 50, she enrolled in driving school at Summit Point Raceway in West Virginia. Before long, she was a bona fide racecar driver.

"You have to go to driver's school before you can get a Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) license," she says. She shared photos of her racecar and the actual headlight cover from the car bearing two dozen or so stickers as evidence of many of the races in which she participated. She raced from approximately 1997 to 2007.

Bonnie is quick to point out that she did not race for NASCAR. Instead, she was strictly a road racer participating at the club level of racing, not professionally. Bonnie chose amateur road racing for one very simplistic

reason – the pursuit of happiness.

Bonnie raced her first generation Mazda RX-7 on a two-mile paved track with curves, hills and straights. She found herself hovering near the back of the pack, allowing faster cars to move ahead. On occasion she was able to move up to the middle. "After years I became a little less nervous and a little more aggressive," she remembers.

Bonnie was the only woman in her race class at that time. To call out her uniqueness, her friends painted the words "the tooth fairy" on the back of her Mazda, in homage to her and her husband's work in dentistry.

Her passion became a family affair. Her son Jason raced his own car in a different class and served as a flagger with his father and Bonnie's husband Larry. They communicated with the drivers by waving various colored flags to advise of conditions or dangers ahead. Larry was the solo member of the pit crew whose job was to maintain the car and tow it to the racetrack. "I raced with testosterone-laden twenty-something men when I was fifty," she remarks. "They had to win, so I let them pass. My son said to me once:



Independent living resident Bonnie Fields

"Mom, put your foot in it! You drive faster on the beltway than you're driving out here," she laughs. Larry echoes this point. "The guys at the track knew she wasn't driving fast enough, too, because her brake pads were wearing very slowly."

However, Bonnie points out that having fun and a unique experience and finishing an event in which both she and the car were unscathed was paramount to placing first. "Depending on how you look at it, I either never won a race, or I won all of them except one," she said, noting that she didn't win because her car failed. "I was having fun and always arrived home safely."



Bonnie on the track in her race car

IN THE NEWS—THE PATH FORWARD



Healthcare Administrator Erin Wheeler

By Erin Wheeler
Healthcare Administrator

We are nearly six months into our vaccination program at The Village at Rockville, and we have exciting news to report. Nearly all of residents and a substantial number of staff members have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Our statistics regarding these vaccinations are as follows:

- 76.5% of all team members are fully vaccinated.
- 92% of skilled nursing residents are fully vaccinated
- 97% of assisted living residents are fully vaccinated

- 96.5% of independent living residents are fully vaccinated

We also just held a vaccination clinic for residents and team members who needed to receive the second dose of the vaccine, so these numbers will increase. Please know that non-vaccinated staff members are tested on a regular basis.

We are excited that because the majority of our community is fully vaccinated, and of our residents' family members are able to visit together. We love seeing more families visiting together across the community, enjoying nature and recapturing moments.

As you know, we are keenly aware of and tuned into guidance being shared by Maryland Department of Health (MDH) that is specific for nursing homes. As we continue to win the war on COVID-19, it is our hope that soon we will be able to fully re-open, and our every day operations will be much closer to what they were prior to the pandemic.

Vaccinated residents are enjoying more opportunities to socialize with each other. Socialization is a key component of the seven dimensions of wellness, which is a primary focus at The Village at Rockville. As we

provide residents with opportunities to explore all dimensions of wellness — social, physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, vocational and environmental — we believe that we enhance residents' abilities to continually thrive in each of these areas of their lives.

While we found ways during the height of the pandemic to replicate social elements in our programming, virtual or otherwise, we are glad that residents have the opportunity to gather together again in person.

Finally, thank you for your questions about when members of our community will receive COVID-19 booster shots. There have been many questions throughout the medical community about when, and if, these shots will be needed. Unfortunately, we do not have an answer for you now. However, we are kept informed through regular meetings with MDH that help us keep our community safe and far ahead on the path forward.

TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: LORNA BROWN

Each year, The Village at Rockville's Talent & Culture team creates a special program to honor team members celebrating milestone anniversaries. This year, team members celebrating anywhere from five to 35 years were honored for their dedication and service to residents and team members.

While the celebration was held virtually this year, it was perhaps more meaningful. After weathering the pandemic for the last year, the milestone anniversaries took on new meaning — one of fortitude, strength and a commitment to overcoming obstacles in order to serve residents.

Geriatric Nursing Assistant (GNA) Lorna Brown is one of three team members at The Village at Rockville who celebrated 35 years of service this year. Cassandra Marshall and Jean Wynter share this milestone.

Lorna says 35 years is a long time for any employee to devote to any organization, however, for her it seemed to go by quickly. That's because each day connecting with residents and team members equates to doing meaningful work that she loves.

"It's an honor and a blessing to be here for 35 years," she says. "I never thought I would work here for this long, but I'm here, and I appreciate all of the love I've received from residents and team members."



Geriatric Nursing Assistant Lorna Brown

As she considers the challenges of the past year, she is even more grateful. "Through all of this pandemic we are going through, we are here taking care of our residents, doing the best we can. We hope and pray that we can move on and things will get a little better as we go along. Thank God we're still here."

For Lorna, working at The Village at Rockville has equated to more than just a job. It has meant building relationships with residents and team members who have become more like family.

This is the type of connection that has helped her bring her positive spirit to work every day. "Even through all of the bad weather, I am here to take care of my residents. That means a lot to me," she says.

Lorna's coach, Assistant Director of Nursing Kokouvi Addeh-Adodo says she is truly a dedicated team member worthy of innumerable kudos and accolades.

"This 35-year milestone celebration is proof that The Village at Rockville is truly a great place to work," he says. "Lorna's dedication and passion for what she does are an inspiration for all of us."



OPENING MINDS WITH ART

When ConnectedLiving Coordinator, Mengjiao Wang wants to relax or de-stress, she turns to visual art. She says when she is creating — through drawing, still life or 3D art for example — her problems seem to dissipate. While providing residents at The Village at Rockville with her art skills, especially those who have dementia, she wondered if she could help them create the self-satisfying peace that has become her refuge.

Mengjiao found a groundbreaking arts program to not only introduce residents at The Village at Rockville to the same sense of peace that art brings to her but to also

utilize art as a valuable means of communication.

Mengjiao became a certified trainer of Opening Minds Through Art (OMA). Through the OMA program, people with dementia are paired with volunteers who are trained to rely on imagination instead of memory and focus on remaining strengths instead of lost skills. Through this process, older adults who have dementia are also able to assume new roles as artists and teachers and leave a legacy of beautiful artwork. OMA has been widely replicated. “Through this program, Mengjiao has the tools to bring enhanced art programs to our memory care communities,” said



Connected Living Coordinator Mengjiao Wang

Mengjiao's coach, ConnectedLiving Director, Melissa Blackstone. “We are so excited to be able to offer this program to residents because we know how powerful art is and the positive engagement experiences art creates. We are also thankful to Mengjiao for her commitment and dedication to this community.”

A photograph of two women, one younger and one older, smiling and standing outdoors in front of greenery. The younger woman is wearing a light blue shirt, and the older woman is wearing a striped shirt and a pearl necklace.

myPotentialSM at home



A National Lutheran Service

myPotential at Home—A National Lutheran Service offers in-home health, wellness and personal care services to older adults in Montgomery County, Maryland.

myPotential at Home's staff is carefully vetted and provide a range of highly customizable services to help you or your loved one including:

- Assistance with everyday tasks
- Personal care and assistance
- Transportation and companionship
- Light housekeeping and meal preparation
- And more

myPotential at Home's holistic and customized approach helps older adults reach their full potential at any age and any stage.

myPotential at Home is licensed as a residential service agency by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Health Care Quality. License number R4007P.

To learn more call 301-354-4567 or visit www.mypotentialathome.com

myPotential at Home is affiliated with National Lutheran Communities & Services, a not-for-profit ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, serving people of all beliefs.

CLOSING IN ON OUR GOAL: BENEVOLENT CARE CAMPAIGN

People love to know that since our founding in 1890, we have never had to ask residents to leave if they ran out of funds through no fault of their own.

While there is always a need to grow our Benevolent Care Endowment, we are currently in the final stretch of a targeted campaign to grow this fund by \$3 million by December 31, 2021.

The beauty of this campaign is that we do not get closer to the finish line only through actual cash gifts, although they are important. You can also include a planned gift, such as a bequest in your will or a beneficiary designation of an account (e.g. IRA, stock, or life insurance). If you let the Philanthropy department know the approximate current value of that gift, it will be counted towards our goal.

With your help we can raise the final \$500,000 by December 31.

Here's an example of how you can contribute to the Benevolent Care Campaign. Widow Katie Luther has an IRA valued at \$500,000. She updates her beneficiary designations: 20% to each of her three children who are doing well, 20% to her church, and 20% to The Village at Rockville. When she lets us know this, we can count her \$100,000 towards the goal of this campaign. Now there is only \$400,000 more to raise. Even though no one knows how much will be in her IRA when we actually receive it, we can value this generous gesture at the amount on the date she completes her paperwork. To find out how you can participate, please call the Philanthropy department at 301-354-8422.

A TASTE OF GLENMERE

Since Glenmere opened earlier this year, current residents and team members have enjoyed touring our 130 apartment independent living expansion.

"We are so excited that we can now safely offer tours of Glenmere to potential residents who have been patiently waiting to see our beautiful new apartment homes," says Sales Director, Lawren Lankford.

More than fifty potential residents and their families toured Glenmere during the month of May alone, and more will tour this month and enjoy a special meal from the Dining team.

"Current residents are spreading the word about their new home to their friends, and potential residents can't wait to visit in person so they, too, can get a taste of Glenmere," she says.

For more information go to thevillageatrockville.org/openhouse

NLCS NAMES NEW CEO



National Lutheran Communities & Services (NLCS), parent company of The Village at Rockville, has

named Cyndi Walters as President and CEO, succeeding Larry Bradshaw, who is retiring after 12 years with NLCS. Cyndi, who has worked with NLCS in varying capacities for nine years, most recently as Chief Operating Officer, becomes the CEO on

August 1, 2021. "National Lutheran Communities & Services will be in very capable, skilled and dedicated hands under Cyndi's expertise and vision. She understands and lives the NLCS ministry of keeping quality care at the focus of our day-to-day operations and mission," Bradshaw stated. Read more about our new CEO at www.nationallutheran.org.

EVERYTHING GREEN—HORTICULTURE AT THE VILLAGE AT ROCKVILLE

Horticulture, or the art of garden cultivation and management, can have many positive effects on the lives of older adults. For example, gardening and the growth of green plants in one's environment can also improve motor functioning, ease stress and encourage positive mental well-being.

ConnectedLiving Coordinator, Susan Devine was just about to kick off a formal horticultural program last March when the pandemic hit. The horticulturist with a

30-year career in interiorscaping had to apply her background and love of plants to her job of keeping residents engaged when they could no longer gather for horticultural programs.

Susan created innovative ways for residents to connect with horticulture — everything from building terrariums with succulent plants for individual residents in the Health Center to creating a habitat of milkweed plants to lure monarch butterflies to our



ConnectedLiving Coordinator Susan Devine

assisted living patio. Recently she organized a container garden workshop. “Plants are a powerful tool for healing and enjoyment for older adults,” she says. “I am truly honored by finding ways for our community to engage with them every day.”



The Village at Rockville is affiliated with National Lutheran Communities & Services, a faith-based, not-for-profit ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, serving people of all beliefs.

A National Lutheran Community
9701 Veirs Drive, Rockville, MD 20850

