

BRANCHING OUT

LIVING BRANCHES

Live & Grow – Together

EVERYONE COMES TOGETHER

1975

SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES AUXILIARY



TOWARDS A NEW VAN – Souderton Mennonite Homes Auxiliary committed this year's fund raising efforts towards the purchase of a wheelchair-accessible mini-van for the health care facility. The poster introducing the van was presented to SMH Board Vice President Willis Miller by Auxiliary President Alta Yoder at a recent Community Volunteer Dinner sponsored by more than 100 volunteers. The upcoming fund raising event, a Music and Quilt Auction, to be held Aug. 27.





FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

WHETHER THEY IMPACT OUR CAREER PATH,

grow our knowledge, or mold our character, a good mentor can make all the difference in any stage of life. During the dedication ceremony for the Derstine Chapel at Dock Woods in October 2025, I reflected on two individuals who had a profound impact on so many residents and team members at Dock Woods – including me.

David and Maxine Derstine were employed at Dock Woods when I began my tenure with the organization, and I got to know David well before he retired in 1995. With an eye for the future and a heart for others, David exemplified what would ultimately become the mission of Living Branches: to empower residents and older adults to lead lives of purpose and joy, guided by the Mennonite tradition of care and service to others. I have many fond memories of David and Maxine; they were welcoming, engaging, and respectful, and I try to live by their example every day at Living Branches.

Countless others have shaped this organization over the decades. In this issue's cover story, you'll meet some of the dedicated women who established and continue to serve the Souderton Mennonite Homes Auxiliary. Since its founding 50 years ago, the Auxiliary has raised over \$2 million to support the Souderton community, including campus upgrades and a recent focus on benevolent care. Those who have contributed their time, talents, and energy through the Auxiliary should be proud to know they've left Living Branches better than they found it.

But the story of one or even a handful of influential persons cannot tell the full story of Living Branches. This organization does not depend on any one person or personality; it depends on each and every one of us. Our time and skills. Our willingness to serve our residents, families, and team members. Our commitment to a shared mission and vision.

The next time you step into the Derstine Chapel or another campus space dedicated to a person who shaped Living Branches, I encourage you to reflect on those who came before you. Those who answered your questions, offered you advice, and influenced your character. And I encourage you to look around and consider who may benefit from your advice and experience. What guidance can you offer today so that Living Branches remains a vibrant, welcoming community tomorrow? Whom can you support as we work – together – to advance our mission?

EDWARD D. BRUBAKER
President/CEO

BRANCHING OUT

A PUBLICATION OF LIVING BRANCHES

Together we empower older adults and families to lead lives of purpose and joy, guided by the Mennonite tradition of care and service to others.

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Living Branches maintains a mailing list of people who we feel are interested in the activities, events, programs, and services of our communities. If for any reason you want your name removed from this list, please email the editor with your name, address, and request at BranchingOut@LivingBranches.org

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EVERYONE COMES TOGETHER



THE LASTING LEGACY OF THE SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES AUXILIARY



TOP:
JEFF GORDON SIGNS
A RACE CAR QUILT
DESIGNED BY BUD AND
JENNETTE BUNNEY AND
AUCTIONED AT THE
CHICKEN BBQ IN 1996.

JUST A FEW YEARS shy of its 50th anniversary, the Souderton Mennonite Homes Auxiliary reached an important milestone. Since its creation in 1975, the group has contributed \$2 million to Souderton Mennonite Homes.

“I have such a wonderful group behind me,” said Auxiliary president Alta Yoder. “That’s why we keep plugging ahead with things – why we’re still raising money.”

For half a century, the Auxiliary has served the Souderton community through volunteering and, in recent years, a strong focus on fundraising for benevolent care.

“The Auxiliary has faithfully served countless Souderton Mennonite Homes residents and their families over the years,” said Living Branches President/CEO Edward Brubaker. “The group’s longevity is a testament to the clarity of their mission, dedication of their members, and nimbleness in meeting our community’s evolving needs.”

A CALL TO SERVICE

The Auxiliary was born from a singular call to serve others. Marion Alderfer Landis, a registered nurse at Grand View Hospital and a dedicated volunteer at Souderton Mennonite Homes, formed the Auxiliary and served as its first president in 1975.

In that role, Marion oversaw Auxiliary operations, fundraising efforts, and volunteer recruitment and management.

“She just saw a need,” Alta said. “She and her husband had always visited residents, so they knew what was needed.”

MANY HANDS

Although she served with the Auxiliary until 1989, Marion quickly brought others into the fold. The presidency passed to Florence Metz in 1977 and was held by three others – Shirley Swartz, Esther Leatherman, and Anna Mae Derstine – before Alta took the role in 1986 and was hired by Souderton Mennonite Homes in 1988.

“Marion was a wonderful person to work with,” Alta said. “She was always supportive and stayed very involved even after I came on board.”

The Auxiliary coordinated volunteers, drawn from member churches, to support residents and team members in day-to-day activities. They also celebrated resident birthdays and hosted many socials and activities now managed by life enrichment coordinators. Popular events included a spring fling social, a summer picnic, and an annual Christmas celebration and tea.

BELOVED TRADITIONS

To raise funds for repairs, remodeling, and miscellaneous items such as a piano and projector, the Auxiliary got to work right away in its early years. Members displayed quilts in local banks, sold antique furniture, and hosted auctions.

As the Auxiliary grew throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the group launched many of the



cherished fundraisers still enjoyed today at the Souderton campus of Living Branches.

THE CHICKEN BBQ AND QUILT AUCTION

Under the guidance of Florence Metz, the Auxiliary started in 1975 what would become a well-known annual event in the Souderton community: the Chicken BBQ and Quilt Auction.

“It was on a small scale early on,” Alta recalled, “and the main thing was the quilt auction as well as the chicken. We used to make our chicken on Christopher Dock’s campus and transport it up to Souderton until the Auxiliary installed the BBQ pit on the Souderton campus in 1987. Eventually, the event got to the size that we would hire a company to put all the tents up.”

Though the Covid pandemic and challenges with volunteer recruitment have brought a close to the chicken BBQ, some elements of the event, such as the hymn sing, are set to continue at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

“Like most non-profit organizations today, Living Branches is retooling its large fundraiser events,” said Keith Heavener, director of fund development for Living Branches. “Fortunately, the Auxiliary continues to find ways to raise funds in support of residents. Their creativity and agility is admirable.”



GRANDMA'S OLD FASHIONED DINNERS

Starting in 2005, one of the items auctioned off at the Chicken BBQ was a dinner for 12, prepared and served by Auxiliary members in the Sunflower Room at Souderton Mennonite Homes. Cuisine varied over the years – from roast beef to oysters to ham to brunch – but the food and fellowship was always enjoyed by attendees and the Auxiliary volunteers who contributed home-cooked food.

THE HOLIDAY BAZAAR

Like the Chicken BBQ, the annual Holiday Bazaar – a two-day market featuring local crafters, artists, and other vendors – grew from a humble start in 1975 into a popular tradition.

“It used to be where the laundry is located now,” Alta recalled. “I would bring my grandparents, who were residents at the time, down that long hallway. It was small, but people came.”

The bazaar was originally called the Pre-Christmas Sale and took place after Thanksgiving until flagging attendance prompted a shift to early November. It “really took off” after that, according to Alta.

One of the most popular elements – the oyster stew, first introduced in 1981 – was another contribution of Florence Metz.

“We would also make vegetable soup in the kitchen, working until late at night,” Alta said. “Cooling it down was always an issue. It was quite an undertaking!”

THE ROCKER-THON

When Souderton Mennonite Homes sought to build a fitness center, the Auxiliary came up with a creative fundraiser: the Rocker-thon, first hosted in 2004.

“The first year, we had both bikes and rocking chairs in the auditorium for participants to sit on,” Alta recalled.

The event quickly evolved into its current state, in which residents enjoy knitting, word puzzles, and socializing while sitting in rocking chairs. Their friends and family members pledge support of the six-hour event, which is set to resume in 2024.

“It’s always fun to see how residents start in the center of the auditorium and end up on the outskirts because their rockers move throughout the day,” Alta said with a smile.

A CHARITABLE LEGACY

As the Auxiliary launched more and more annual fundraisers – and those fundraisers grew in size and success – they were able to fund larger projects and purchases. Those contributions now total over \$2 million, a figure Alta calls “overwhelming.”



TOP:
AUXILIARY FUNDS CONTRIBUTED TO THE CAMPUS PAVILION

BOTTOM:
VOLUNTEERS SERVE UP SLICES OF PIE AT THE ANNUAL CHICKEN BBQ

March 1975: Auxiliary created (called Eastern Mennonite Home Auxiliary at the time) with Marion Alderfer Landis serving as the first president from 1975 to 1977.

The Corner Store opens as a grocery store for residents, with prices kept the same or very close to Landis’ prices.

First hymn sing is held the day after the Chicken BBQ.

1975

1979

1985

1987

1995

1996

Auxiliary funds support purchase of a brown station wagon for resident transportation.

The pavilion was built with Auxiliary funds contributed in 1986 and 1987.

Jeff Gordon signed race car quilt is auctioned off at the Chicken BBQ.

“I have trouble saying it,” she says.

Much of those funds supported campus projects, from the pavilion installed in 1987 to a new wheelchair van and two passenger vehicles in the late 1990s, to the creation of the Apple Orchard Café in 2005.

Other times, funds were used for maintenance and refurbishments, including new air conditioning and fans in 1980 and work on the front lobby nearly 15 years later. For several years in the early 2000s, matching gifts doubled the impact of these contributions, helping to establish the Apple Orchard Café and bring new equipment to the fitness center.

“For every project, someone in the Auxiliary was really on top of it,” Alta explained.

SUPPORTING BENEVOLENT CARE

When Living Branches was established in 2008 through the affiliation of Souderton Mennonite Homes and Dock Woods, the Auxiliary shifted the focus of their donations.

Since 2007, the Auxiliary has contributed nearly \$575,000 to the Agape Fund, which provides benevolent care to Souderton Mennonite Homes residents who can no longer afford the full cost of their care.

Some of these funds come from the Corner Store at Souderton Mennonite Homes, another creative

avenue for fundraising that opened its doors in 1985. Those who run the store volunteer their time to ensure the store’s profits benefit residents.

Auxiliary funds also come from community members and businesses who give financial support.

“Everyone comes together to help those who can’t afford care for the length of years they live anymore,” Alta says. “I think we’re more focused now, and donors are more enthused with that.”

Dollars raised for the Agape Fund broaden the impact of the Auxiliary’s work, as all residents who qualify for benevolent care can benefit from the fund. In 2025 alone, 18 Souderton Mennonite Homes residents received benevolent care thanks in part to the Agape Fund.

“Senior citizens have always been my love,” Alta says. “As a senior myself, I know how families feel. They’re just so grateful for a program that will take care of them like this.”

**TOP:
AUXILIARY FUNDS
PURCHASED A
26-PASSENGER COACH
FOR RESIDENTS**

**BOTTOM:
AUXILIARY OFFICERS
IN 2008**



**L TO R: BARBARA MOYER, RUTH NICE, ALTA YODER, GAIL PANTZER,
LIZ HAGEY, SHIRLEY RITTENHOUSE, AND FLORENCE METZ**

Walking path around the villas completed, supported by Auxiliary donations in 1998 and 1999.

First Rocker-thon hosted to raise funds for fitness center equipment. \$120,000 donated the following year, thanks to matching dollars.

The Auxiliary begins to make memorial gifts to the Agape Fund in memory of Auxiliary members.

1999

2003

2004

2007

2019

Donated \$200,000 for the Apple Orchard Café.

Auxiliary makes first contribution in support of the Agape Fund, which provides benevolent care to Souderton Mennonite Homes residents who have outlived their funds through no fault of their own.



TOP: A LIVING ROOM IN THE NEW HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY AT DOCK WOODS

LEFT: A DINING AREA IN THE NEW HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY AT DOCK WOODS

RIGHT: CONSTRUCTION ON THE NEW MEMORY CARE COMMUNITY IN HEALTH CARE AT SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES

HEALTH CARE AT DOCK WOODS

Work continues at Dock Terrace, the Health Care neighborhood at Dock Woods. Phase II has wrapped up, providing Health Care residents with 14 renovated rooms, the majority of which are private. Fifteen residents settled into those new rooms in early February and are enjoying their thoughtfully designed accommodations. Team members and residents also have access to a new living room, dining room, and private lounge area ideal for socializing or entertaining visitors.

The Dock Terrace central courtyard is almost finished and features new furniture and plantings promising to provide a beautiful green space in the coming years. We can't wait for Health Care residents and visitors to be able to enjoy this new space – once the weather is better suited for time in the great outdoors!

Phase III of construction is now underway. This phase will add 15 more resident rooms and another activity space to Health Care by the end of this summer. We're looking forward to welcoming residents, team members, and guests to this renovated space.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

HEALTH CARE AND MEMORY CARE AT SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES

Construction carried on through the frigid winter months at Souderton Mennonite Homes, moving the new Health Care and Memory Care communities closer toward an autumn opening date.

The newly constructed wing in Health Care will create a specialized, state-of-the-art Memory Care community for residents, offering 18 private rooms for residents with dementia who also need the highest level of health care.

Also underway is the new construction for Memory Care at the Personal Care level. When finished, residents will enjoy a new neighborhood complete with 26 private resident rooms, more space, plenty of natural light, and a thoughtful layout that provides beautiful common spaces both inside and out.



**THE DAVID AND MAXINE
DERSTINE CHAPEL
WAS DEDICATED
IN OCTOBER 2023**

*The Living Branches
community came together to
honor the legacy of David and
Maxine Derstine during the
Friends of the Sharing Fund
dinner in October 2023.*



**A LEGACY OF
Faithful Service**

During this annual celebration, the chapel at Dock Woods was renamed the David and Maxine Derstine Chapel, in recognition of the couple's many years of service to – and vital role in establishing – Dock Woods.

“For [my parents], what began as a vision became a mission, became their community,” said Daryl Derstine, David and Maxine's son. “That community became more complete as they watched the chapel come to fruition. [Dad] marveled at the beauty within but rejoiced at the possibilities that the chapel might provide a gathering place with a purpose.”

A LIFETIME OF SERVICE

Over their 61 years of marriage, David and Maxine's lives were firmly grounded in service. From their post-war years serving in Belgium to David's work with Hatfield Mennonite Home (now The Willows of Living Branches), David and Maxine tirelessly put their faith into practice.

David became Hatfield Mennonite Home's director of development in 1976, prepared for the role after decades of training, pastoral experience, and service to the Mennonite community. His first challenges involved raising funds to pay for the land Dock Woods now occupies and helping coordinate the development projects.

David ultimately led Dock Woods as its first executive director until 1989. Upon reaching retirement age, he stayed on until 1995 as director of marketing and fund development and manager of Dock Acres. He also served a three-year term on the board.

“Dave was a people person and related well to others,” said Edward D. Brubaker, president/CEO of Living Branches. “He recognized the worth of all individuals and saw the importance of all. That's a piece of

who he was and something we want to be part of Living Branches today.”

Maxine was a valuable partner to David, working alongside him first in their home office in Blooming Glen and then at Dock Woods. She was the second person employed by Dock Woods and served the organization from 1981 to 1995, processing applications for Dock Village and Dock Manor, the campus' affordable housing communities.

“Dad and Mom displayed a sincere desire to help others,” Daryl said. “They lived a dream. It is fair to say that it consumed them. They were all in – up for the challenge.”

BRINGING EVERYONE INTO THE FOLD

It's no coincidence that the chapel was chosen to carry David and Maxine Derstine's legacy. As a pastor, places of worship were close to David's heart.

What's more, David and Maxine felt called to serve all individuals, including those in need of affordable housing. While initial plans for Dock Woods did not call for subsidized housing for low-income families, David and Maxine worked to ensure the opportunity afforded by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds was carefully examined and ultimately accepted.

“Dad valued people, so it should not come as a surprise that he embraced the Dock Woods mission that presented itself through the dreams and discernment of a group of similarly minded persons,” Daryl said.

THE DERSTINE CHAPEL

For some, the work would have ended with cutting the ribbons

at Dock Manor and Dock Village, the affordable housing communities at Dock Woods. But the Derstines were committed to integrating those living in these facilities into the larger Dock Woods community.

Plans called for a chapel that would physically link the main Dock Woods campus building to Dock Manor, bridging two groups with diverging needs but a common belonging in the Living Branches community. The chapel opened its doors in 2000 after a dedication ceremony that included a reading from Jeremiah 17: “Those who trust in the Lord shall be like a tree that never ceases bearing fruit.”

Decades later, the chapel now bears the name of two individuals who poured their energy, time, and love into serving the Dock Woods community. The Derstine Chapel – a beloved place of fellowship and worship – is one of many sites where David and Maxine's decades of faithful service will bear fruit for years to come.

“My dad's sister showed us a family letter from 1981,” Daryl said. “In one passage [my dad] wrote, ‘We have a fine team that, in itself, brightens the path and lightens the load. We see a great possibility for good, and we are pleased to be a part of it.’”





COMMUNITY UNITY

LIVING BRANCHES RESIDENTS SHARE THEIR TIME AND TALENTS

Across all three Living Branches campuses, residents took time from their holiday happenings to serve their local communities. From creating special treats for local law enforcement officers to packing backpacks filled with food for Souderton-area families facing food insecurity, residents enjoyed working together to make a difference.





HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Living Branches residents ended 2025 with heaps of holiday cheer! There were campus visits with Santa (and a surprise visit from the Grinch), a living nativity scene with team members from The Willows of Living Branches, and lots of Christmas-themed activities and sing-a-longs. We also rang in the new year with campus celebrations, delicious snacks, and festive 2024 apparel.



TEAM MEMBER HOLIDAY PARTIES

Living Branches team members had a wonderful time socializing, playing games, and having delicious food during the annual holiday parties in late January. To celebrate this year's theme – Flannel and Frost – team members enjoyed hot chocolate, s'mores kits, cozy games, and fun lumberjack props at the photo booth.





A VIRTUAL TRIP ACROSS THE POND

What a way to travel! One Living Branches resident accompanied her church on a trip to her former home country of England — without leaving her residence here at The Willows of Living Branches. A “Flat Frances” (like a Flat Stanley) traveled across the pond with choir members from Frances’ church. The choir was in England to sing at Exeter Cathedral, where Frances was confirmed. She spent her formative years in England and emigrated to the U.S. when she was 20. Frances loved seeing “herself” in various places and with clergy members around the cathedral.





ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

Love is in the air at Living Branches! For Valentine's Day, each community celebrated with love-themed music, activities, sweets, and decorations.

Souderton Mennonite Homes hosted its 48th annual Valentine's Day concert, treating residents to love songs performed by the Bucks County Country Gentlemen Quartet. Health Care residents received roses through AARP's Wish of a Lifetime program, a nationwide initiative to spread Valentine's Day cheer to seniors.

At Dock Woods, Residential Living residents dined together at the annual Valentine's Day Banquet. Other neighborhoods played Valentine's Day trivia, decorated with flowers, and created valentines.

Residents at The Willows of Living Branches learned about the history of Valentine's Day symbols and enjoyed love songs, sweetheart bingo, and Valentine's Day cards and crafts.



Annual Report

Letter from Chair / CEO



Dear Partners in Mission:

We are grateful for your continued support of Living Branches, as we come together to empower older adults and families to lead lives of purpose and joy. Your partnership with us allows us to advance that mission every day.

The last fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, was a positive year in which we exceeded our budgeted goals. While the Covid pandemic and occupancy challenges continue to impact census, cash flow and our underlying financial strength remains positive. This strength enables us to continue renovation projects that will prepare Living Branches for the coming years.

This fall, we anticipate completing our construction at Souderton Mennonite Homes and welcoming residents to more modern, spacious, and thoughtfully designed accommodations in Health Care and Memory Care. We appreciate the efforts by our board, financial services, and operational teams, and we're grateful to every donor who supported the capital campaign that funded this construction.

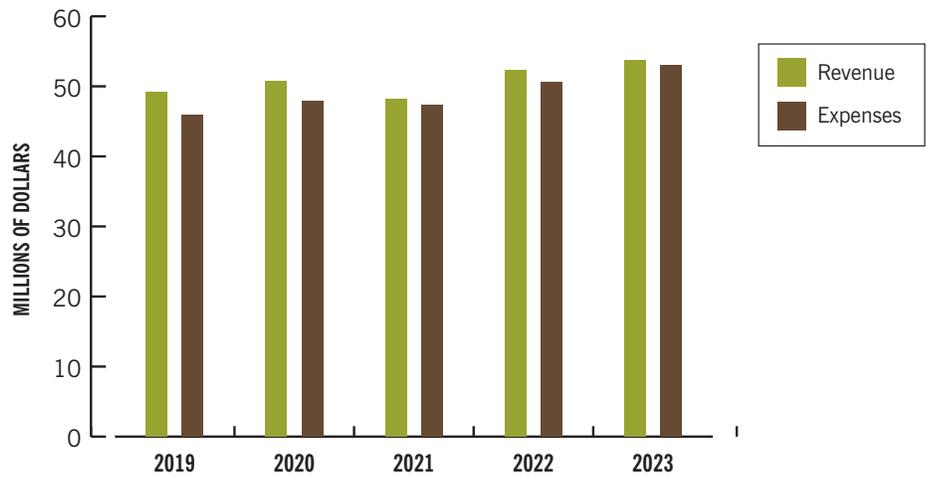
As urgency surrounding the pandemic fades, we will be guided by our strategic plan in turning our attention to team member culture, community life, and research. We are excited to see the results of ongoing work in all of these areas, including new team member recruitment and retention initiatives; a web-based portal to enhance resident connection and communication; and efforts to streamline how data is collected across all three Living Branches campuses.

We look forward to another fruitful year of uniting with you to empower older adults and families to lead lives of service and joy. On behalf of our residents, team members, and the board of directors, thank you for being a valued member of the Living Branches community.

EDWARD D. BRUBAKER
President/CEO

JOHN W. DUERKSEN
Chair of the Board of Directors

REVENUE AND EXPENSES



LIVING BRANCHES CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET JUNE 30, 2023

ASSETS

Current Assets	\$9,854,170
Assets Whose Use is Limited	141,132,716
Property and Equipment (Net)	84,260,255
Other Assets	690,599
TOTAL	\$235,937,740

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities	\$4,531,050
Construction Payables	3,237,755
Long-Term Debt	14,474,276
Refundable Fees and Deposits	25,254,631
Deferred Revenues from Entrance Fees	24,443,902
Other Liabilities	10,210,888
Total Liabilities	\$82,152,502
Net Assets	\$153,785,238
TOTAL	\$235,937,740





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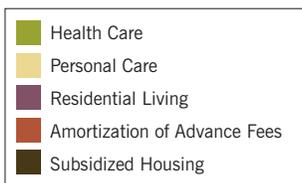
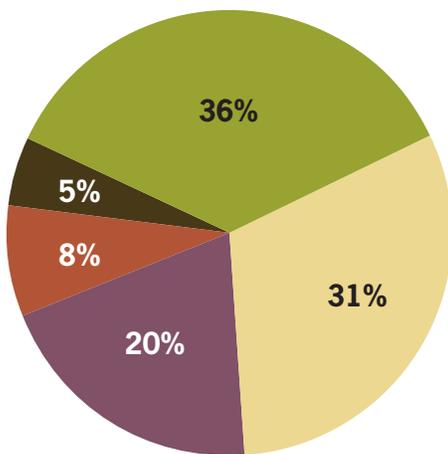
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Director Emeritus

2023 RESIDENT SERVICES REVENUE SOURCES



BENEVOLENT AND UNREIMBURSED CARE

	2022	2023
Health Care	\$3,378,602	\$3,592,924
Personal Care and Residential Living	1,479,294	1,686,906
TOTAL	\$4,837,294	\$5,279,803
% Increase	-1%	9%

NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS	2022	2023
Health Care	76	66
Personal Care	37	38
Residential Living	0	0
TOTAL	113	104

Benevolent and unreimbursed care is provided to residents when their savings, income, insurance, and public assistance benefits are not sufficient to fully pay for the cost of care provided by the organization.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**The Willows
of Living Branches**
2343 Bethlehem Pike
Hatfield, PA 19440
215-822-0688

**Souderton
Mennonite Homes**
207 W. Summit Street
Souderton, PA 18964
215-723-9881

Dock Woods
275 Dock Drive
Lansdale, PA 19446
215-368-4438

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DISCOVER LIVING BRANCHES

Discovery Tours are designed for first-time visitors to Souderton Mennonite Homes and Dock Woods interested in learning more about the opportunities available in Residential Living. Each event begins with light refreshments and a brief presentation to explain the communities and help you become better acquainted with Living Branches. After viewing 5-D videos of an apartment, cottage, and villa, you'll take a short walking tour of the community center and driving tour of the campus.

**THERE IS NO FEE
FOR THIS EVENT, BUT
REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.**

**Please call Jana Alderfer
or Nicole Boucher to register.**

Jana Alderfer
Souderton Mennonite Homes
215-723-9881

Nicole Boucher
Dock Woods
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