BRANCHINGOUT

LIVING BRANCHES

Live & Grow — Together

Generation TO GENERATION





FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

GRACE ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

AMONG THE MOST MEANINGFUL relationships I see at Living Branches are those formed between residents and young people. All three campuses offer opportunities to engage with children and teens who are neither team members nor family members. Often built around shared activities or interests, these relationships bring joy, perspective, and a renewed sense of purpose.

In this issue, you'll read about the Wonder and Wisdom Book Club in which local high school students and residents met to discuss literature, share life experiences, and lift each other up. At another campus, our annual Student in Residence program invites a college student to live on-site for one year. They dine with residents, enjoy programs and activities, and build relationships that extend beyond the school year.

Programs like these help lower generational barriers and remind us how much we all have in common. Research shows that intergenerational connections can reduce feelings of loneliness, improve mood, and even support memory and cognitive health. Sharing a story, a skill, or a laugh is uplifting to people of all ages!

Just as important, these encounters leave residents feeling encouraged about the future. After spending time with children, teens, and young adults. many tell us they feel a renewed sense of hope. They see firsthand the next generation is capable, caring, and ready to take on the responsibilities of life.

At Living Branches, our mission is to empower older adults to lead lives of purpose and joy. Our intergenerational initiatives live out that mission every day – in stories shared, friendships formed, and faith renewed.

EDWARD D. BRUBAKER

President/CEO

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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Generation to Generation

From young children to college students, the next generation brings energy, experiences, and eagerness to learn. Learn more about the Wonder and Wisdom Book Club, the Student in Residence program, and the Dock Woods Children's Center.



New terrace apartments are coming soon to Dock Woods, offering upscale amenities in the heart of campus.

Care on Wheels

When Hurricane Helene left a young firefighter and his fiancée without a safe home, Living Branches came together to help.

Campus Happenings

The spring and early summer months brought sweet treats and plenty of celebrations.

Annual Giving

January 1 - June 30, 2025



BEHIND THE LENS

"I Bet I Could Fit in There!"

As part of the Care on Wheels project (page 10), a camper went from campus to campus, letting residents and team members see the new home that would be driven to North Carolina for a family in need. Advancement team members including Tiara Demetrius, clinical liaison for Living Branches – were on hand to help residents access the camper and drop off donations.

"I saw this little storage compartment on the camper and thought, 'I bet I could fit in there,'" Demetrius explains. "It turns out. I could!'

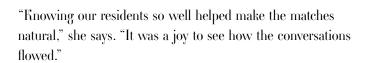
Admission counselor Leah McGuire was just as astonished as Demetrius. The two enjoyed a good laugh while Demetrius found her way into and out of the storage compartment – a little bruised the next day but still smiling!

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GOING BEYOND THE BOOK

The book club met monthly in February, March, and April at Souderton Mennonite Homes. After an initial meet-and-greet session, future meetings focused on 'Night,' as well as the life stories of the students and residents.

"The residents would compare these students to their grandchildren or great-grandchildren and see how much they had in common," Scattergood said. "They talked about

school, the cost of college, and their plans for the future."

Resident participant Ginny Close found the experience deeply moving. "Most of us, I dare say, come from a secure middle-class background," she said. "At times the contrast between our lives and our students' lives was evident and palpable. And yet we wanted to reach this population and encourage them."

For Close, the experience also grounded her thinking about immigration, an issue often discussed in the abstract. "For me it was not 110,000 immigrants; it was one person, one family," she said. "The book club put names and faces and emotions to what can be a cold number. I would hope if we do it again, there will be even more residents who could have this positive experience."

The program concluded with a celebratory luncheon at the high school. Residents, students, and Living Branches and



TO GENERATION

The Wonder and Wisdom Book Club

a chilly February afternoon, a French-speaking high school student was paired with a Souderton Mennonite Homes resident who often travels to Paris. A teen from Vietnam who loves animals met a retired veterinarian who volunteered in the teen's home region of Vietnam. A young man from Central America connected with a resident who speaks fluent Spanish after decades of mission work in South America.

These weren't lucky coincidences. They were thoughtful matches made by Heather Scattergood, a life enrichment coordinator at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Scattergood partnered with two Souderton Area High School teachers to launch the Wonder and Wisdom Book Club in early 2025, uniting residents and local high school students learning English. Not just to discuss literature, but to share their life stories and discover what they had in common.

FROM READING TO RELATIONSHIP

In 2024 the Indian Valley Education Foundation approached Scattergood about working together more closely. They connected Scattergood with Kimberly Musselman, an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, and Krysten Momsen, an English teacher at Souderton Area High School.

Every year, Scattergood leads a resident book club offering a title assigned to Souderton Area High School students.

Expanding on that idea, Scattergood, Musselman, and Momsen – with support from the Foundation – launched the inaugural Wonder and Wisdom Book Club in February 2025.

The teachers selected "Night" by Elie Wiesel, a memoir of survival during the Holocaust that was assigned to the ESL students.

"When we started putting this together in the fall of 2024, we didn't predict the topic of immigration would be front-page news in 2025," Scattergood said. "'Night' ended up being incredibly relevant."

To help match the 17 students with participating residents, each student wrote a letter about themselves, detailing their interests, life experiences, and aspirations.

The students came from a range of countries and backgrounds: some had lived in the United States for more than a decade; others had arrived just months before. They spoke an array of languages including Spanish, French, Vietnamese, and Korean.

Scattergood used these details to match each student with a Souderton Mennonite Homes resident, drawing on her deep knowledge of the residents to create meaningful connections.

LIVING BRANCHES | LIVE & GROW – TOGETHER







Souderton Area School District leaders gathered to reflect on the experience.

At the event, the students surprised the residents with a handmade booklet of poems and reflections about their partners. The residents, in turn, had written brief reflections of their own, describing the students as "enthusiastic and engaged," "courteous and curious," and "so smart and informed."

A MEANINGFUL EXCHANGE

For the students, the project was much more than an academic exercise. Musselman said the experience helped English language learners connect with literature in a new way, but also reach across cultural and generational divides.

"Many of our students described the project as the highlight of their school year," she said.

Scattergood agrees. "The residents gave these students unconditional friendship and cheerleading," she said. "With everything going on in the world, for these students to be lifted up by people from completely different backgrounds...it was powerful."

Living Branches President/CEO Edward Brubaker believes these kinds of programs are essential for building trust and breaking down barriers, especially between generations.

"Different generations often look at each other with skepticism," Brubaker said. "Older adults may wonder, 'Can I trust you to carry this forward?' Younger people may think, 'You've had your time, now it's my turn.' But when people with different life experiences talk – when they build trust – they see each other as fully human. Conversations can reveal the common threads that connect us all."

THE NEXT CHAPTER

The first year of the Wonder and Wisdom Book Club may be over, but the story doesn't end there. Scattergood is already working on plans for another round.

After seeing how naturally the conversations unfolded – and how much the students and residents gained from each other – she's hopeful new residents will take part next time.

"In other cultures seniors may be more revered than they are here," she said. "For residents to have their stories received by these students and get to encourage them and support them – it's no wonder everyone said they want to do it again!"

Student in Residence at The Willows

The youngest resident at The Willows of Living Branches is much younger than you might guess – decades younger, in fact!

The Student in Residence program, launched in 2018, invites one local university student to reside at The Willows for free. They become a part of community life by sharing at least one meal per day and leading programs with residents.

Recent Students in Residence have attended Delaware Valley University, but college students from at any university are invited to apply each spring.

"The Student in Residence program allows relationships to develop between the generations," says Tammy Whittaker, director of Personal Care Services at The Willows. "It's been a wonderful way to see perceptions changed and barriers broken down."

Residents and team members at The Willows just bid farewell to Molly Neidig (below), who spent the last two semesters at The Willows and is now preparing for veterinary school.

"This is such a great program," Molly shares. "It's like a family here. Honestly if I could stay forever, I would."

A new Student in Residence will join The Willows in August, bringing a fresh perspective and energy throughout the close-knit community. But it's more than just youthful energy – Students in Residence demonstrate that the future is in good hands.

"Our residents tend to have a hopeful outlook about younger generations,"
Whittaker says, "because they have seen firsthand the quality of students welcomed into their home."





DURING JUNE'S STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL, DOCK WOODS TEAM MEMBER ALYSSA SIMSICK VISITED THE PETTING ZOO WITH HER DAUGHTER, WHO IS ENROLLED IN THE DAY CARE.

The Youngest Visitors to Dock Woods

Residents at all Living Branches campuses are thrilled when grandchildren and great-grandchildren come to visit. But at one community, little ones can be on campus all day – whether a relative lives there or not.

Over the years, several organizations have operated out of Dock Woods' day care facility, which was intentionally designed for that purpose more than two decades ago.

Living Branches team members often take advantage of the convenient location on campus, which reduces time spent dropping off and picking up their children.

And sometimes, the close proximity means extra check-ins from busy parents.

"My now-preteen daughter used to attend the day care," says Karen Walser, supportive living sales counselor for Living Branches. "When I worked on that campus, I would stop in quickly to see her — I called them 'flyby kisses.' I remember those days fondly whenever I walk by!"

Day care students participate in campus programs on occasion. Residents get a kick out of seeing them in costume for Halloween trick-or-treating, or clapping along to sing-alongs led by life enrichment coordinators in Serenata Memory Care.

"You can see residents light up when the little ones walk into the room," says Annette Echanis, director for resident engagement. "Whether it's a planned program or a quick wave through the window, having young children here brings so much joy to residents."

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Terrace Living in the Heart of Dock Woods



"Projects like Care on Wheels draw a community together for a purpose."

CARE ON WHEELS:

Living Branches Provides Camper and Compassion to North Carolinian Family

MONTHS AFTER
HURRICANE HELENE
FADED FROM NATIONAL
HEADLINES, RESIDENTS
AND TEAM MEMBERS AT
LIVING BRANCHES PROVED
THERE'S NO EXPIRATION
DATE ON KINDNESS.

In April, the Living Branches community contributed more than \$16,000 toward a new camper for a young firefighter in North Carolina who lost his home to the hurricane in late September. His existing trailer – damaged by mold and ongoing water leakage – was no longer safe for him, his fiancée, or their dog.

The Living Branches project, called Care on Wheels, set out to change that.

"This young man served as a first responder for others during the hurricane," said Edward Brubaker, president/CEO of Living Branches.
"While he was rescuing others, his own home was destroyed and his life upended. It's an honor to help him get back on track."

COMING TOGETHER TO CARE

Throughout April, the camper visited each Living Branches campus, and the response was overwhelming.

"Watching residents rally together reminded me how generous this community is," said Tiara Demetrius, clinical liaison for Living Branches and one of the team members who collected donated items. "Residents had fun while doing something meaningful."

After all the campus visits, the camper was stocked with everything a fresh start might need: brand-new bedding, clothing, pots and pans, and even homemade dog treats for the family pup. An additional \$2,000 in donated gift cards will help the family buy groceries, fuel, and household basics.

The camper itself was purchased at a subsidized rate thanks to the generosity of Dan and Claire Keller at Indian Valley Camping Center.

"We hope this gift, given with love and care from so many helps this young family feel more secure," said chief advancement officer Alexandra Metricarti.

DELIVERING HOPE

When the time came to deliver the stocked camper, Living Branches board member Wendell Weaver volunteered to drive it to North Carolina.

He met the young firefighter in person and handed over the keys, along with the warmth and support of an entire community.

"He was very thankful to have a place he can call his own," Weaver said. "So many times we give to organizations but don't see where it went and what it did. In this case we got to hand the gift to someone – it doesn't get any better than that.

"Projects like Care on Wheels draw a community together for a purpose," he added. "When we come together and do something that has an end good for God's kingdom, that's a great thing for our community."

A SWEET SUMMER

The spring and early summer months have brought lots of reasons to smile! Living Branches residents celebrated their nursing teams, local art students, and natural beauty. Strawberry Festival brought a weeklong celebration — with delicious strawberry themed fun — to all three campuses.



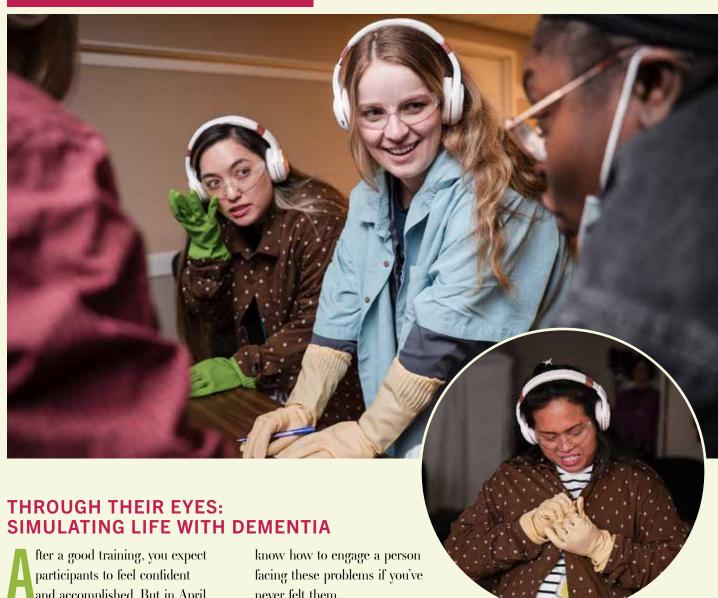


STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

A sweet end to spring! Residents and team members kicked off the month of June with a weeklong Strawberry Festival, complete with games, a petting zoo, antique tractors, line dancing, and lots of delicious sips and snacks.







and accomplished. But in April dozens of Living Branches team members learned a great deal from an experience they felt was "stressful," "very distracting" and "made [them] feel anxious."

Delivered by Penn-Temple's Long Term Care RISE program, the training used sensory reduction tools like gloves and headphones to simulate what it feels like to live with dementia.

In addition to memory loss and cognitive challenges, dementia can contribute to hearing loss, vision problems, overstimulation, loss of sensory nerves and fine motor skills, and other challenges. But it can be hard to

never felt them.

"The goal of this unique training was to encourage discussion around the factors that can lead to adverse behavior in a person with dementia," says Annette Echanis, director of resident engagement.

After being fitted with the proper items, team members found everyday tasks much more difficult.

Participants – including nurses, aides, and team members from life enrichment, pastoral care, dining services, and environmental services – walked away with greater empathy for residents living with dementia.

"I couldn't understand what was being said to me during the simulation," said Angelina Patrowich, a social worker at Dock Woods. "It really showed me that I need to slow down and be clearer when speaking to someone living with dementia."

Echanis says this simulation was so valuable that it will be incorporated into Dementia Capable Care, a nationally recognized training given to Living Branches team members.



YOUNG ARTISTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Elementary and middle school students from Dock Mennonite Academy debuted their artwork at Souderton Mennonite Homes this spring. After a reception with students and their families, the artwork hung for several months in the Apple Orchard Café gallery. The art show was organized with help from current art teacher Kim Bergey and a Souderton Mennonite Homes resident who formerly taught art at the Academy.



NURSES APPRECIATION WEEK

It's a bird! It's a plane! It's a superhero nurse! Residents at The Willows of Living Branches celebrated Nurses Appreciation Week in May with a special photo booth and props. Nurses were encouraged to strike their mightiest pose alongside residents.



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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 3-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 Crystal Kratz to register

Crystal Kratz 215-723-9881 ext. 42319