

# BRANCHING OUT

LIVING BRANCHES

*Live & Grow – Together*



## STUDENTS

---

*at Living Branches*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE: NEW SHARED SERVICES OFFICES!



## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

# CONNECTING GENERATIONS TO ONE ANOTHER

### ONE OF THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF

Living Branches is the wide spectrum of ages within our communities. We serve residents who are over 100 years of age and pass children in the halls who are under the age of two from the children's center at Dock Woods. With residents, staff, volunteers, and visitors, our communities are filled with persons in all walks of life, which allows us to learn from one another and grow together.

Over the years I have regularly heard residents express how much they enjoy interacting with student employees. Hiring younger persons for positions, such as servers in the dining room, creates the opportunity for intergenerational relationships. It is not forced, but rather a natural interaction that occurs. Persons begin to see their commonalities instead of their differences.

The desire and benefit of intergenerational opportunities has been evident through feedback from our residents for many years, and so we have been open to new ways to provide those opportunities. In this edition of Branching Out you will meet students who are serving at Living Branches in various capacities: some are interns through the new creative arts therapy program and others are serving through the STARR program. You'll also be introduced to the student in residence at The Willows, who has spent the last year building relationships with the residents at that campus.

Intergenerational opportunities are a wonderful way that we can connect our mission to what we do each day at Living Branches, and connect generations to one another. Through music, art, service, and interaction, students are empowering residents to lead lives of purpose and joy. And I don't think any of us will be surprised to learn that the relationship is reciprocal, with residents empowering students to more joyful and purposeful lives as well.

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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Contact Branching Out at 215-368-4438 or  
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# THE WILLOWS

## STUDENT IN RESIDENCE

*Explores New Friendships,  
Career Possibilities,  
and* **LIFE LESSONS**

By: Danielle Leheny



### CARA FOGARTY

read about the Living Branches student in residence program on a flyer that was hanging – of all places – in the plant sciences building at Delaware Valley

University. Although in looking back, Cara is quick to point out that this lucky moment definitely planted a wonderful “seed” in her life – not only for her participation in the student in residence program, but also for the direction in which she plans to grow her career when she graduates in May 2019.

“The flyer said something like, ‘Do you enjoy talking with seniors?’ And I do enjoy interacting with seniors, so I stopped in my tracks to read the flyer in full,” said Cara. “The Living Branches student in residence program instantly appealed to me, because I had been toying with the idea of focusing my career on geriatric medicine. When I first started college, I thought I would pursue wildlife research, but through a series of internships and experiences, my passion for senior care pointed me in a new direction – one that I knew I could explore even more with Living Branches.”

Before joining the student in residence program, Cara had been dealing with a three-hour commute to school, but her new apartment at The Willows puts Cara much closer to her studies – and offers her a daily opportunity to interact with the residents.

“I knew before I came to The Willows that I would enjoy my time here – but what has surprised me the most is how much I enjoy my neighbors,” said Cara. “They have embraced me into their home and invited me into their lives. Every day I feel blessed and amazed by the friendships that have bloomed since my first day here.”

Because the student in residence program is very flexible, Cara can interact with the residents in a wide variety of ways. Some days she joins her neighbors in favorite activities, such as a late-night card game, and other days, she helps create an event for interested

residents, such as a special crafting project.

“My time at The Willows – and how much I enjoy it – has definitely let me know that I’m barking up the right tree in terms of my career path,” said Cara. “And if I do end up pursuing geriatric medicine, I’ll be able to walk that path with a first-hand, personal connection to the lives I hope to touch.”

While Cara is grateful for the unique career insights offered by the student in residence program, she will most cherish the many special moments that color her days at The Willows.

“I was having lunch one day with a resident who interviewed me as part of the selection committee for the program, and he learned that I had received all As that semester,” said Cara. “He asked one of the staff members to announce my news to the whole dining room. His pride in my accomplishments reminded me of how my own grandmother, who passed away a while back, used to behave when hearing about my biggest wins. It was definitely an emotional moment for me.”

Cara also enjoys being counted as one of the girls in The Willows weekly card games.

“We have so much fun in our banter back-and-forth,” said Cara. “It’s been a refreshing change-of-pace to hang out with people who don’t need technology to connect. We just need a space to gather and a willingness to share ourselves, our stories, and our laughter – no smartphones needed! I’ll carry that powerful lesson and those wonderful memories with me always – in my career, in my life, and of course, in my heart.”



# AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY PROGRAM INTERNS

*Last year Living Branches introduced Seth Laucks as the creative arts therapy coordinator and the creative arts therapy program as an extension of the dementia care strategy initiative. One of the many benefits of this program is the placement of student interns who have academic requirements within Living Branches. In the first four months of the program, the interns have completed 206 sessions with residents. They are making an incredible impact on the lives of our residents and we're excited to let them share about their experiences.*



**XIAOYING GUO**

**University:** Drexel University  
**Program:** Master's - Music Therapy and Counseling  
**Community:** Dock Woods

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED DURING YOUR INTERNSHIP?

I have learned that working with older adults with dementia is not only about professional strategies or skills, but also a caring heart and patience.

## WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY/ COUNSELING?

Before I came to America, I had the experience of working with adult in-patients with cancer, adult outpatients with mental health disorders, and children with hearing disabilities in the school setting in China, which guided me to my prospective career path. As a musicology major, I used to feel confused about my future. Music is my love; however, I am not satisfied with becoming a teacher or vocal coach like the majority of graduates in this field in China. During my junior year I heard about music therapy for the first time.

The volunteer experience in The No.10 People's Hospital of Shanghai was really meaningful to me. What impressed me the most was the music progressive relaxation activities we conducted with the cancer patients during the PICC surgery. It was the first time I had been involved in a

medical surgery as an assistant. When I saw the anxiety and depression of the patient significantly decrease because of our activities, I personally felt that my musical talent could contribute to relieving other people's pain.



**CORINNE LANDES**

**University:** Temple University  
**Program:** Bachelor's - Music Therapy  
**Community:** Souderton Mennonite Homes

## WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED MOST ABOUT YOUR INTERNSHIP AT LIVING BRANCHES?

The part that I have enjoyed the most, since the beginning of my internship at Living Branches, is getting to know the residents. It has been a joy to get to sit one on one to build a connection with the residents that have isolated themselves. Every resident has a story and it has been a pleasure to listen to each one.

## CAN YOU SHARE ABOUT A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE FROM YOUR INTERNSHIP?

I was especially moved during my first session with a resident who is grieving the loss of a spouse. The first session is typically a time where I can get to know the resident and build an initial relationship. However, this session was different. The resident opened up to me and shared all the pain she was feeling in that moment. The resident voiced pain over being

told by family and others to move on. During the session, I let the resident know that it was okay to be in pain and grieving. This allowed the resident to not suppress feelings, but rather process through the feelings of grief. The resident burst into tears, releasing many emotions. In every session since then, the resident has been in a positive mood and has voiced enjoying the music that is created.

## WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS FOR AFTER GRADUATION?

I hope to continue working with older adults in any capacity that becomes available! This has been such a rewarding experience that I would love to continue working in a long term care community, wherever that may be.



**NATALIE MAEDA**

**University:** Drexel University  
**Program:** Master's - Music Therapy and Counseling  
**Community:** Dock Woods

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED DURING YOUR INTERNSHIP?

I have learned that each resident has their own needs and personalities, and because of this, as a student therapist, I need to be prepared to cater to each of these needs. I also need to be adaptable to any situation that may arise while working in this dynamic setting.

## WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY AND COUNSELING?

From a young age, I have always had an interest in therapy because I have always had a deep desire to help others. Besides this, I grew up loving music. When I heard about music therapy, it seemed like a perfect synthesis of my two passions.

## WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS FOR AFTER GRADUATION?

I have not quite decided which population I would most like to work with, but after graduation, I plan to move back to Washington state to start my career as a music therapist. Ideally, I would like to work in a setting where I could collaborate with other creative art therapists, especially art therapists, but also drama and dance therapists.



**MELISSA MAGUIRE**

**University:** Holy Family University  
**Program:** Master's - Clinical Mental Health  
**Community:** Dock Woods and Souderton Mennonite Homes

## CAN YOU SHARE ABOUT A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE FROM YOUR INTERNSHIP?

There is one moment that stands out to me: A resident was referred to the creative arts therapy team, as her family was concerned about her not eating. The resident has advanced dementia and the family wanted to

try everything they could to help her. After a session of music therapy with the resident, in which she did not have much of a response, the team waited to see how her lunch went. It was the most rewarding feeling to see her take a few bites of food. This is the feeling we as counselors strive for when working with clients.

**WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS FOR AFTER GRADUATION?**

After graduation my career goals are to obtain my state licensure to practice as an licensed professional counselor. I want to begin my career making a difference in people’s lives in the clinical mental health field.



**JONATHAN PAINTER**  
**University:** Drexel University  
**Program:** Master’s - Music Therapy and Counseling  
**Community:** Souderton Mennonite Homes

**WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED MOST ABOUT YOUR INTERNSHIP AT LIVING BRANCHES?**

The most enjoyable part of having my internship has been the residents at Souderton Mennonite Homes. They are genuinely happy to see me each and every time that I am able to interact with them. The staff has been extremely supportive of the creative arts therapy program coming to Living Branches. Having staff support has helped me to feel comfortable and

have a better learning experience.

**WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY AND COUNSELING?**

My great grandmother, with whom I had a close relationship, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. One of the only ways to engage her in the advanced stages was the singing of hymns. I wanted to find a way to impact others diagnosed with dementia through music.

**WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS FOR AFTER GRADUATION?**

My desire is to continue working with older adults, especially those diagnosed with dementia. Eventually, I would like to be able to teach future music therapists at the college level. I also would like the opportunity to share about music therapy in a variety of settings, so I can show others the benefits.



**ASHLYN PARKS**  
**University:** Temple University  
**Program:** Bachelor’s - Music Therapy  
**Community:** Dock Woods

**WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED MOST ABOUT YOUR INTERNSHIP AT LIVING BRANCHES?**

One thing I have enjoyed most about my internship is my independence. This is my first opportunity to grow out of my comfort zone and see my own therapeutic style. I have a wonderful

and supportive supervisor who really pushes me to reach new heights as a student; and couldn’t ask for a better internship placement.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED DURING YOUR INTERNSHIP?**

One major thing that I have learned in my internship is the importance of connections. I realized this semester that if I focus all of my attention on my own musical preferences and musicality, the sessions remain rather repetitive. If I take the time to learn about my residents and follow their lead/musical taste, the sessions grow in trust and closeness. Sometimes all someone wants is a close and trusting relationship.



**MARIANA RUIZ**  
**University:** Immaculata University  
**Program:** Dual Master’s - Music Therapy and Clinical Mental Health Counseling  
**Community:** The Willows of Living Branches

**WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED MOST ABOUT YOUR INTERNSHIP AT LIVING BRANCHES?**

When I am walking around with my guitar I sometimes come across a couple of residents in common areas and they ask for music. If I am not headed to see a resident I usually stay with them and we play some music. Those impromptu groups have started to become some of my favorite time

with residents. They always sing along and sometimes even get silly and dance. It is so amazing to see residents laugh together, sing songs, and share stories.

**CAN YOU SHARE ABOUT A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE FROM YOUR INTERNSHIP?**

When I first started my internship at The Willows I was working with a resident who shared stories about a family piano every time I met with her. When I got the keyboard working, I brought it into a session with her and she was visibly very excited to see it. When I turned it on for her and allowed her to play it, the resident began to play “Claire de Lune.” After a few minutes of playing she turned to me with tears in her eyes and said “Wow, just wow” and went on to share that she had not played the piano in several years and was amazed at how she could remember. The resident said she heard that music stays in our memory the longest.



**KAITLYN SANTUCCI**  
**University:** Drexel University  
**Program:** Bachelor’s - Dance Major and Psychology Minor - Dance/ Movement Therapy Track  
**Communities:** The Willows of Living Branches, Souderton Mennonite Homes, and Dock Woods

**WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED MOST ABOUT YOUR INTERNSHIP AT LIVING BRANCHES?**

I have most enjoyed working on the Music and Memory program. I have learned how a Music and Memory program is run, and how to create individualized playlists for residents.

**WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY/ COUNSELING?**

I decided to study creative arts therapy because I wanted to use my passion for dance in a way that would benefit others in the community.



**BRIAN THOMAS**  
**University:** Drexel University  
**Program:** Bachelor’s – Business and Engineering  
**Community:** Dock Woods

**WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED MOST ABOUT YOUR INTERNSHIP AT LIVING BRANCHES?**

I have really enjoyed connecting with other students in the program that have a passion for music therapy and are pursuing degrees in the field.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED DURING YOUR INTERNSHIP?**

Over the time spent at Dock Woods, I have learned about

some of the challenges a person may encounter when informing others of what music therapy aims to provide residents. At times it can be difficult to quantify the direct impact or benefit the program has on a specific resident, but collecting as much quantifiable information as possible is essential in order to understand an individual’s progress in the program.

**WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS FOR AFTER GRADUATION?**

My career goals for after graduation are to work in the health care industry or in the music technology space, but it would be ideal to somehow merge the two in a collaborative sense, to advance the level of care provided to patients or residents from a holistic perspective.





# STARR Program

## Supports Local Youth in Job-Readiness – and Builds Lasting Bonds with Residents

**F**IVE YEARS AGO, the Living Branches circle of care at Souderton Mennonite Homes expanded to welcome a very treasured group of young adults into the community: our STARR students. STARR stands for “Students Transitioning to Adult Roles and Responsibilities,” and the program is for graduates of Souderton Area High School with disabilities who volunteer their time and service to gain real-world work experience and personal development opportunities.

The STARR students offer support on three different teams: environmental services, Health Care, and Personal Care – and they rotate through these assignments to gain a broad range of experiences. Students in environmental services help with activities like folding laundry, taking care of the grounds, and wiping down handrails, and those in Health Care and Personal Care supply residents with everything from a refreshing beverage to a friendly visit.



“The students provide our community with many sets of much-appreciated extra hands,” said Lynne Allebach, volunteer coordinator at Living Branches. “For example, in the dining room, they ensure the residents’ walkers are stored off to the side – making the space more open and safer for both residents and our dining staff.”

When Lynne first pitched the STARR program to the Souderton Mennonite Homes campus leadership team, there was much discussion about how they would fill the students’ time – but that challenge quickly became a moot point as the STARR students came to be an indispensable part of life in the community from the very first rotation.

“The students themselves often come up with ideas about how they can support the residents,” said Heather Scattergood, wellness and life enrichment coordinator at Souderton Mennonite Homes. “They play

games with the residents; they make them cards around the holidays; and they even lovingly bake the dog biscuits we offer in The Corner Store for visiting therapy pets.”

While the services the students provide – and the work experience they gain in return – is highly valuable, the most inspirational benefit of the program is that it brings together two groups of people who enrich each other’s lives in unique ways.

“Participation in the STARR program gives our students a tangible boost to their self-esteem,” said Renée Wagner, transition teacher at Souderton Area High School. “Many of these students didn’t feel accepted among their peers in high school because they look or act differently. However, at Souderton Mennonite Homes, they know they are needed and appreciated for the care they provide to the community.”

And the residents, in turn, bask in the special attention they receive from the STARR students. Unlike the responsibilities of full-time staff members, a student’s only task is often to offer residents a one-on-one friendly ear – and those experiences are meaningful for both the students and the residents.

“We occasionally give the students ‘conversation cards’ for small group discussions with residents,” said Heather. “Topics range from easy subjects like favorite foods to deeper conversations about biggest fears and challenges. These discussions forge powerful bonds between the students and residents – and create relationships built on empathy and care for each other.”

Many of the residents – especially former teachers – very much enjoy

their role as mentors, whether they are teaching the students to make applesauce, supporting them in the annual STARR Iron Chef competition, or offering helpful life advice over a friendly game of Nintendo Wii bowling.

At the end of the year, the staff, students, and residents come together to celebrate the wrap-up of the STARR program and to recognize the students’ excellent service. Many graduating STARR students



**STARR STUDENTS**  
*LEFT TO RIGHT - Candace Alderfer, Gage Baughman, Kevin Lezynski, Isaiah Crede-Devine, Christopher Phan, Jon Closs, Connor Kulathum, Morgan Errington, Lauren Mangini, Skylar Zeigler, Ciara Alderfer*

have transitioned to successful jobs – including Jimmy Buetikofer, a former student who now works in environmental services at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Since the flagship STARR program launched at Souderton Mennonite Homes five years ago, the high school has expanded the initiative to six other sites – leading to even more opportunities for the local students.

“We are very grateful to Living Branches for the opportunity they gave us to prove just how valuable this experience is for the students and the people whose lives they touch,” said Renée. “We look forward to seeing the Souderton Mennonite Homes STARR program continue to bring students and residents together in mutual support and encouragement. They take such special care of each other, and it’s a beautiful thing to see.”





## BEACH PARTY (1)

This winter the residents at The Willows enjoyed a Friday night luau to beat the winter blues. Complete with a photo booth, beach-themed treats, and games, residents enjoyed this fun night with student in residence, Cara Fogarty. The leis and photo booth were definitely the highlight of the night!

## ART GALLERY (2)

The resident art committee at Dock Woods hosted the first art gallery reception, following the completion of renovations and the installation of the first art show. The current show features four Dock Woods resident artists: Margaret Dawson, Lyn Dimmig, Esther Ruth Shisler, and Sally Keyes Yates. Residents enjoyed refreshments following the gallery walk. Next time you visit Dock Woods, be sure to stop by the gallery which is located directly behind Fisher Auditorium.



## SHARED SERVICES OFFICES

In the last edition of Branching Out, we shared that all three Living Branches communities are currently under renovation, but another renovation project was also in the works: the shared services offices.

On January 23, about twenty-five staff persons moved from offices at The Willows, Souderton Mennonite Homes, and Dock Woods to the new shared services offices, located at the corner of Reliance and Cowpath Roads. Since the affiliation of Living Branches in 2008, employees in a few departments have been scattered across the three campuses because there was not adequate space to bring them together at one campus. This building was the perfect solution to that problem. The building is now home to the executive leadership team, the accounting team, the risk management and transportation team, and some staff persons from the marketing and human resources teams.

## WHY SHARED SERVICES?

When the shared services offices sign was installed in February, we received questions from many persons in the local community about what the name meant. Some guessed it was home health care, others weren't sure what it meant at all!

The term shared services is used within Living Branches to refer to teams that provide services to the entire organization. Each community has their own dining services, environmental services, Personal Care services, etc. to support the residents in that community. Alternately within Living Branches, there is only one accounting team that supports all three communities. The teams that support all of Living Branches are grouped together as the shared services.

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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  
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**Dock Woods**  
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## MARKETING DISCOVERY TOURS

Discovery Tours are designed for first-time visitors to Souderton Mennonite Homes and Dock Woods. Each event begins with light refreshments and a brief presentation to explain the communities and help you become better acquainted with Living Branches. Then you'll take a tour of the community center and residents' homes, visiting a villa, a cottage, and an apartment. There is no fee for this event, but registration is required. ***To register, visit [www.livingbranches.org/events](http://www.livingbranches.org/events).***

### **Dock Woods – 1:30 p.m.**

Thursday, May 9

Tuesday, May 21

Tuesday, June 4

Tuesday, June 18

### **Souderton Mennonite Homes – 1:30 p.m.**

Tuesday, May 14

Thursday, May 30

Tuesday, June 11

Tuesday, June 25

