

BRANCHING OUT

LIVING BRANCHES

Live & Grow – Together

OPENING
*hearts,
minds,
& doors*

WITH

CREATIVE
ARTS THERAPY



INSIDE THIS ISSUE: RENOVATIONS UNDERWAY AT DOCK WOODS



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

MUSIC: A UNIFYING FORCE

IN PREVIOUS EDITIONS I HAVE SHARED HOW

my mother's dementia diagnosis and journey impacted my life and the way I view the work that happens at Living Branches. While the last few years of her life were very hard, I do have happy memories. And many of those memories include music.

My mother loved hymns and often sang as she worked around the house. She enjoyed music very much, so I played hymns on my phone during my visits. Even better was when our daughter, Brandi, would come to visit. Brandi still talks about the special connection she shared with her grandmother as she played "Trust and Obey" and watched my mother mouth the words. Even in the depths of dementia, she remembered the song. Music is powerful.

And that is why I am very pleased to announce the Creative Arts Therapy program at Living Branches. In this edition of Branching Out, you will meet Seth Laucks, the new Living Branches creative arts therapy coordinator. When we introduced Seth to the board of directors, executive leadership team, and Living Branches leadership group, he made sure everyone had a musical instrument as he led the groups in song. It was incredible to witness how music transformed the atmosphere in the room. People let their guard down, began to smile, and had fun with one another. The energy created in the room tapped into people's souls. It brought them together.

When our daughter was younger, she was mentored by Joe Hesh, a great musician who unfortunately passed away in 2016. Joe and I had many discussions about music therapy and how music could potentially help persons with dementia. Seeing music therapy integrated at Living Branches is a way that I personally can honor and remember Joe's passion for music and how it brings change to persons' lives. That ultimately is what this is all about – bringing change to resident's lives.

Each word in our mission statement was carefully selected and holds importance, but to me, the core of our mission is purpose and joy. Music provides both. It breaks down barriers and creates community. Music is a unifying force. I eagerly anticipate the purpose and joy that will be created in the lives of Living Branches residents as a result of music therapy.

EDWARD D. BRUBAKER
President/CEO

BRANCHINGOUT

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OPENING *hearts, minds, & doors* — WITH — CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY

By: Danielle Leheny

Seth Laucks, MA, MT-BC, LPC, believes in the healing and connecting power of music. He knows the right song can unlock a door to everything from a treasured memory, to relaxation and pain relief, to overall well-being and happiness. Seth's passion for music will serve him well in his new role as the Living Branches creative arts therapy coordinator – an extension of the Living Branches Dementia Care initiative.



“EVERYONE CAN NAME AT LEAST ONE SONG THAT SPARKS A STRONG EMOTION, WHETHER IT’S A WEDDING SONG, A MELODY ASSOCIATED WITH A LOVED ONE, OR EVEN A FAVORITE TUNE FROM CHILDHOOD,” SAID SETH. “This universal bond with music transcends culture, race, and age. It can help connect us to each other, particularly when traditional communication methods aren’t as possible – a challenge we often face with residents who are living with dementia. Music therapy can greatly enhance those relationships and the level of care we provide for all of our residents, and I’m definitely excited to get started!”

Seth is quickly becoming a familiar face throughout the Living Branches communities. Always armed with a mega-watt smile and most often a musical instrument, Seth’s enthusiasm is contagious, and his fan base is growing in musical leaps and bounds. One of Seth’s biggest fans is Kathleen Roberts, director of dementia care strategy – first introduced to our readers in the fall 2016 edition of “Branching Out.”

As a recap, Kathleen’s primary objective is to seek out best practices in memory care – connecting ideas and experts in the region and beyond – to help residents and families who are living with dementia lead the best lives possible. From the very beginning, Kathleen focused heavily on the power of music therapy. Her own mother, who was a Living Branches resident before she passed, found incredible joy in listening to the big band music she loved – which Kathleen had loaded onto her son’s old iPod.

“Music inspired many positive changes for my mom, her relationships, and her well-being, and in turn, inspired me to think about and explore the many possibilities of using creative arts to bring similar joy to other residents,” said Kathleen.

That creative arts therapy program is now a reality, and Kathleen is grateful for the many experts and resources who have helped her guide this journey – especially Seth, who entered Kathleen’s world and her plans over two years ago at a fun and fateful meeting.

TWO DEDICATED CAREGIVERS – ONE LUCKY ENCOUNTER

Kathleen and Seth first met at a conference hosted by LeadingAge, a non-profit organization focused on education, advocacy, and applied research in the field of aging services.

“There weren’t many sessions on dementia at that conference, but a music therapy session caught my eye,” said Kathleen. “The session was at seven o’clock in the morning in Hershey, PA, so I needed to leave my house at four o’clock to make it on time with the other early birds!”

The pre-dawn drive was well worth the effort, because the early bird session host was Seth, and Kathleen was immediately impressed with his passion, unique experience, and approach to music therapy. She even volunteered to participate in Seth's sample musical therapy session in front of the audience. After the session, Kathleen introduced herself to Seth and learned that he was working at a skilled nursing and rehab facility in West Philadelphia through Drexel University, where he was earning his master's degree in music therapy and counseling.

"Seth was doing cutting-edge work, and in the 18 months he'd been there, he was already making an incredible impact," said Kathleen. "Given the facility's limited resources, the success was all the more impressive – and highlighted their team's commitment to excellent care."

Over the next two years, Kathleen invited Seth to the Living Branches communities to host music therapy workshops and training sessions. Relationships and learnings grew, and when Kathleen identified an opportunity for Seth to join the team full-time, the timing was just right.

Now that Seth is a full-time member of the Living Branches team, Kathleen sees the creative arts therapy program growing in three distinct ways: resident music therapy sessions with Seth, a new creative arts therapy internship program, and a shared commitment by all Living Branches staff to seek opportunities to incorporate creative arts into many aspects of resident life.

"Each of these paths offers a range of both short- and long- term possibilities to enhance care, improve lives, and

For these residents, music therapy can be another influential tool in how we can address and tailor care to their special needs...

bring people together," said Kathleen. "We're still early in the process, but with Seth on the team, we've already made excellent progress in all three growth areas!"

SESSIONS WITH SETH: A RAY OF MUSICAL LIGHT FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT THE MOST

As an important early step, Seth, Kathleen, and other members of the Living Branches care team are working together to identify the residents with physical or mental challenges who will most benefit from music therapy sessions.

"For these residents, music therapy can be another influential tool in how we can address and tailor care to their special needs – as a complement to the physical and medical care they are already receiving," said Seth.

Seth is quick to point out that in his music therapy sessions, he doesn't jump right to playing the guitar or singing a song.

"The first action I take is to make sure a resident's basic needs are being met," said Seth. "For example, are they physically comfortable? Is there anything I can do to make them feel more comfortable? Then, my next step is helping the resident get comfortable with me! The time we take to get to know each other not only helps the resident feel safe, but also allows me to chart out the actual approach.

And with every person, it's always different!"

Seth gathers as much information as he can about a person's musical background. *Did they sing in a church group? Did they ever play an instrument? What's their favorite kind of music?* Even personal history beyond music can make an impact. For example, if a resident was once a farmer, Seth might use songs about farming to build interest and connection.

"Sessions vary as much as the individuals do," said Seth. "Sometimes we play music together. Other times, we might listen to a particular song and move to the beat. Or, we may even write a song about the person's life experiences, whether it's grieving a loved one or reflecting upon a happy memory from childhood."

Seth has an arsenal of musical instruments – most of which do not require any expertise to play and are pre-tuned to set up the resident for instant success. Seth notes that participants are often shy at first, but once they realize the active role they can play in music-making, they soon become playful and joyful, as well as willing to try out new activities.

"One of my favorite music therapy memories is a session with a blind woman who was in hospice care," said Seth. "At the start of the session, I had opened the curtains so she could



GET TO KNOW SETH

EVER CATCH YOURSELF SINGING A POPULAR JINGLE?

Seth started doing that when he was just two years old! His daily performances of everything from the NPR “Morning Edition” song to the catchiest of television commercials convinced Seth’s mom that a musical career was in his destiny, and she did everything she could to nourish that passion. She even drove Seth to the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore for regular music lessons.

“That classical music training served as a solid foundation that broadened my interest and skills in other types of music, and I eventually played in rock and jazz bands in high school,” said Seth.

Even though Seth is the only musician in his family, his love of music is no surprise – as Seth’s entire family shares his passion, and both of his grandmothers even sang in a choir. Seth’s connection to health care also found its roots within his family. His father is a doctor, and his mother works in mental health counseling. When Seth went to college, he began taking psychology classes and working in human services jobs.

“My interest in senior care sparked at Cornell University through a research project,” said Seth. “I had previously worked with kids and individuals with special needs, but something really clicked for me when working with seniors. I’ve always been drawn to history and tradition, and those who have lived long lives have rich history and wisdom to share.”

Given the rising trend of creative arts in health care, Seth found his true calling – and was able to weave his passions for music and senior care together into a solid vision for his career. Since then, Seth has collected countless memories that regularly confirm his chosen path.

“When I was working in Philadelphia, I met a senior with very limited mental capabilities and even more limited physical capabilities,” said Seth. “Sadly, he had been abused and neglected for decades. His one positive connection to life was the radio. While he couldn’t actually vocalize songs, he loved sharing his ability to mouth the words and perform for us. He often used a maraca as a microphone, and those performances were his moment to shine. One time, I even changed the words to a song to incorporate his name, and it lit up his face – as well as mine.”

From singing jingles at the age of two for his family members to now sharing his passion for music with the entire Living Branches community, Seth’s unique journey promises many more opportunities to inspire everyone around him.

feel the sunshine on her face – which made her smile. Then, we sang “You are the Sunshine of my Life” together. Even though this woman was very limited in her physical movements, she could still use hand bells to play along with the music, and she could even dance “The Twist” from her bed – a favorite activity from her youth. It was a beautiful thing to see her seek joy in those moments, even as she approached the end of her life.”

Seth’s ability to draw individuals out – through dialogue, relationship-building, and ultimately music – as well as his custom, person-centered approach, has enabled him to make a difference for many people who were struggling to find some light.

“Another woman I worked with was suffering from severe depression. Her body was failing, and she had recently lost her husband,” said Seth. “Faith had always been a big part of her life, so we worked together on one of her favorite hymns – rewriting the lyrics to tell the story of her own struggles. Eventually, she performed this song in front of hundreds of people at a Christmas concert. The writing process, the practice time, and her brave performance represented a huge triumph for her. After that experience, she told me that she again felt at peace – and she knew that God had a plan for her life.”

Successes such as this one serve as Seth’s daily inspiration – and will help guide him every step of the way at Living Branches.

THE CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM — MORE HANDS, MORE HEARTS, MORE POSSIBILITIES

The new internship program is designed to be a win-win-win – for the Living Branches community, for the students, and for the advancement of dementia care as a whole. Seth has already identified several students who will join Living Branches in the fall.

“Each intern and co-op will bring diverse musical and therapeutic skills to our community,” said Seth. “Their unique experiences and studies will keep the program fresh with innovative ideas – and of course, will enable our team to support even more residents and offer a range of new activities.”

Not only will the students receive the practical experience they need to become certified in their field, they’ll also receive real-world, hands-on experience, so that they can put what they’ve learned in a classroom setting to practical use.

“Intergenerational contact never fails to breathe fresh life into all that we do,” said Kathleen. “In addition, our interns will discover much about the special world of senior care. Most creative therapy students envision working with children or young adults, but through this partnership, we can open their eyes to how wonderful it is to work with older individuals as well! The work is deeply rewarding – and we want the next generation to understand that they are much needed in our shared effort to enhance senior care in all communities.”

OPEN DOOR — OPEN DIALOGUE

When you hear Seth talk about his vision for the creative arts therapy program, the word that pops up the most is collaboration. And one only need be in Seth’s presence for a few minutes to learn that he isn’t shy – especially when it comes to learning more about the community’s needs and potential ideas. As a matter of fact, Seth has spent much of his early time in his new role touring every level of care to start a dialogue with team members across the Living Branches communities.

“The team has been very open to sharing their feedback about creative arts therapy, which is already so much a part of the Living Branches culture,” said Seth. “A quick glance at our monthly calendar illustrates the broad range of creative enrichment opportunities, from musical performances to art activities. I see myself as a stimulus for pushing even further and encouraging the team to think outside the box about ways they can incorporate the arts into daily activities. Then, Kathleen and I can work together to help find the resources needed to make those ideas a reality.”

With Kathleen and Seth leading the creative arts therapy charge, exciting visions are sure to continue transforming into incredible realities. In addition to the work they will do at Living Branches, Kathleen and Seth plan to continue partnering with other organizations and universities to boost learning, collaboration, and success.



“Our ultimate vision is for Living Branches to serve as a model and a resource for other communities like ours – particularly in the world of dementia care, where creative arts therapy is playing a growing role,” said Kathleen. “Right now, we are building a solid foundation, and today’s success stories will pave the road toward others.”

“In the meantime, the opportunity to open residents’ eyes to the healing power of music is a true gift – just as Seth himself has been a gift to our community,” added Kathleen. “He’s got our toes tapping, our minds open, and our hopes high – and we look forward to seeing our collaborative symphony inspire all members of the Living Branches family.”



NEW FUND FOR CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY:

Inspiring Donors & Growing Possibilities

DO YOU HAVE A PASSION FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS? HAVE YOU SEEN MUSIC, ART, OR DANCE MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE'S LIFE – PERHAPS EVEN YOUR OWN? THE NEW FUND FOR CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY INVITES ANYONE WITH AN INTEREST IN THE ARTS TO PLAY A PART IN THE GROWING VISION AT LIVING BRANCHES TO ENHANCE LIVES THROUGH THE UNIQUE HEALING AND CONNECTING POWER OF THE CREATIVE ARTS.



The Fund for Creative Arts Therapy is part of the Living Branches Foundation, which exists to maintain life-enriching experiences for all residents. While the foundation's primary goal is to grow the organization's benevolent care funds – which support residents who need financial assistance – there are a range of additional funds that enable opportunities and growth in a specific life enrichment area. For example, the Elizabeth's Garden Fund ensures this special place at Souderton Mennonite Homes continues to delight residents, staff, and guests; the Expanding Our Horizons Fund supports residents and staff in their mission trips (see article on page 12); and now, the Fund for Creative Arts Therapy will help us bring joy to even more residents through music, art, and dance.

"We have been blessed with very generous foundation donors, and their gifts allow us to not only maintain all that we do within our active, caring communities, but also increase our opportunities to explore new paths," said Edward Brubaker, President and CEO, Living Branches.

Ed is particularly excited about the creative arts therapy program, as well as its new fund. His mother faced the challenges of dementia before she passed, and he is eager to see the new program begin benefiting the Living Branches residents in Memory Care who need it the most. In addition, Ed's daughter is a singer-songwriter in her spare time, so he is no stranger to the beauty and wonder of music in his daily life.

"From the moment I met Seth, I knew his charisma, kindness, passion, and unique expertise would spark amazing possibilities for our community," said Ed. "I have



enjoyed learning about Kathleen and Seth's plans for the new creative arts therapy program, but I'm even more excited to see those plans becoming a reality."

Living Branches is seeking to raise \$1.5 million for the new Fund for Creative Arts Therapy over the next five years to support Kathleen, Seth and all of Living Branches in these efforts.

"Our first donation was \$5,000, which was matched by the donor's company two to one – raising the amount to \$15,000," said Keith Heavener, director of fund development, Living

Branches. "In addition, Living Branches established a

\$250,000 matching fund – which doubled the

amount to \$30,000 – all possible through that original \$5,000 donation! The board of directors and the executive leadership team at Living Branches are committed to this new program and we welcome other donors to take advantage of this generous matching offer."

Seth, Kathleen, and the entire Living Branches' team invite anyone who is interested in learning more about the creative arts therapy program and its new fund to call or to arrange for a visit to see the program in action.

"While the Living Branches Foundation will continue to focus on benevolent care, we are excited to offer new opportunities for our donors to focus their contributions on life enrichment areas that align with their personal passions – whether it be gardening, community service, or creative arts," said Ed. "Every contribution matters – and enhances our ability to help residents lead vibrant lives full of purpose and joy."

BUILDING MORE THAN HOMES THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE & CARE

By: Danielle Leheny

For Keith and Dottie Reed, a life well lived is a life that touches the lives of many. In 1971, the couple went on their first mission trip through their church, and since then, have spent decades traveling wherever God has led them to put their passion for helping people in times of crisis and need to good use. Keith and Dottie moved to Souderton Mennonite Homes five years ago – and found in the Living Branches community a shared passion for service to others. They also made excellent use of the Expanding Our Horizons fund – part of the Living Branches Foundation and open to all residents for community service activities – to cover the costs of their transportation to several mission trips to rebuild damaged or destroyed homes.

“A large component of our calling to service is to encourage others to explore the many ways in which they can make a positive impact on the lives of those in need,” said Keith. “We feel incredibly fortunate to be part of a community with deep roots in service and care, and we enjoy sharing our personal experiences to inspire others to get involved.”

“We tell people all the time that our biggest reward is the many life stories we witness and touch through our service,” added Dottie. “We carry those stories in our hearts everywhere we go – and are honored to become a part of the unique lives of so many incredible people.”

Keith and Dottie’s own story as a couple began in the 1950s, when Keith’s family joined the church where Dottie’s family belonged. While it’s not surprising that the couple met through church, it is surprising that Keith and Dottie’s relationship bloomed after Dottie accidentally broke Keith’s finger while playing basketball! (Keith is quick to point out with a joking smile that love hurts.)

Although Keith and Dottie might not have been the best basketball teammates, they were a perfect match in their shared commitment to service. When the couple’s daughters were very young, the pair jointly decided to devote the rest of their lives to community outreach and service to the church. Today, Keith and Dottie volunteer through Mennonite Disaster Services (MDS), a network of Anabaptist churches dedicated to responding to natural and man-made disasters in Canada and the United States. The group’s aim is to assist the most vulnerable community members, individuals, and families who would not otherwise have the means to recover.

“We learned about MDS at a volunteer fair,” said Keith. “I used to work as a mechanical contractor, and I have licenses in a range of building services, such as electric and plumbing work – so the pictures of the rebuilt homes at the MDS booth definitely caught my eye and my interest. I remember standing at the table for a long time, watching the presentation – and imagining the role Dottie and I could play in the work they do. It was so clearly a perfect fit for what we were looking to do with our lives.”

Through MDS, the couple has travelled across the country, from Florida to California, for weeks – and

sometimes months – at a time to help individuals and families get back on their feet following a disaster. They usually leave for an annual trip the day after Christmas (as Dottie’s church choirs don’t rehearse in January and February) – and the pair also tackles more local projects throughout the year.

“Our second trip through MDS will always stand out in our memory,” said Dottie. “We were helping a single mother named Jenora rebuild her home in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina. Her son Jacob was 14 years old at the time, and every day, he would come home from school and ask, ‘How can I help?’ Jenora had serious heart problems, and she was also the primary caregiver for her handicapped niece. As we rebuilt their home, we formed a deep bond with this special family. We have kept in touch and visited in person when possible – and we recently learned that Jacob graduated from pharmacy school!”

Both Keith and Dottie are quick to point out that the MDS volunteers are building more than homes. They are building connections – lasting and powerful – and spreading hope, care, and wonder at the impact individuals can make on each other’s lives.

“A while back, we were on a build in Florida following a devastating hurricane, and another volunteer – who was a school teacher like me – decided to help the family’s young daughter with her schoolwork, as she was struggling in school.” said Dottie. “The little girl, who had a very curious mind, also expressed an interest in learning more about God, and since I always carry my favorite religious booklets with me, I was honored to share my faith with her. We kept in touch with her for quite a while, and

I will never forget her delight in those meaningful conversations.”

Another common thread in Keith and Dottie’s many stories about their outreach experiences is their amazement at the resilience of the individuals and families who have faced such challenging circumstances.

“During one trip to San Marcos, Texas, we were helping make improvements to the trailer of a woman who was badly crippled,” said Dottie. “The trailer was in terrible shape – rotted floors, a serious rat infestation, and damage just about everywhere. However, this lovely woman still managed to keep the trailer clean and tidy – and to host Bible studies since she couldn’t get to church. We were delighted to make big improvements to her living conditions – and inspired by her perseverance through countless challenges.”

Keith, who serves as project manager on most of the builds they join, is also amazed by the selflessness and dedication of the MDS volunteers – and the work they can accomplish when they work together.

“There’s always a mix of both familiar and new faces – which is ideal,” said Keith. “I try to pair new volunteers with the experienced ones to maximize learning. And it’s always wonderful to see volunteers return again and again, because we can really pick up steam by leveraging skills and talent where they are most needed.”

For both Keith and Dottie, their journey of service will remain a part of their lives and who they are as a couple. As a matter of fact, the pair was even packing up the car for an upcoming trip to West Virginia at the time of their interview for this article! They had also recently hosted the benefiting couple for a visit to this area – which allowed the church to get to know the individuals they were helping. The couple lost their home in a flood and have been living in an old farmhouse with no heat. The MDS team looks forward to seeing them settled into their new home before the winter arrives.

“There is such joy in the work we do,” said Dottie. “I encourage anyone who is interested in service to find out more about the many diverse opportunities available. Living Branches residents in particular have plenty of opportunities – whether it’s funding through the Expanding our Horizons program or service to one of our own community members in need. The world is full of opportunities to make a difference – and to leave a lasting, loving impact on the lives of those we touch.”



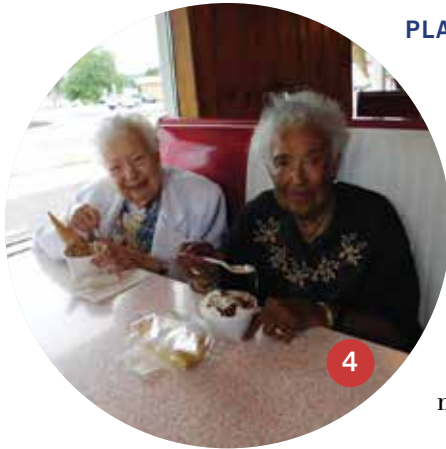
LIVING BRANCHES RECOGNIZED AT LEADINGAGE PA (1)

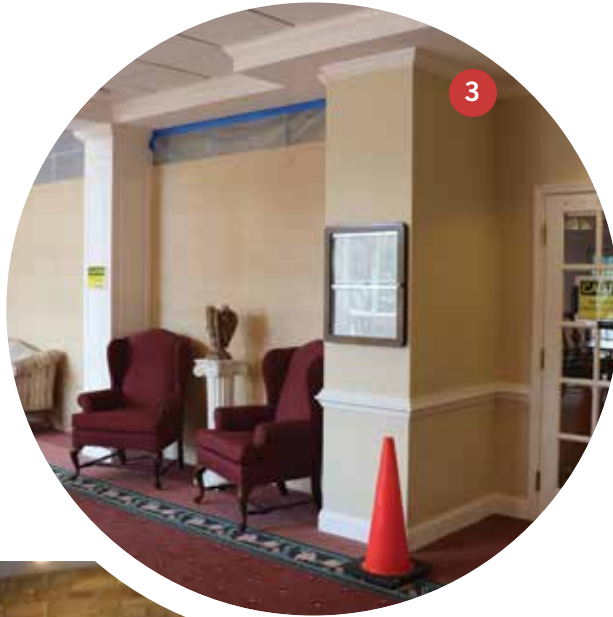
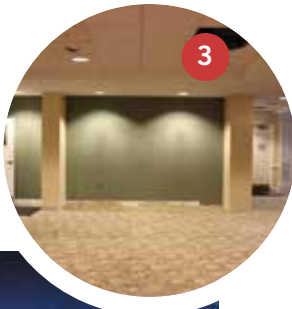
Living Branches was recently recognized at the Second Annual Workforce Celebration of our state association, LeadingAge PA. Kathleen Roberts, director of dementia care strategy, accepted an award recognizing our internship with Drexel University. Living Branches was noted as having groundbreaking dementia care work during that presentation. Kathy Shott, chief human resources officer, accepted a \$1,000 scholarship on behalf of Kayla DiGiovanni, resident assistant at The Willows who was unable to attend the ceremony. Kayla will be graduating from Cedar Crest College in 2020 with a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing.



PLAY BALL! (2)

Tasia Coblentz, fitness center coordinator, accompanied residents on a tour of Citizens Bank Park which includes the Diamond Club, Hall of Fame Club, Broadcast Booth, Media Room, and of course, the Phillies dugout. It was especially fun to visit the ball park during a season with so many wins and such excitement!





RENOVATIONS UNDERWAY AT DOCK WOODS (3)

If you visit Dock Woods, you'll notice wet paint signs and caution tape because renovations are underway! Phase 1, which is nearing completion, included new paint, wallpaper, carpet, baseboards, and lighting in Dock Gardens North Wing. Work has moved onto Phase 2 which includes the library, game room, auditorium, and bistro. If you're interested in hearing more updates throughout the renovation, be sure to follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our YouTube channel. We are filming "Tool Time with Todd" segments with Todd Detweiler, director of environmental services, during the renovations to share updates with the community.

I SCREAM, YOU SCREAM, WE ALL SCREAM FOR ICE CREAM (4)

In celebration of National Ice Cream month, the staff and residents of The Willows took a trip to Inside Scoop, a 1950s-style ice cream parlor in Coopersburg. It was the perfect outing for some of the hottest days of the summer. It was also a special because it was during Jenni Agosto's last few weeks as the student in residence for The Willows.

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JANUARY 1, 2018 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2018



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Dock Woods

Tuesday, October 23

Thursday, November 8

Tuesday, November 27

Souderton Mennonite Homes

Thursday, October 18

Friday, November 2

Wednesday, November 14

