

BRANCHINGOUT

LIVING BRANCHES

Live & Grow – Together



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

PERSONAL CARE

AT

Living Branches

INSIDE THIS ISSUE: VACCINE CLINIC UPDATE



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

TURNING TO THE FUTURE

OVER THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS, I have reflected many times that the resilience of our residents, their families, and our staff has been remarkable. While Branching Out is typically reserved for sharing positive stories and updates, I would be remiss to not acknowledge how hard life has been for our residents and the pain they have experienced this past year.

It has been a challenging year for everyone, but the pain for our residents was different from that of our staff. We could go home and interact with our families. Many residents could not. I want to recognize that and take a moment to say thank you. Thank you for your diligent work to keep yourselves and your neighbors safe, and for your continued patience and trust in us. I'm grateful to say we're in a better place today than we were a year ago. And the vaccine has brought hope for the future that makes me believe we'll be in an even better place a year from now.

As we begin to turn our focus to the future for the organization, I'm excited to begin sharing our communities with prospective residents once again. Last year at The Willows of Living Branches we renovated to create larger apartments with bay windows, spacious bathrooms with walk-in showers, kitchenettes with subway tile, and beautiful hallways and common spaces. We never got the opportunity to market these beautiful spaces to the community and I'm excited to be able to do that this year.

We've also made improvements to Personal Care at Souderton Mennonite Homes, which you will read more about in this issue. As I toured the spaces last week I was amazed at the difference. It's no secret that color and light in our environment impacts our mood and overall well-being, just like the first warm, sunny days of spring make everyone smile and feel happier. The hallways are now beautiful, inviting, and so much brighter. And the new one-bedroom apartments will be much more saleable than previous studio apartments.

I'm proud of the work we've done to enhance our communities for the residents who call Living Branches home today, and the persons we'll welcome in the future. The care is important. The relationships are important. And the setting is also important.

Again, thank you for your continued trust in us as we navigate through this year together.

Edward D. Brubaker

EDWARD D. BRUBAKER

President/CEO

BRANCHINGOUT

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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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2021 New Year, New Hope



FOR MOST OF THE SECOND HALF of 2020, we were awaiting news about the forthcoming Covid-19 vaccine. We knew once the vaccine was available, we would finally be headed toward the other side of the pandemic.

In mid-December Living Branches received word that the first clinic would be held at Dock Woods on January 9. We sprang into action to begin preparing, only to find out on Christmas Eve at 4:00 p.m. that the first clinic would actually be a week sooner than we were originally told. We had only nine days to alert staff, educate staff, create sign-up sheets, and see to every other logistic - and there were two holidays within that nine day period. It seemed to fit the norm of 2020: sitting in a holding pattern, learning new information, and then having to move - and move fast.



Over the next few weeks, numerous educational Zoom calls were held for staff. A Q&A series with our medical director, Dr. Haimowitz, was filmed for residents and staff. And we were able to host a webinar with Dr. Drew Weissman from Penn Medicine who was instrumental in developing the mRNA technology used in the vaccine.

In the first quarter of 2021, 23 vaccine clinics were held at the three Living Branches communities for residents and staff. We are thrilled to share that 74% percent of staff and 90-100% of percent of residents (depending on location) received their vaccinations. We thank everyone for doing their part to help Living Branches get closer to herd immunity and get back to normal! For more information, visit livingbranches.org/coronavirus.



UNDERSTANDING MRNA AND THE COVID-19 VACCINE: ADDRESSING SAFETY CONCERNS OF LONG-TERM CARE EMPLOYEES

A WEBINAR WITH PENN MEDICINE

Kathleen Roberts, director of dementia care strategy, has strong connections with Penn Medicine and was able to connect with Dr. Drew Weissman, MD, PhD, who has been studying mRNA since the 1990s and was instrumental in developing the technology that is the backbone of the Covid-19 vaccine. Dr. Weissman was willing to participate in a webinar for our staff and answered questions related to the safety of the vaccine, the differences between DNA and RNA, and the ingredients in the Covid-19 vaccine. This webinar was well attended by staff from Living Branches, Penn Medicine, and some other local health care providers. We were thrilled to be able to offer this webinar and hear directly from one of the persons with direct knowledge about the vaccine, and we are so grateful to the scientific community for bringing us a safe and effective vaccine for Covid-19. The Q&A portion of the webinar was recorded and is available on our YouTube channel.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

PERSONAL CARE

AT *Living Branches*

Our Communities.
Our Stories.
Our Unity through Challenges.

WE ALL LOOK FORWARD

to the days when life's most simple decisions are again...well...simple. Decisions about going food shopping, or meeting up with a friend, or hosting a holiday get-together.

At Living Branches, we are very aware that just as simple decisions are challenging these days, decisions that are tough in a “normal” environment – such as whether you, a parent, or a loved one is ready for a move into a community like ours – are even tougher when those decisions need to be made through the many challenges we face today.

Because of the pandemic, families must make difficult decisions about a loved one's care while taking into account a virus that's especially dangerous for older adults, as well

as the challenges of physical distancing. It might seem like the only choice right now is to keep a parent at home or with family, but there are risks in those scenarios as well, especially if the older adult needs regular assistance with daily activities, has medical conditions, or is suffering from a lack of socialization and activity.

“It's no surprise that more families are asking themselves if now is the right time for such a move,” said Leslie Novak, social worker, Dock Woods and The Willows of Living Branches. “But our core guidance in helping families through this decision has remained unchanged. It's best to be proactive when there are signs that a loved one is struggling, and transitions are smoother when they occur before there is an ‘emergency.’ When families take into account the safety measures communities like

ours have implemented, as well as all the creative ways we're keeping residents engaged and active, many are realizing that a move to a Personal Care community is the best option for keeping a loved one safe, as well as mentally and physically healthy.”

As with any decision, having good information at hand is key. And for the toughest decisions and challenges, it's critical to connect with those who can support you and help you overcome any hurdles you face.

“We've always encouraged families to reach out to us at any point in the process, even when they are just beginning to think about Personal Care,” said Jen Derstine, director of Personal Care services at The Willows of Living Branches. “This is especially true today, given the added complexity. We're thrilled when we can provide our families (and prospective families) with information to help with decision-making, stories from our communities to put their minds at ease, and a caring ear to let them know they have support.”

We know not everyone on this journey has had a chance to reach out for that support, so in the spirit of sharing helpful information, we sat down with some of our team members to highlight Personal Care at Living Branches, the unique stories from our communities, and the many ways in which our residents, staff, and families

have risen to meet the challenges of the pandemic.

For those who are on this care journey for themselves or a loved one, we hope this glimpse into our Personal Care communities encourages you to continue your information gathering and to broaden your support network wherever possible. It can start with one phone call! We're here, we're listening, and in the meantime, we're excited to spotlight our Personal Care philosophy, approach, and stories.

Personal Care at Living Branches

WHAT OUR PERSONAL CARE COMMUNITIES ARE LIKE...

In the simplest of explanations, it's home,” Leslie Novak shared.

Our Personal Care communities invite residents to enjoy an independent and worry-free lifestyle, supported by a compassionate and competent staff ready to assist with daily activities. “The Living Branches Personal Care communities include The Willows of Living Branches (all Personal Care), Dock Woods (Oakwood Court for traditional Personal Care and Harmony House for Memory Care), and Souderton Mennonite Homes (including Park View for Memory Care). Each community has its own unique personality (which we explore in the following spotlights), but all

offer spacious apartments, community activities, and the constant comfort of friendship, security, and care.

“We like to say that Personal Care at Living Branches gives daily life a bit of care-free sparkle,” said Ruthie Stubblebine, director of Personal Care services at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Our Personal Care communities are ideal for those who want to live in their own place with privacy, but benefit from easy access to customized services that fit their needs. All Personal Care residents enjoy delicious meals and housekeeping services, and they may enlist additional support for services like medicine management, shower and dressing assistance, and laundry.

Living Branches also offers around-the-clock nursing care – a fairly unique offering in our communities that gives both residents and family members peace of mind.

But back to that sparkle... The life enrichment activities on our campus are endless. From onsite fitness centers and programming, to community events and special meals, to afternoon strolls through the beautiful gardens, residents can truly customize their days with the people, activities, and pastimes that bring them joy.

“We are a community where you can’t go far without enjoying a friendly smile and a neighborly ‘hello,’” said Sue Sunderland, director of Personal Care services at Dock Woods. “Even through the challenges of Covid-19, we’ve heard so many of our residents and families share their appreciation for that spirit of community, which feels more important than ever.”

“A son of one of our residents recently told me that even though his mom moved here during Covid-19 times, she has enjoyed more social interaction than she had living at home with family,” shared Leslie. “His gratitude touched my heart, and as a staff member, I have felt my own sense of gratitude grow because of the constant rewards of supporting our residents and families through these challenging times.”

OUR PERSONAL CARE PHILOSOPHY...

Our team members strive, every day and with every action, to respect and

promote each resident’s independence – and to empower them to lead lives of purpose and joy.

At the heart of this is our commitment to person-centered care, which means that activities, services, and care plans are customized to each resident’s unique preferences and values. This approach honors our residents’ choices, dignity, and individuality, which enhances both the quality of their care and, of course, their happiness.

“We make every attempt to learn about each resident’s history and interests,” said Leslie. “From hallway conversations to tell-your-life-story events, there are constant opportunities to build our relationships with – and understanding of – our residents. These connections allow us to customize not only bigger things like care plans, but also our daily interactions. For example, we might joke more with a resident who likes to laugh, or be more tender with a

resident who enjoys quiet talks. I see constant examples of our staff using their empathy and intuition to show our residents that we see them for the unique people they are – and all the things they care about and love to do.”

Even in our Memory Care communities, where residents have different levels of cognition, our staff has discovered plenty of opportunities to engage residents in activities and interactions that that bring them joy.

“It might be as simple as talking about a favorite childhood memory, or putting on a beloved song from their youth,” said Sue.

“We all want to be treated with respect and kindness,” added Leslie. “A while back, a prospective resident asked me, ‘Are the people here nice?’ I could feel her worry, and I told her without hesitation that some of the kindest people I know live and work in our community. Soon after she moved in, she circled back to me and said, ‘You were right! Everyone has been so nice

to me.’ And I could see the weight of that worry lifted – and replaced with joy and contentment. It was such a great moment that still makes my heart swell.”

OUR ADVICE TO FAMILY MEMBERS CONSIDERING PERSONAL CARE

Our support for every family is always unique, but there are some pieces of advice that we share with everyone on this care journey.

First and foremost, we encourage family members to have a conversation with to their loved ones – ideally before there is an emergency situation. And to really listen to what they have to say.

“It’s also important to talk about the fears a loved one may have about their current situation,” said Leslie. “Many older adults struggle with the anxieties of living alone. It might be concerns about shoveling snow in the winter, or their driving abilities, or even just the general upkeep of home ownership. Yes, there may also be anxieties associated with a move, but we see so many minds swayed when older adults start to envision their lives without the fears and burdens that perhaps they haven’t shared with their family as they’ve aged.”

Second, be sure to visit or virtually tour the communities that top your list, because no amount of brochures, floor plans, or pictures can truly bring the day-to-day experience to life.

“It’s always amazing to see the variety of reasons residents fall in love with our communities when they have a chance to experience them,” said Jen Derstine. “I remember one resident couldn’t say enough about the meals. She hadn’t cooked anything nutritious for herself in a long time, and she simply raved about how much better she felt – and how delicious the food is here.”

“One prospective resident was really struggling with the idea of moving out of her house, and we offered her a chance to visit one of our group music activities,” said Leslie. “Our life enrichment coordinator at the time had a dog, and the prospective resident loved dogs. Her special time with the dog allowed her to enjoy the group activity so much that she came back to our office with a smile from ear-to-ear. Once people experience our communities, they can more easily imagine the friendships, the fun, and the worry-free lifestyle.”



And finally, we want all of our families and prospective residents to know that we are here for them every step of the way – from the first conversation, through the transition, to our daily commitment to supporting our residents in every way possible.

The Willows of Living Branches

WHAT MAKES OUR COMMUNITY UNIQUE...

Bright. Cheerful. Close-Knit. Homey. These are the words that our residents and family members frequently use to describe The Willows of Living Branches.

“We’re a small community, and I believe that gives life here a very special quality,” said Jen Derstine. “Our residents and staff form close bonds, and we all know each other – which makes the entire community feel like family.”

Much like students who thrive going to a small college, the residents who choose The Willows appreciate that they never feel lost in the hustle and bustle of a larger campus. Our community is simple to navigate, and it’s always easy to find a friendly, familiar face.

“Even though The Willows community is close-knit, residents and staff alike are extremely welcoming of new residents,” said Leslie Novak. “Everyone goes out of their way to help our newest friends feel at home quickly.”

“Because our community is small, it’s much easier to customize our enrichment activities for small groups or individuals,” said Jen. “Our residents aren’t shy about suggesting something fun, especially activities that bring people together. And the fun for the staff is making it happen!”

“Soon after she moved in, she circled back to me and said, ‘You were right! Everyone has been so nice to me.’”





SOME OF OUR FAVORITE MEMORIES...

“We welcomed a new resident to The Willows around Christmas,” said Jen. “Because of the 14-day quarantine period, she didn’t get to see much of the community in her earliest days here. When she was finally able to come upstairs and see all of the beautiful holiday decorations, she was amazed. Everyone who saw the dazzled look on her face was touched to be a part of this extra-special welcome into our community.”

“It’s impossible to pick my favorite memory from The Willows,” said Leslie. “Every interaction I’m part of (or witness) reminds me of the tender, cohesive, and supportive place this community is for both residents and staff. From the cards the residents make for each other, to the hallway conversations that allow us to check in on each other and keep spirits high through the pandemic – there’s a constant flow of care and empathy no matter what challenges we face.”

Dock Woods

WHAT MAKES OUR COMMUNITY UNIQUE...

“Because of the size, scope, and different levels of care offered at Dock Woods, our residents enjoy access to a range of amenities that aren’t possible in a standalone Personal Care community,” said Debbie Drummond, life enrichment coordinator, Oakwood Court.

From a stunning pool, to a state-of-the-art fitness center,

to a range of community and learning activities, residents of Dock Woods experience a very active lifestyle within the 108-acre campus of beautifully maintained grounds. As needs change, residents who joined the community in Residential Living sometimes move into one of the Dock Woods Personal Care communities – and they retain access to all the activities they’ve come to enjoy. (Even snow doesn’t get in the way!)

“Despite being a larger campus, there are still plenty of friendly hellos everywhere you look,” said Sue Sunderland. “Each staff department and team member finds their own way to get to know our residents. We hear countless stories from residents about how a maintenance worker came by to hang a photo, but ended up staying to talk about the latest sports game. Or how the housekeeper popped in to vacuum and took the time to share a family recipe they’d talked about the week before.”

“There’s definitely a lifestyle of abundance at Dock Woods,” said Debbie, “but wrapped around that will always be the genuine, compassionate care that connects our residents, their families, and our staff.”

SOME OF OUR FAVORITE MEMORIES...

“We recently welcomed a new resident to Harmony House, and during the transition, her daughter explained to us that her mother is an introvert,” said Sue. “But over time, she started participating in our hallway activities, which we’d started during Covid-19 times to bring people together safely. She clearly enjoyed the fun interactions, and she even

shared her birthday cookies with her neighbors on her special day!”

For the staff and residents alike, some of our best memories come from our efforts to “get to yes” with unusual resident requests.

“One of our residents had spent much of her life down the shore, and every year, her family came to the beach house for a special gathering,” said Leslie. “Following a move to hospice care due to failing health, the resident asked if she could still go to the shore with her family for a week in the summer. At first, it seemed like a daunting request, but we worked with her medical team to put together a plan of care and to work through all needed logistics – and she went to the shore with her family! I will never forget how happy this woman was when she returned; she said the memories she made that week were a highlight of her life, and she would cherish them forever. I can’t express how grateful I am to have been a part of that story.”

Debbie, too, was eager to share a poignant experience that touched her heart. “I had the privilege of taking one of our residents to visit her husband in Health Care for their wedding anniversary. They hadn’t seen each other in a while, and the reunion was so very beautiful. She showed him pictures from their wedding album, and when she mentioned their wedding song, I was able to pull it up and play it on my smartphone. Even though he wasn’t able to talk, the recognition lit up his eyes, and they both cried happy tears as they held hands. It was an amazing life moment to witness.”

Souderton Mennonite Homes

WHAT MAKES OUR COMMUNITY UNIQUE...

Souderton Mennonite Homes rests on the summit of Souderton, Pennsylvania, surrounded by the local community.

“There are deep ties to the Mennonite faith and traditions in our community,” said Jennifer Landis, Personal Care care coordinator at Souderton Mennonite Homes. “There are also strong family connections here that bind us together. Many of our staff members have worked here for a long time, and they have been blessed to care for multiple generations in the same family. We often hear things like, ‘I remember when you took care of my aunt!’ For the staff and residents, there’s a beauty and comfort in those connections.”

Even though intertwined roots abound at Souderton Mennonite Homes, staff and residents are very welcoming of any resident who has chosen to call their community home.

“I believe our staff has always excelled at ‘getting to yes,’” said Ruthie Stubblebine. “But I’ve been amazed at the levels of flexibility, the creativity, the empathy, and the unstoppable commitment to genuine care that every single staff member has demonstrated through our recent challenges. I couldn’t even begin to express my admiration for all they do. They’re all that and a bag of chips! And you can quote me on that!”

For Melissa McGuire, life enrichment coordinator, it’s easy to explain the staff’s willingness to go above and beyond. “We’re a family at Souderton

Mennonite Homes – and every resident and staff member is an important part of our circle. Our family may be weathering an intense storm right now, but the strength of our circle has only grown stronger.”

SOME OF OUR FAVORITE MEMORIES...

“Before Covid-19, there was always a select group of residents who enjoyed coming to my office and reminding me of what I needed to do that day,” said Melissa. “They certainly aren’t shy, and I’ve been missing the company. I’m looking forward to the days when I can safely have my ‘helpers” back in my office!”

“I enjoy the easy camaraderie we have with residents,” said Jennifer. “Because of our roles, we learn a lot about our residents’ background, health, and families – but they invite us into their lives in so many other ways. They share favorite memories, funny jokes, and there’s definitely been a lot of talking about the things they miss. In these times of ‘social distancing,’ I’m more grateful than ever for the bonds we enjoy here.”

The Big Things. The Little Things. And Everything In Between.

Sharing the many ways our staff, residents, and families have supported each other through the challenges of the pandemic:

WE GOT FLEXIBLE.

Not surprisingly, the Living Branches staff has worked diligently to implement a wide range of safety measures based on the latest guidance, but we have also balanced these

measures with our residents’ very real need for togetherness – with each other and with their families.

“It’s easy to get caught up in the guidelines, because those measures are clearly important for keeping



our community safe,” said Ruthie Stubblebine. “However, we have continually faced situations where we must balance those measures with the human side of things. We are caregivers that care for the whole person, and this includes a balanced – and often individualized – approach to navigating these challenges.”

At times, this has meant allowing family visits, but carefully ensuring that all safety precautions have been taken. In other situations, this has meant reimagining certain beloved activities and traditions, such as holiday events, that allow for celebration and interaction – but keep residents and staff as safe as possible.

“One of the Living Branches core values is ‘Get to Yes,’” said Leslie Novak. “While this commitment has certainly felt more challenging through the pandemic, it’s also more important than ever to bring a heightened level of flexibility and empathy to all we do.”

WE GOT CREATIVE.

We’ve always believed that stepping out of the “comfort zone” is the best way to spark creativity. So last year and this year, we’ve had plenty of opportunities to showcase just how creative our staff is when it comes to keeping our residents connected and engaged.

“No matter what level of restrictions we have faced, we’ve been able to keep up with some form of social interaction,” said Jen Derstine. “We make special deliveries of crafts and puzzles. We host hallway and small

group activities. We definitely sanitize items a lot more than usual, but that never takes away from the smiles that bloom when people see a friendly face.”

It will come as no surprise that video chatting has played a huge role in our ability to keep residents connected to their families, and the staff has been happy to play the role of tech support in helping make those virtual get-togethers happen.

“It’s been tough watching our residents miss the people and places they love, so every staff member is willing to do whatever it takes to bring people together in new ways,” said Debbie Drummond. “As an example, we may not be able to have birthday celebrations right now, but our residents love our new travelling root beer float cart! And the residents who are missing in-person church attendance can now watch regular church services on our in-house television station.”

WE GOT CLOSER.

Through the massive challenges of the pandemic, we have been reminded – quite dramatically – to be grateful for all of the blessings in our lives. And this includes the unique opportunities we’ve shared since early 2020 to get closer as a Living Branches community.

“We’ve had more time to spend one-on-one time with residents,” said Jen. “More time to just sit and reminisce. More time to get to know each other and share life stories.”

And for all of our staff members, the pandemic has shined a constant spotlight on our commitments to residents, families, and each other.

“As a team, we’ve been through challenges we never could have imagined,” said Sue Sunderland. “But these challenges have shown us how much we’re capable of – and how much we care about our community. Every day, I see staff members reach inside themselves to provide each resident with what they need. They have remained consistently warm, engaging, positive, and upbeat – and I am more grateful than ever to be a part of this team.”

And that positivity has continued to nourish more positivity – even through the toughest of challenges.

“One of our family members recently asked me how we’re holding up,” said Leslie. “I told him that we’ve been luckier than many, and that I couldn’t be prouder of the countless ways our communities have come together to take care of each other. It’s all the big things. All the little things. And everything in between.”

GIVING BACK FROM HOME

by: Shelby Slemmer, Intern



Jean Keer lives in the Dock Acres cottages at Dock Woods with her husband, Stafford, and together they are deeply committed to giving back to the community. After working in long term care facilities since she earned her nursing license at 48 years of age, Jean knew she wanted to support the dementia care program at Living Branches in some way. But like everything else in 2020, volunteering in that area of the community was restricted.

also decrease stress and increase calm and joy. Doris taught Jean how to create these comfort dolls and soon Jean was on her way to creating her own yarn dolls to give to residents in Country Cottage. Jean shares, “It takes a full day to create one of these adorable knit dolls, but I’m patient. And I’m committed to making a difference!”

This past December Jean put a twist on the comfort dolls by changing their look to resemble Santa Claus. She made 18 Santa dolls – one for every resident in Country Cottage – and over a dozen additional dolls for residents in Harmony House.

Jean looks forward to the day when she will be able to volunteer within Country Cottage, but wherever she is, she is always giving to others! Whether it be gifting meaningful presents such as the comfort dolls, baking Christmas cookies for her neighbors in the Acres, or helping out a friend, you can always find Jean Keer engaged in activities that benefit the Dock Woods community.

“It takes a full day to create one of these adorable knit dolls, but I’m patient. And I’m committed to making a difference!”

Jean learned of “comfort dolls” being created by Doris Fenton, another Residential Living resident at Dock Woods. Comfort dolls are commonly used in Memory Care settings because they provide persons with dementia with a sense of purpose as a caregiver and



RENOVATIONS

AT SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, common space renovations have taken place at Souderton Mennonite Homes. First was the lobby and Apple Orchard Café on the 2000 level, then came the Summit Dining Room and common spaces on the 3000 level, and we've now moved to common spaces on the 4000 and 5000 levels. These areas are for Personal Care residents and we are excited about the increased natural light, bright colors, and sophistication these updates have brought to the community. We're also excited that this project included combining 10 studio apartments to create five one-bedroom apartments. These will be the first one-bedroom apartments for Personal Care at Souderton Mennonite Homes and we are thrilled to be able to offer these spacious apartments to new residents looking for more space in their living accommodations.

GLOBE HOPPING WITH LIVING U (1)

In January Living U offered a free six-part virtual series taking residents and community members around the world! Maribeth Benner coordinated Zoom call interviews with Sally Makeen in Kuwait, Rubina Budha in Nepal, Nur Ninda Natalia in Indonesia, and Bemnet Tsegaye in Ethiopia, who are all previous participants of the Mennonite Central Committee International Visitor Exchange Program (MCC IVEP) and served at Living Branches. Participants also had the privilege of learning from Robert and Irene Suderman who served as missionaries in Bolivia and Vurayayi Pugen and Thelma Sadzamari who are MCC co-area directors living in Rwanda. It was exciting for many Living Branches residents to reconnect with IVEP'ers and meet their families, and learn about the various countries, cultures, and mission work.



PEN PALS WITH DMA (2)

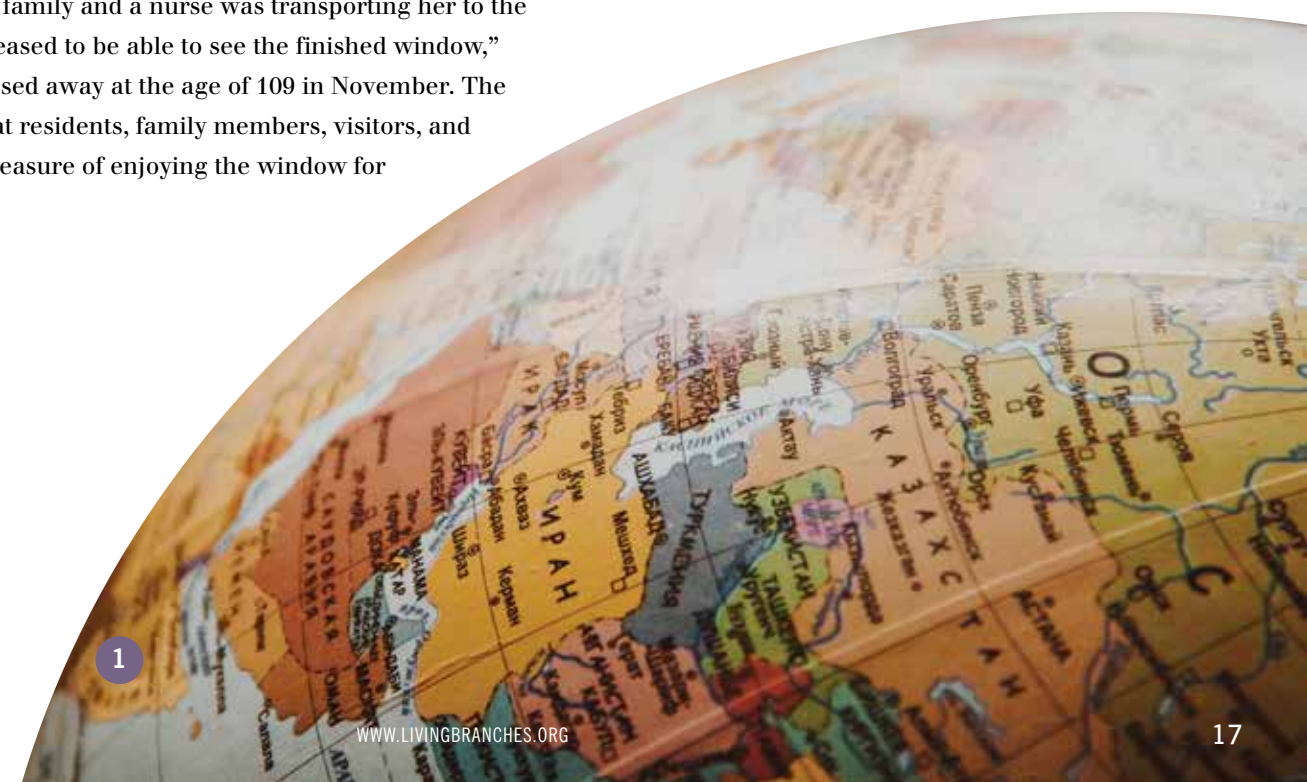
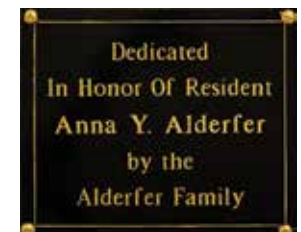
This past fall 17 Dock Woods residents and Dock Mennonite Academy students in Zach Brower's family life class took part in a pen pal project. The pen pals started off by writing letters to each other, and while some continued to correspond by letters, both typed and handwritten, many of the pairs opted to email each other. There were also opportunities for the student/resident pairs to meet via Zoom or Facetime, or have a phone call.

This proved to be a meaningful experience during a very difficult time. One resident shared, "Even though it took convincing to get me to participate, I really enjoyed it!" And many students shared similar sentiments. It was interesting for them to hear residents share their perspective on the pandemic after living through other difficult times in US history. The hope is that one day some of these pairs may cross the parking lot between Dock Woods and Dock Mennonite Academy and meet face to face in the future.



STAINED GLASS ART INSTALLATION (3)

A recent addition at Souderton Mennonite Homes is a nine-pane stained glass window installed on the 3000 level near the Summit Dining Room. The stained glass was created by a son-in-law of Janet Alderfer Vincent, in honor of her first mother-in-law, Anna Y. Alderfer (known by many as Grammy Alderfer) who was a master quilter and a longtime resident of Souderton Mennonite Homes. Janet shared, "It was a dream of his to do this. We brought various quilt patterns in and laid them out on her bed. She helped pick out the designs." They then worked with staff at Souderton Mennonite Homes to select colors and find a place for the window to be displayed. One day this fall when staff members were preparing to hang the window on the wall, it just so happened that Anna had a scheduled visit with family and a nurse was transporting her to the visit. "She was so pleased to be able to see the finished window," said Janet. Anna passed away at the age of 109 in November. The family is grateful that residents, family members, visitors, and staff will have the pleasure of enjoying the window for years to come.



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