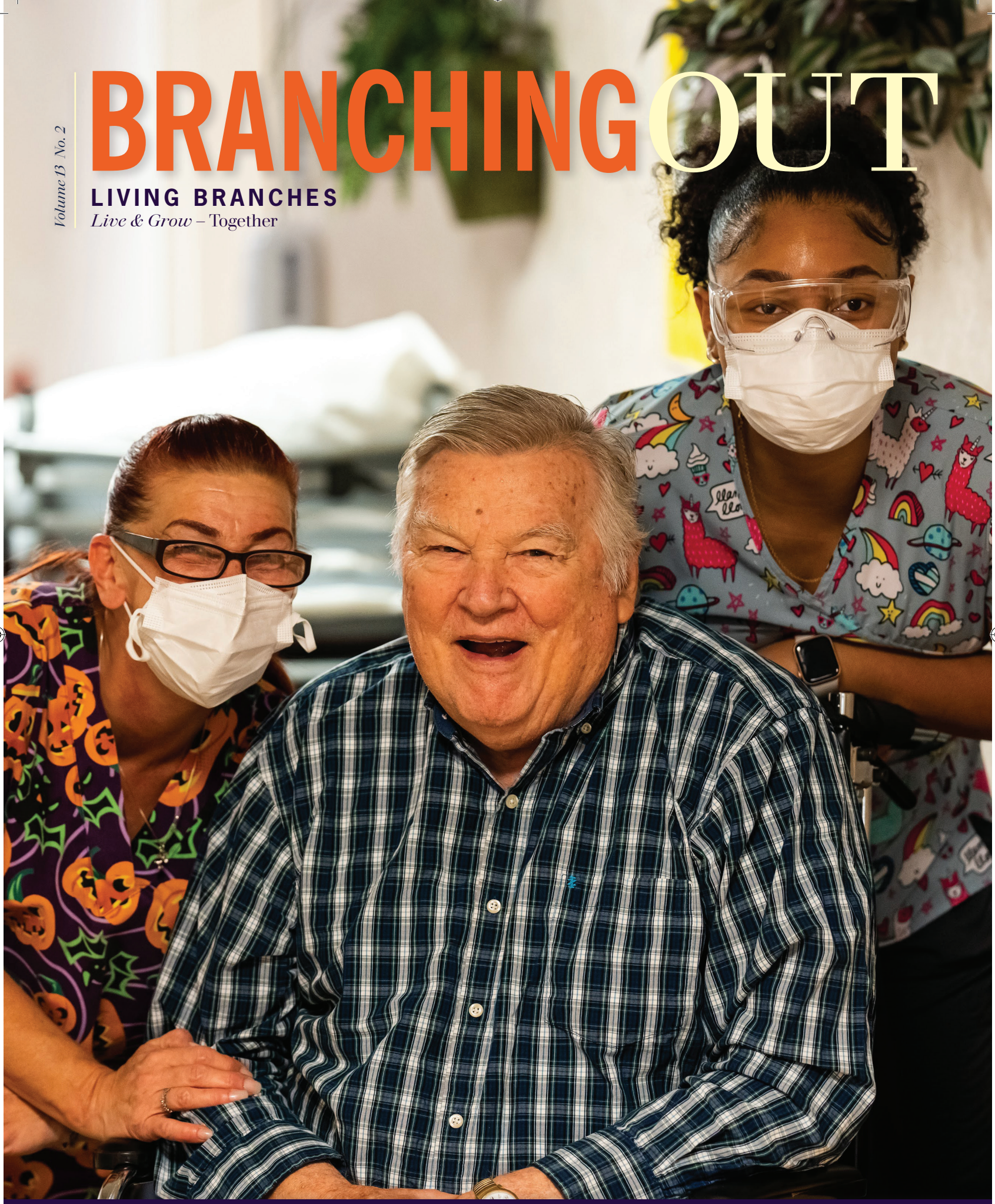


Volume 13 No. 2

# BRANCHING OUT

**LIVING BRANCHES**

*Live & Grow – Together*



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE: INTRODUCING THE CAMPAIGN FOR LIVING BRANCHES**



## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

**OUR LEAD STORY** in this edition of Branching Out spotlights the incredible commitment of our certified nursing assistants (CNAs). They have graciously shared insights about caregiving, a glimpse into their career journeys, and inspiring stories that perfectly showcase why they are so passionate.

Our CNAs were so open in their willingness to share their caregiving journeys that it has inspired me to do the same!

Let's go back to 1984 when I was just out of college. To be candid I wasn't purposefully seeking a career in the caregiving space. My fiancée (now my lovely wife) and I were looking for an opportunity that balanced a location close to family with a role that utilized my finance background. I decided to accept a position as an accountant for Dock Woods. Little did I know that decision would lead me to the world of caregiving where I have found my purpose.

While there are opportunities to learn at every turn, I have come to believe firmly in two timeless truths when it comes to caregiving.

But more on that in a moment...

First I'd like to share a special experience I had during weekend leadership duty. I was talking with a resident in the Hearthside Bistro at Dock Woods about another resident who had recently joined the community. The new resident had struggled with feeling out of place her entire life and was experiencing some difficulty in her transition. The concerned resident I had the pleasure of speaking with decided to rally other members of the community to reach out and show acts of kindness and compassion. Through these acts of love, they were able to help the woman build her confidence.

Now let's go back to those two timeless truths I mentioned earlier.

- 1. We are all called upon to be caregivers.** There are opportunities every day to take the best care of the people in our lives and communities.
- 2. Love is always the best approach to caregiving.** Examples of the many ways love can make a difference are on full display in the stories shared by our CNAs in this edition's lead story.

So to all of our incredible CNAs...You inspire me every day with your commitment, your stories, and your love for our residents. Thank you for everything you do!

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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## The Stories of Living Branches CNAs:

# “We Work Where They Live”



### CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANTS

Certified nursing assistants (CNAs) spend their days, evenings, and nights taking care of residents in our Health Care (skilled nursing) communities. Their faces are often the first that residents see in the morning and the last they see at night. The bonds that form between our residents and CNAs are meaningful and important to both parties — and play a critical role in ensuring every day is the best day possible.

We recently sat down with some CNAs and residents to learn more about those bonds and their shared experiences.



### “WE LOVE TO MAKE EACH OTHER SMILE”

The banter between these two companions — an older gentleman in a wheelchair and a young man wearing scrubs — is relaxed, familiar, and punctuated by laughter. They sound like life-long friends.

But Lamar Heppler has been a resident of Health Care at Souderton Mennonite Homes for less than a year, and CNA Vidal James joined the staff sometime later. Nevertheless they have already made an enormous positive impact on each other's lives.

“If we had more people like this gentleman right here,” Lamar says with a nod to Vidal, “It would be a wonderful world.”

“Mr. H’ is an all-round good guy,” Vidal says. “We love to make each other smile.”

Lamar and Vidal's friendship is not an anomaly in Living Branches communities. A visitor hears repeatedly — from both staff members and residents — about the mutually rewarding and meaningful bonds that can form between residents and CNAs.

The path that led Vidal to becoming a CNA and working with — and befriending — Lamar was not a direct one. Immediately before joining Souderton, Vidal worked as a general manager for Chipotle, and his previous experience includes working as a personal trainer.

His current job is different from his past ones in many

ways, but one difference stands out. “I had seven or eight jobs before this one,” he says. “But this is the only job I've loved.”

Lamar attributes the progress he's made adjusting to using leg prostheses in large part to Vidal. “I don't think I would have come along as well as I have without this man,” he says. “This is all new to me — and it's not easy. When he's off a couple of days, I miss him. He's fantastic.”

“He's nothing but smiles,” Vidal says about Lamar. “This man cheers me up and makes me love my job. Coming here is not like coming to work for me, it's like coming home.”

Vidal attributes his success as a CNA, as reflected in the relationships he's developed with Lamar and other residents, to a tip he picked up as a trainee.

“Our instructor suggested we keep in mind that our residents don't live where we work; rather, we work where they live. We come into their home to help them. Thinking about what I do that way helps guide my efforts in treating our residents with the respect they deserve.”

There are more than 1.5 million CNAs in the United States and, driven by the need to serve a rapidly aging population, that number is rising fast — projections see an 11-percent growth in their ranks by 2026. About 75,000 CNAs work in Pennsylvania, and about 58 percent of them are employed by nursing homes and adult-care facilities.

## “IT MEANS A LOT TO ME TO TAKE CARE OF HER”

Four years ago, Kelli Murphy was a lead server in dining services and working at Souderton Mennonite Homes, where she met Darlene Myers, a resident at Souderton for twenty years. Today Kelli is a CNA who cares for Darlene.

“Kelli comes in every morning ready to help people,” Darlene says.

“It means a lot to me to take care of her and make sure all her needs are met,” Kelli says. “And I love watching her — and all the residents — shine in the dining room and during activities.”

Kelli’s transition from working as a server to caring for Darlene and other residents meant she had to travel a path required of all CNAs — completing a state-mandated number of training hours and then passing an examination that includes both a written test and a skills evaluation that results in state certification. Kelli was eligible to start down that path because she met basic Pennsylvania requirements that include being 16 or older, in good physical health, and passing a background check.

She didn’t have to travel far to learn how to be a CNA — training takes place right where she works during classes offered to Living Branches employees at no cost — in fact, they are paid while attending them. The classes usually take place two or three times a week over the course of about seven weeks.



## “I FELL IN LOVE WITH IT!”

While CNAs enter the field with a variety of backgrounds, their next career step — if they choose to take one — is very often into nursing, and some go on to become nursing supervisors and managers. The careers of several of Living Branches’ senior nurses followed this path.

One former CNA in a leadership position is Leslie Collins, assistant director of Health Care services at Souderton Mennonite Homes. The relationships she formed as a CNA with the people in her care left her with several indelible memories that include having the daughter of a man she cared for present her with a five-pound bag of sugar after his passing.

“Her father loved sugar in his coffee — a lot of sugar! — and we always made sure he got it. That was a small thing to us, but it was such a big, important thing in his life that he made sure his family knew about it. His daughter wanted to thank us, so she brought us sugar in his memory. That meant a lot to me — and still does.”

Miranda Williams, who has been with Living Branches for five years, is one of the many CNAs who has thought about becoming a nurse. But based on what she shares about her relationships with the residents she cares for in her current role, she’ll have mixed feelings if she decides to move on.

“I wanted a career in health care, and I knew that working as a CNA would be a really good start — but once I was here, I fell in love with it!” she says. “It’s a challenging, sometimes even hard job, but I’ve learned so much — and so many residents have become my friends.”

One of them is Dock Woods resident Ron Shea, who shares that, after a lifetime of independent living, he resisted relying on caregivers like Miranda.

“Leaving your family and friends to move in with strangers is hard,” he acknowledges. “I always felt I could take care of myself — that I didn’t need somebody.”

But his thinking changed when that “somebody” turned out to be Miranda and her fellow CNAs. Their care and support helped move him toward acceptance, and now: “I don’t know how I would manage by myself,” he says.



## A Day in the Life of a CNA

Living Branches CNAs work directly with residents to help make every day the best day it can be.

According to Leslie Collins, assistant director of Health Care services at Souderton Mennonite Homes, specific CNA responsibilities can differ based on resident needs and the shift they are working, but in general CNAs assist residents with all aspects of their care.

Mornings and evenings are the busiest times of day, as CNAs are busy helping residents as they wake up and then get ready for bed. Showering, shaving, assisting in the bathroom, putting on and removing makeup, changing clothes – all of these can take place in the morning and evening.

CNAs are also the eyes and ears of the care team. Because they work most closely with residents, CNAs can spot problems and complications before they start. This is especially true at Living Branches because CNAs usually work with the same small group of residents every day. They know what's typical for their residents and can tell when someone is experiencing a change in health or cognitive status.

Other aspects of daily routine for CNAs are taking residents' vital signs, assisting at meal times, helping residents maintain their mobility, and recording all their data and care activities in the residents' electronic medical records.

In talking with CNAs for this article, there was universal agreement that the best part of each day is the time spent deepening relationships with residents. Whether it's casual conversation during the care times, painting nails, or sharing in the fun of music on the patio - the moments between CNAs and their residents are encouraging and important to both.

People who enjoy the role of CNA the most seem to value relationships with other people, have lots of energy, and get satisfaction from helping others. If you or someone you know would like to learn more about working as a CNA and the paid training course offered by Living Branches, visit our website at [livingbranches.org/CNA](http://livingbranches.org/CNA).



### “CAREGIVERS AT HEART”

“I kind of adopted a bunch of the girls because they are so good to me, and I appreciate everything they do,” said Dock Woods resident Phyllis Holsinger, referring to some of her favorite female CNAs. “And they sort of adopted me as their second mother.”

Shelby Schroy, who has worked for Living Branches since 2019, is one of Phyllis’ “adoptees”. She was inspired to become a CNA by watching caregivers look after her mother. “I thought, ‘Caring for people and making them feel better with my kindness is the kind of work God wants me to do.’ Caring for people just feels right to me. Many of us here are caregivers at heart. It’s something that’s just in us.”

Caring can take many forms, including — for Phyllis and Shelby — hairstyling. “My hair always looks a mess in the morning, but Shelby knows how to make it look nice,” Phyllis says. “Anything I ask her to do, she’s ready to do. She’s a really big help. She’s wonderful.”

“I love doing Phyllis’ hair,” Shelby says. “It’s my favorite thing! We have a lot of fun in the mornings.”



### “SHE TOLD ME WHO SHE WAS”

Dock Woods resident Carolyn Gordon vividly recalls her first impression of CNA Myra James. It was very positive — for a simple reason.

“She came into my room and told me who she was,” Carolyn says.

Carolyn’s care regimen requires her to be woken early. The grogginess associated with that early wake-up visit, combined with her vision difficulties, makes it difficult for Carolyn to identify her morning visitors.

But with the simple act of saying her name, Myra showed respect. And that meant a lot to Carolyn.

They were off to a good start — and Myra continued to impress. “She listened to me,” Carolyn says. “She didn’t assume she knew better than me about what I needed. And she didn’t try to handle me.”

Not being “handled,” but rather being treated as someone capable of knowing what they need and encouraged to be as autonomous as possible, is another signal of respect — one highly valued by Carolyn and her fellow residents.

“We want to be listened to, to be helped, to be eased along — which Myra does beautifully,” Carolyn says.

Myra gets it. Echoing the tip from training that also guides her colleague Vidal, she says, “We have to keep in mind that we work where they live, and we are interrupting them every time we come into their room.”

“This is my first job in the medical field, and I love it,” she says. “I learn something new every day, and I love interacting with the residents, getting to know their routines, and learning the little details they like.”

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### THE KEY TO SUCCESS AS A CNA?

Myra says it perfectly:

*“You have to be willing to listen, learn, and lead with love.”*

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# Living Branches

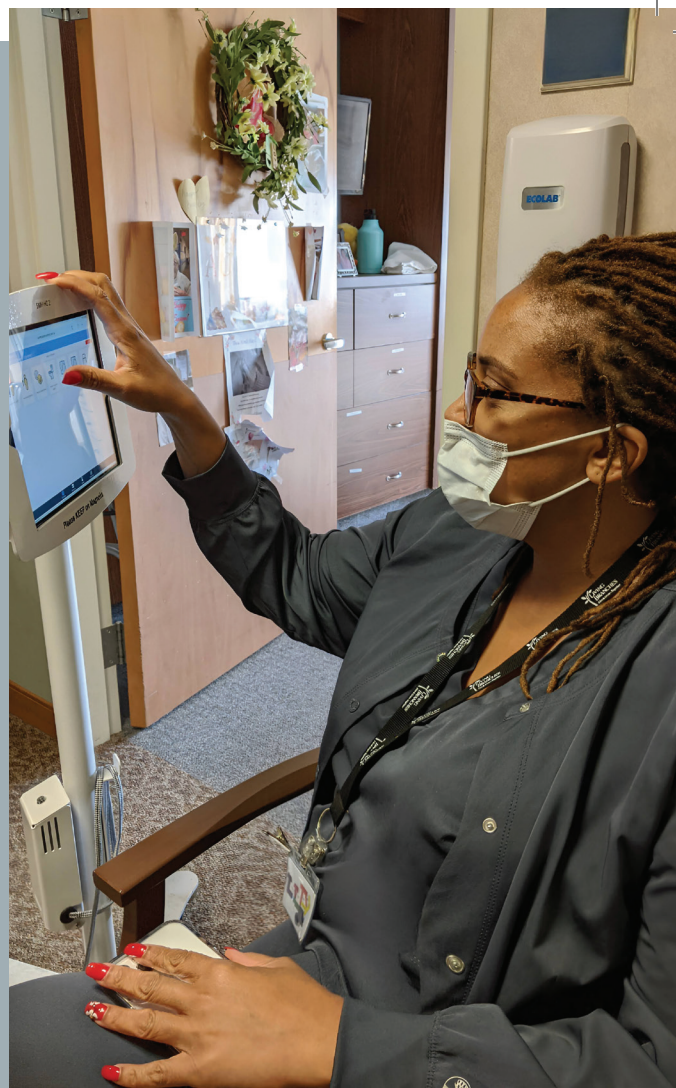
# CNA Training Program

SEVERAL TIMES PER YEAR, Living Branches offers a CNA class for persons interested in starting a career in health care. The course spans seven weeks split between the classroom, lab, and clinical experience with residents to demonstrate the roles and responsibilities of providing long-term care. All students are hired as Living Branches employees for the duration of the course, earning \$15.00 per hour as they learn.

Students represent a variety of backgrounds: some who later move on to nursing, and others who aspire a career change and feel drawn to caregiving. Living Branches welcomes the opportunity for team members to grow from within, and some CNAs even start in different departments before enrolling in the course.

If you or someone you know would like to learn more about working as a CNA and the paid training course offered by Living Branches, visit our website at [livingbranches.org/CNA](http://livingbranches.org/CNA).

WWW.LIVINGBRANCHES.ORG



## CAMPUS HAPPENINGS

### SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES RESIDENTS FIND NEW PURPOSE FOR PLASTIC BAGS

What started as an Earth Day initiative at Souderton Mennonite Homes has evolved into a resident-favorite activity across all levels of care. Throughout the month of April, Residential Living life enrichment coordinator, Heather Scattergood, encouraged residents to gather and recycle plastic bags. Drawing inspiration from *One Plastic Bag*, a book sharing the real-life story of African women who recycled and repurposed plastic bags, Heather implemented a program where residents would essentially do the same, but instead create sleeping mats for homeless shelters.

Heather explained that the process starts with taking a clean bag and folding it so that it can be cut into two-inch strips. The resulting material is referred to as plarn (plastic bag yarn), and is crocheted using either a standard crochet hook, or the loom that was generously donated to the group in July. Once complete the mats can be easily hosed off, and will be donated to community organizations, including Manna on Main Street and Access Living.

For several months now, Residential Living residents have met each week to work on various steps of the process. Over time this activity has garnered the participation of residents in Memory Care and Health Care as well, who assist particularly with the folding and cutting of the bags.

Initially Heather had hopes of creating even just one mat, as she explained that it takes approximately 700 bags to do so. The group's efforts have now surpassed that goal, and have culminated in two 5 feet by 6 feet mats. Within a couple of months, Heather hopes that it will evolve into an entirely resident-run program.



### MEMORY BOOKS: MEMORIES THAT LAST

Earlier this summer Harmony House residents created memory books: a resource for communicating with seniors who live with dementia. Memory books can serve as conversation starters, give context to an event or time period, and provide a source of comfort for residents.

Residents were joined by loved ones who helped gather photographs, stories, and other important mementos that filled the pages of their books. Most memory books begin with childhood stories and memories, progressing through early adulthood and the remainder of residents' lives. Families enjoyed spending time together and were treated with baked goods prepared by residents in Harmony House and Oakwood Court!

Additionally the memory book workshop educated loved ones on the Montessori philosophy of care. Montessori for aging and dementia involves three main steps: assessing a senior's needs and strengths, identifying activities that they enjoy, and then encouraging the individual to choose from a list of available activities. At Living Branches memory books are just one tool utilized in Memory Care neighborhoods, with a goal of recognizing experiences that allow each resident to lead a purposeful life.





## BEACH DAY

August brought a celebration of summer to Living Branches campuses in the form of Beach Day – or Beach Week at The Willows of Living Branches, who decided one day wasn't enough time for all the fun they had planned. Residents played lawn games, ate ice cream, enjoyed concerts, won prizes, danced the hula, and relished in reconnecting with each other.

## FRIENDS OF THE SHARING FUND DINNER

The Friends of the Sharing Fund dinner was held at Dock Woods in October.

This annual event benefits the Sharing Fund, a benevolent care fund which enables us to provide financial assistance to residents of Dock Woods and The Willows of Living Branches who are no longer able to pay the full cost of their care.

After a three year break caused by Covid restrictions, guests were delighted to return to Hearthside Bistro and Fisher Auditorium to enjoy a fantastic meal provided by our dining services team. The evening's entertainment was provided by Ted & Co. Theaterworks – featuring Ted Swartz and Jeff Raught sharing their show, "Holy Surprises."

Thank you to all who donated to the Sharing Fund as part of this special event.



Rendering of the courtyard  
between the new Health Care  
and Memory Care at Souderton  
Mennonite Homes



# BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE: Construction in Health Care is Underway!





## 2022 HAS BEEN A YEAR OF NEW

beginnings for the Living Branches communities. Residents and staff at Souderton Mennonite Homes and Dock Woods have been preparing for construction at each campus. Projects include an addition to Dock Terrace Health Care at Dock Woods, building a new Park View Memory Care addition at Souderton Mennonite Homes, and enlarging Souderton's Health Care center to provide a dedicated area for residents living with dementia.

With this construction Living Branches will provide more private resident rooms and better accommodate those visiting friends and loved ones in the Health Care and Memory Care neighborhoods.

### KICKING OFF HEALTH CARE CONSTRUCTION AT DOCK WOODS

On June 15, 2022, Dock Woods residents and staff gathered in the chapel for a construction kickoff event. Together they honored the history of Dock Terrace and celebrated all that the future will bring.

Living Branches President/CEO, Edward Brubaker, welcomed all who attended and provided opening comments regarding the addition at Dock Woods. The afternoon's itinerary featured an introduction to leaders of the

Benchmark Construction team, a litany read by several Living Branches staff persons, and a video presentation of Dock Terrace throughout the years. Lynne Allebach, volunteer coordinator, led staff and residents in a closing prayer to bless the upcoming construction. Pastor Sandy Landes and the Dock Woods community worked together to craft a special prayer for the kick-off event. Prayer cards were printed so all attendees could enjoy a meaningful souvenir from the celebration.

### SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES SECURES FUNDING FROM LOCAL LEGISLATORS

This spring it was announced that Souderton Mennonite Homes was a recipient of \$2 million worth of state funding as part of the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP). The Living Branches community is deeply appreciative of the advocacy and efforts of both Senator Marie Collett and Representative Steve Malagari, who serve Bucks and Montgomery counties. These funds will support the transition from companion suites to a majority of private rooms in Health Care settings, along with all other planned renovations and expansions at Souderton Mennonite Homes. We are anticipating that construction will begin in Spring 2025.



**ANNOUNCING: ROOTED IN LOVE.  
GROWING TOGETHER. THE CAMPAIGN  
FOR LIVING BRANCHES**

*Join us in supporting these important projects at Living Branches*

Generous board members, residents, and friends of Living Branches have contributed \$2.8 million as of June 30, 2022! Living Branches seeks to raise \$3,500,000 to enhance the lives of residents living in our communities.

**GOAL: \$3,500,000**

- **Growing Together with Building Updates:**  
*Bringing the welcoming feeling of home and privacy to residents living in Health Care and Memory Care*
- **Growing Together with Creative Arts Therapy:**  
*Enhancing the quality of residents' lives through music, art, and dance*

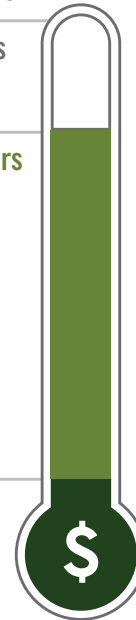
These construction projects are more than buildings – bright, well-appointed new and renovated spaces encourage fellowship and participation in community activities; a majority of single rooms will offer residents the peace; and creative arts therapy improves the quality of

**GOAL  
\$3,500,000**

**Living Branches  
Supporters**

**Major Gift Donors  
\$2,300,000**

**Residents  
\$500,000**



residents' lives by accomplishing individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship.

This project will require a significant investment from Living Branches reserves, as well as generous donations from friends and supporters of the Living Branches Foundation.

Your support of this life-changing project would be greatly appreciated. Visit our website to learn more at [livingbranches.org/capitalcampaign](http://livingbranches.org/capitalcampaign).

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JULY 1, 2021 TO JUNE 30, 2022

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 Andrew Campbell

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### Living Branches

**Benevolent Care Fund—**  
Benevolent care for residents at all Living Branches campuses

**Souderton Mennonite Homes Agape Fund –**  
Benevolent care for residents at Souderton Mennonite Homes

**Dock Woods and The Willows Sharing Fund –**  
Benevolent care for residents at Dock Woods and The Willows of Living Branches

**Dock Village Youth Fund—**  
Academic scholarships and learning incentives for residents at Dock Village

**Fund for Creative Arts Therapy –** Enhancing the lives of residents through the healing power of music, art, and dance

**Fund for Housing for Retired Church Workers –**  
Entrance fee assistance for retired Mennonite pastors and spouses

**Nursing Scholarship Fund –** Education grants for employees interested in furthering their nursing training

**Restricted Gifts Fund –**  
Distribution account for restricted contributions to Living Branches facilities and programs



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John Garis Homes, Inc.  
Moyer Indoor/Outdoor  
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RLPS Architects

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Each event begins with light refreshments and a brief presentation to explain the communities and help you become better acquainted with Living Branches. After viewing 5-D videos of an apartment, cottage, and villa, you'll take a short walking tour of the community center and driving tour of the campus.

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