

BRANCHING OUT

LIVING BRANCHES
Live & Grow – Together

CELEBRATING A

100
Century

of SERVICE



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

VISION. OPPORTUNITY. SERVICE.

AT SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES THERE

is a historical wall that contains artifacts from the early 1900s. One of the items that receives a frequent chuckle is a framed list of rules which refers to residents as inmates. Yes, inmates. We smile and shake our heads because we can't imagine calling the persons who live within these walls inmates, but it was a different time. While we may use different language in 2017, the foundation on which the organization was built remains the same: a dedication to serving others.

When I reflect on the leaders who came before me, three themes stand out: vision, opportunity, and service. In the early 1900s there were no local retirement communities. Leaders in the Mennonite community wanted to find a way to care for the aging population in their congregations. They saw a need and collectively asked, "How can we care for our community?"

These men came together and decided to do something. They were forward-thinking visionaries who dreamed up the idea of a home for seniors and then made it happen. When nothing like it existed, they had opportunity to pave the way for senior care. There was great risk involved, but they stepped out in faith and saw "Eastern Mennonite Home of the Franconia District" open its doors in 1917.

Over the next 100 years the community grew. There were building projects, changes in leadership models, and updates to meet state and federal regulations. Yet one thing did not change: a dedication to service. And a reciprocity of service. The organization provided services to residents, but residents also served. One such example is the way residents picked apples from the orchard and made applesauce for residents and for the wider community. There was no kicking up your feet at Souderton Mennonite Homes, but instead a drive to continue to find connection and continue to serve one another, the wider community, and the world.

Souderton Mennonite Homes was born out of a belief that we as Christians and Mennonites should be of service to the persons around us. The core of care and service to others and those who are under-served was the genesis of this organization. And it is with great excitement that we celebrate this century of service and continue to build on this foundation as we empower older adults and families to lead lives of purpose and joy.

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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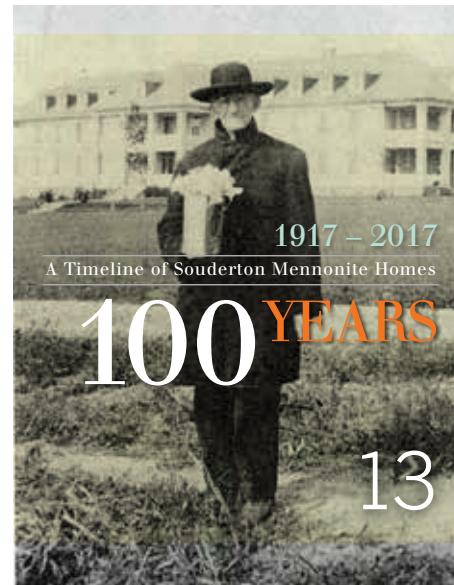
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100 YEARS



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CELEBRATING A 100th Century of SERVICE

HONORING THE ROOTS OF TRADITION AND CELEBRATING
THE WINGS OF GROWTH AT SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES

By: Danielle Leheny

When guests are given the welcome tour at Souderton Mennonite Homes, the upstairs lobby offers one of the most popular spots along the journey: a beautifully weathered 100-year-old brick wall that served as the original exterior of the home. Bruce Alder, Living Branches' Chief Risk Officer, has led the tour countless times, and he always enjoys the opportunity to gather guests around the wall to help them better understand the rich history of Souderton Mennonite Homes.

"THE WALL SHOWCASES A FANTASTIC DISPLAY OF HISTORICAL PHOTOS, AND

there's one photo in particular that I like to point out – it's a lovely shot of several residents from the 1920s gathering together on the original porch, which wrapped around the entryway," said Bruce. "I tell our guests, 'Do you see that brick wall behind the residents on the porch? That's where we're standing right now!'"

Much like Souderton Mennonite Homes' historical wall, the organization is proudly standing in the same fundamental place where it first planted its seeds 100 years ago. Even though the exterior, capacity, and capabilities has been enhanced greatly over the past century, the heart and mission of Souderton Mennonite Homes has remained the same: to offer residents a home where they can live and grow together – strengthened by timeless values, spirituality, and community bonds.

"The people who keep us pure to who we really are and what we really need to be are our residents," said Margaret Zook, the Souderton Mennonite Homes Administrator from 1993 to 2008. "They come here because they find kindred souls who are searching for each other – as well as a place where they can be connected."

That beautiful connection unites not only residents and staff in the present day, but also the many committed individuals who have loved and nurtured the heart of this home over the past 100 years. We invite you to join us on a tour through the unique history of Souderton Mennonite Homes for a closer look at the roots where our values live, the dedication of many that has given our vision wings to grow, and the continuity that connects our past, present, and future.

ROOTED IN SERVICE: THE EARLY YEARS

The Franconia Conference Mennonites have always been conscious of the needs of the poor among the brotherhood and the wider community. In the 1890s, Deacon Henry C. Krupp helped pay for the rent, food, medical, and funeral costs for the poor, and if the Almsfund needed replenishment before the next communion, he simply borrowed money from church members, who willingly supported those in need. Within families, a bone-deep sense of love and responsibility ensured that grandparents and

parents were cared for by the younger generation – but this often meant that the sick or elderly lived out their days confined to a bed, without easy access to proper care.

Progressive Mennonite businessmen noticed how other churches were beginning to care for their needy and aging members in a more cohesive way. William M. Moyer, a Philadelphia marketer and dynamic fundraiser, first introduced the idea of the conference's first "Old Peoples' Home" to Bishop Henry R. Rosenberger and Bishop Andrew S. Mack, conference moderator. The idea was met with some resistance, but on October 7, 1914, the bishops appointed an investigating committee to explore church-affiliated retirement homes in Lancaster county and to report back with recommendations – so that the value of new ideas could be measured against the strain they put on the fabric of faith and tradition. What was to be new must serve what endures.

On October 7, 1915, the conference approved the project and appointed 12 trustees – who understood that they would not be creating an institution, but rather, a home embraced by the church. The conference looked to its congregation to help support the project financially, and the goal of \$6,000 was surpassed as the trustees and congressional committees collected over \$19,000.



The trustees selected a building site on the summit overlooking Souderton – located less than two blocks from the trolley stop – and building began in 1916.

Architect Horace Trumbauer – whose son and grandson would also support the growth of Souderton Mennonite Homes – designed a splendid three-story, 50-room building with a welcoming front porch and shuttered windows along the full length of the home.

The "Eastern Mennonite Home of the Franconia District" quietly opened its doors to the public on Ascension Day, Thursday, May 17, 1917. At the time, twenty "dependent" applications had already been submitted. The staff, who all lived on site, were largely young, single women who received room and board as part of their pay. The board's first "steward and matron" – a leadership model that would serve the organization well until 1995 – were Souderton store clerk Alpheus K. Allebach and his wife Margaret Cassel Allebach. They welcomed their father Christian B. Allebach as the first "inmate" at the rate of \$3.50 per week. Christian,



a minister in Towamencin since 1876, delivered the first sermon on May 20.

Donation boxes at the four outside doors encouraged generosity – and personal notes and collections soon covered the original building costs of over \$35,000!

After two years, Daniel L. and Mary Ann Detweiler Gehman took over as steward and matron – and oversaw various enhancements, including the addition of a much-needed elevator. They hosted special events with the community – and barnyard sounds and floating cherry blossoms along dusty Summit Street greeted young folks as they arrived. All community members were encouraged to participate in monthly Saturday night song services.

The lingering effects of World War I hit the home hard, but the community banded together to provide support. Donations of a vacuum cleaning system,

clothing from sewing circles, and a “Ford machine” donated by trustee Garret S. Nice kept the home running smoothly and economically. When crowded conditions were noticed by the Mission Board during their monthly meeting at the Home, they initiated a building fund to expand. The 1923 annex, which cost over \$50,000, provided a new kitchen, a 200-seat chapel, and “hospital rooms” – allowing the home to increase capacity to 80 residents.

Due in part to the challenges of the early years, the home saw five stewards in ten years. In addition to the Allebachs and the Gehmans, leaders included Solomon Good from 1922 to 1923, John and Katherine Leatherman Gahman from Deep Run congregation for less than a year in 1923, and Frank G. and Mary Moyer from 1923 to 1927. In 1927, the home would begin a long period of administrative stability by welcoming steward and matron Jacob and Lizzie Moyer Landis to the family.

AN EXPANDING HOME – A GROWING VISION: 1927-1993

Much like a tree with strong roots and a steady trunk, the Eastern Mennonite Home thrived under the loving care of Jacob and Lizzie Landis. Lizzie, tall and soft-spoken, started her day at 4:30 a.m. overseeing housekeeping, feeding hungry, homeless folk, and scrubbing pots and pans. Her days were long, and her energy and insights limitless. Formerly a farmer and car salesman, Jacob realized new strengths and abilities in his new job, and his quiet spirituality helped both residents and staff through the hardships of recession.

Supporting 80 residents required regimented organization, and both staff and residents alike worked together to run the home. Huge clothing lines were hung in the garden; the apple orchard behind the garage produced a bountiful harvest – making apple sauce a traditional staple of the Eastern Mennonite diet – and all women helped with duties like canning a wide range of fruits and vegetables grown on-site.

In 1952, Jacob and Lizzie celebrated 25 years of service to the home, as well as their 50th wedding anniversary and Lizzie’s 70th birthday. Shortly before that, Curtis and Martha Alderfer Mininger had joined the home to apprentice with Jacob and Lizzie. It was at mealtime one day in May 1952 when Jacob and Curtis quietly stood up and exchanged seats – signaling the change in leadership. Jacob and Lizzie remained on-site as assistants, and like a mother to her children, the devoted Lizzie continued into her 90s to tuck residents into bed with kisses and prayers before slipping into her own bed. Her 100th birthday was celebrated with her “family” of 55 years, shortly before her memorial service in 1982.

Curtis and Martha were cut from the same cloth as Jacob and Lizzie – and served residents faithfully, with little expectation of reward. Curtis gently handled everything from bedside issues to mechanical breakdowns. Residents depended on him to repair eye glasses, hearing aids, and recorders. The apple orchard, grapevines, and gardens flourished under his touch. Martha purchased the home’s food and household supplies and joined Curtis on bedside visits. Rates were kept down to accommodate the poor and the homeless – and the waiting list grew.

The expanding home strained the state of its nursing care. The second-floor medicine room was no more than a closet, and the nurses worked in pairs on tiring, 12-hour shifts. Thanks to generous donations, construction of a new wing began in 1964. The addition extended back between the kitchen and chapel and included 18 new beds for non-ambulatory patients and a new nursing station. The enhanced level of care meant adjustments for the staff, including new dietary considerations, and the team worked



THE LEGACY OF “HOME”

When Souderton Mennonite Homes first opened its doors in 1917, it was simply called “The Home” – and for many, it was. The Home was built as a reflection of God’s love – to serve as a place where that love could be more easily extended to all members of the community through a tradition of mutual care and support.

Today – in the world of many choices for senior living – for some, the phrase “the home” has taken on quite the opposite meaning, and may evoke impressions of a place that is impersonal or clinical. However, every day, Souderton Mennonite Homes is happy to challenge this modern connotation – and stands by a firm belief that “home” is one of the most lovely and peaceful words there is.

“A home is where we feel a sense of safety and identity,” said Margaret Zook, former administrator. “Through all of our growth, these are the things that we make sure are still available to our residents. Just as we did 100 years ago, we can still say today, ‘We are here for you – and this is your home, a place to be connected to each other and to God’s love.’”

Even though the staff no longer lives on-site as they once did, a deeply-rooted sense of family and care ensures that home is not just a tangible place, but also a feeling of togetherness and support.

“We work in the residents’ home – they don’t live where we work,” said Margaret. “And what we love the most about this home is who we share it with! Every member of our family brings unique gifts that enhance the strength of who we are – and contribute to the enduring beauty of our home.”

together to improve all aspects of service.

By the late 60s, the home – now supporting 100 residents – continued to feel the pressures of growth. In 1968, a proposal was accepted to build cottages in front of the garage. Samuel and Grace Hackman financed the first retirement cottage in exchange for lifetime living rights. Even as the number of residents grew, a strong sense of togetherness remained, and staff and residents alike worked side-by-side on the daily upkeep of the community.

"I got room and board and \$55 a month. It took a little while until I got rich!" once laughed Ruth Nice during an interview in 2002 for a commemorative video about Souderton Mennonite Homes' history. She had come to work in 1953 and lived there until her death in 2011.

"People spent best years of lives here and then could live out their lives here too," said John L. Ruth, Mennonite historian and author. "It was a culture where everybody didn't have to succeed, be impressive, or have a major role. A service role was accepted – and respected."

After 25 years of service, Curtis and Martha were succeeded by Paul D. and Esther Alderfer Moyer

of the Souderton congregation in 1978 – and they were the first administrators to retain their home residence. Curtis and Martha joined the other residents and continued to contribute greatly to the running of the home.

The combination of Paul's strong vision to enhance care for the whole individual and the need to meet the demands of increasingly strict insurance and government regulations made it a necessity to continue expanding and modernizing Souderton Mennonite Homes – but getting things moving in a 60-year-old institution with long-held traditions created challenges.

"When we came here, there wasn't fan in the place!" said Paul, who is currently a resident at Souderton Mennonite Homes with Esther. "It's hard to imagine what it was like – especially on the third floor where it was very hot – and yet the people were happy."

Between 1976 and 1980, the building program expanded, and five four-plex cottages were built on Menno Home Drive. At the same time, the original 18-bed infirmary expanded to a 59-bed skilled nursing area. With the expansion, the board had made a leap of faith, because only half of the units were sold before digging began. However, fears were

FROM QUIET GATHERINGS TO SOCIAL EVENTS – 100 YEARS OF MEALS AND TOGETHERNESS

Almost every person interviewed about life at Souderton Mennonite Homes in its early days will mention the traditional silence that accompanied every meal. Meals were a time to quietly reflect upon the blessings of life and of being together – and the lulling sounds of silverware clinking against plates and bowls served as the only backdrop for individual reflection.

The kitchen was the heart of the home, and daily food preparation was a great unifier – and gave both staff and residents ample

opportunities to work together.

While mealtime has certainly changed in the last century at Souderton Mennonite Homes, the importance of togetherness has remained; it just sounds a lot different! Anyone who has walked through the buzzing dining room or the Apple Orchard Café at mealtime can tell you that the silence of days' past has been replaced with the cheerful sounds of chatter and laughter. And while residents are no longer involved in the daily food preparation, the ever-expanding calendar of events and activities

ensures that opportunities for conversation and togetherness are easy to find.

"Just as our historical tradition of reflective silence at mealtime was meant to honor the love residents had for each other and for God, the chatter and laughter of today serve that very same purpose," said Edward D. Brubaker, President/CEO. "We are blessed to enjoy good food, good times, and good friends – as well as traditions both new and old – that bring us together each and every day."



"...the apple tree is a constant reminder of the cherished roots that have supported – and will continue to support – every member of the Souderton Mennonite Homes family."

quickly quieted, as all residences filled soon after completion.

"Somehow or another, word got out that there was good care given here, and that got people to come," said Paul. "It amazed me that people came from all over!"

By 1981, apartments were located where apple trees once provided fruit. The apartment lounges, recreational rooms, and the large dining room now created an atmosphere for friendship, health and caring. By 1984, residents could enjoy their brightly refurbished, air-conditioned rooms, or relax in the new Colonial Avenue entrance lobby, or browse in the large gift shop. The renovated chapel was also ready – and despite an increasingly diverse population, the importance of worship remained a cornerstone of life.

"They had singing before all the meals; they had prayers before all the meals – everyone entered into the spirituality of the place," said Paul.

On October 1, 1985, Eastern Mennonite Home's name was officially changed to "Souderton Mennonite Homes" – a strong affirmation of the enduring importance of "Home" in the organization's mission. In 1987, the community celebrated its 70th anniversary. That same year, Curtis

Mininger passed away suddenly, concluding his 36 years of dedicated service to the residents and staff.

Paul recalled one of his favorite conversations with Curtis, which took place shortly before he passed: "Curtis was laying in the hospital bed and said to me, 'I was just thinking about how long Jacob and Lizzie served as steward and matron – for 25 years.' So, I said, 'Yes, and how long were you steward?' To which he replied, 'Oh, well...27 years.'"

EXTENDING CARE – DEEPENING UNITY: THE LAST QUARTER CENTURY

In 1993, Souderton Mennonite Homes welcomed Margaret Zook, who became the first sole administrator, as well as the first female leader, for the organization. Margaret grew up fully

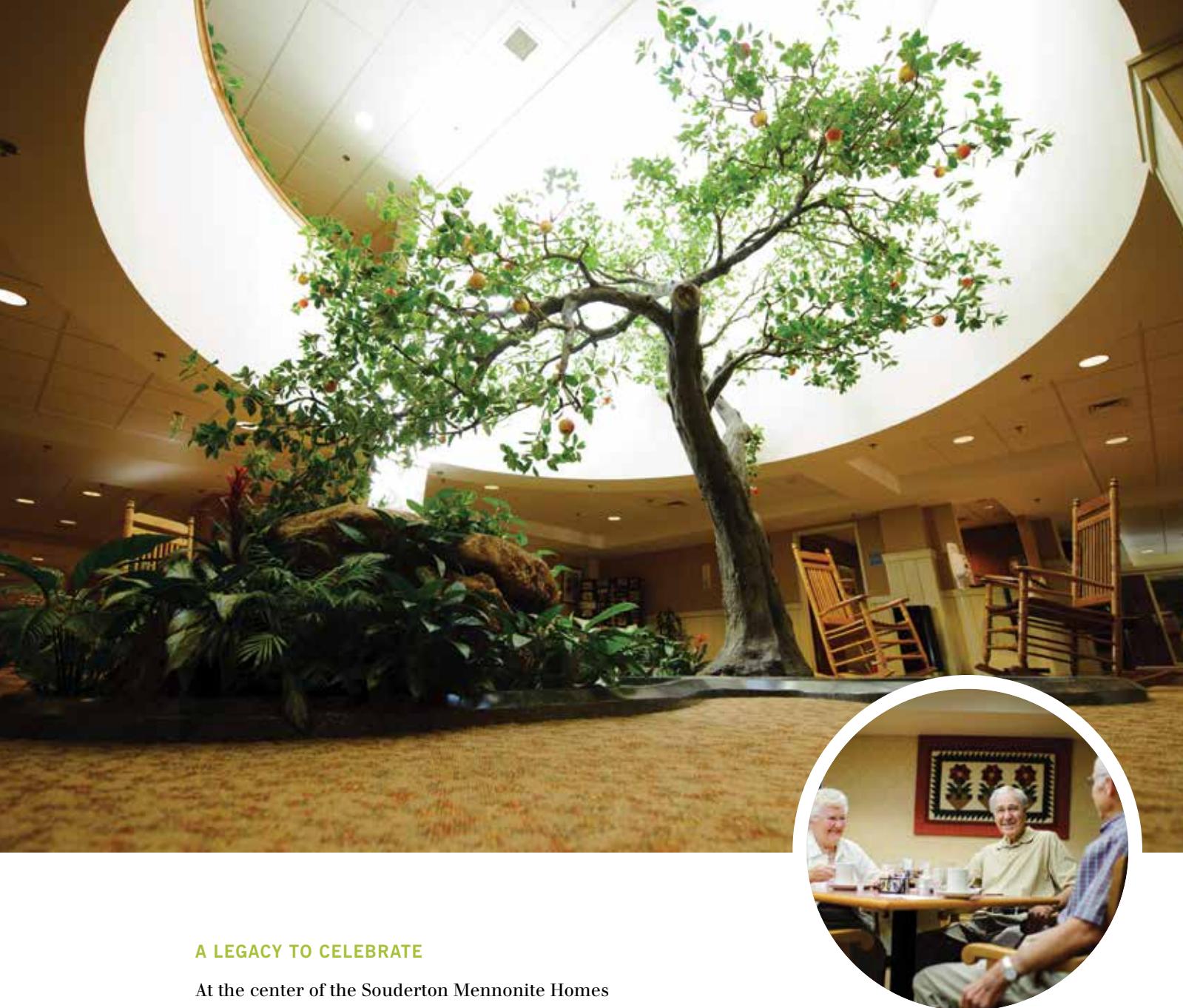
– both of which have been essential to the organization's growth. In 1995, Park View memory care – the first such specialized care unit in this area – opened with 22 beds. Years later, the impressive 2001 expansion, completed in 2003, saw the renovations of all Personal Care rooms, the addition of the Summit View Auditorium and a welcoming community space, and the opening of the award-winning Elizabeth's Garden, which continues to delight residents and visitors alike.

In 2008, Souderton Mennonite Homes joined with Dock Woods and Dock Meadows to form Living Branches – one of the first retirement community affiliations happening in the region.

"We came together with one board and one shared vision, but each campus retains its own unique identity – enabling both choice and diversity for our residents," said Edward D. Brubaker, President/CEO.

Through all of the growth and transition, there remains a beautiful reflection of God's love at the heart of Souderton Mennonite Homes.

"We are indeed still a home," said Margaret in the 2002 commemorative video. "We provide for the people that come here and want a home within a home – and a family within a family."



A LEGACY TO CELEBRATE

At the center of the Souderton Mennonite Homes lobby stands a beautiful replica of an apple tree, with leaves so realistic you want to reach up and touch them. Just as the original exterior brick wall captivates visitors with its connection to history, the tree also represents the beauty of a century of lasting traditions forged by the staff and residents of Souderton Mennonite Homes. From the sweet taste of applesauce, which remains a favorite treat among residents, to the timeless gifts of worship, community, and togetherness, the apple tree is a constant reminder of the cherished roots that have supported – and will continue to support – every member of the Souderton Mennonite Homes family.

“Just as I absorbed the history of this place coming in the front door as a child from those who lived here,

we need to explain to our newest family members that while our exterior does – and out of necessity MUST – change, what lives at our heart remains the same,” said Margaret.

Like the lasting beauty and strength of the historical brick wall that welcomes visitors, the core of Souderton Mennonite Homes has been built by many to endure. Our cherished traditions and roots – and a loving and dedicated team always seeking to enhance lives – will ensure that Souderton Mennonite Homes will always be, quite simply, a place that people can make their home.

Chow Chow

A traditional Pennsylvania Dutch recipe

YIELDS: 5 QUARTS, APPROXIMATELY

CHOW CHOW

1 quart cucumbers, diced	1 pint red peppers
1 quart string beans	1 cup small onions
1 quart lima beans	1 tablespoon dry mustard
1 quart corn	2 cups sugar
1 pint celery	1 quart vinegar
1 pint green peppers	

INSTRUCTIONS

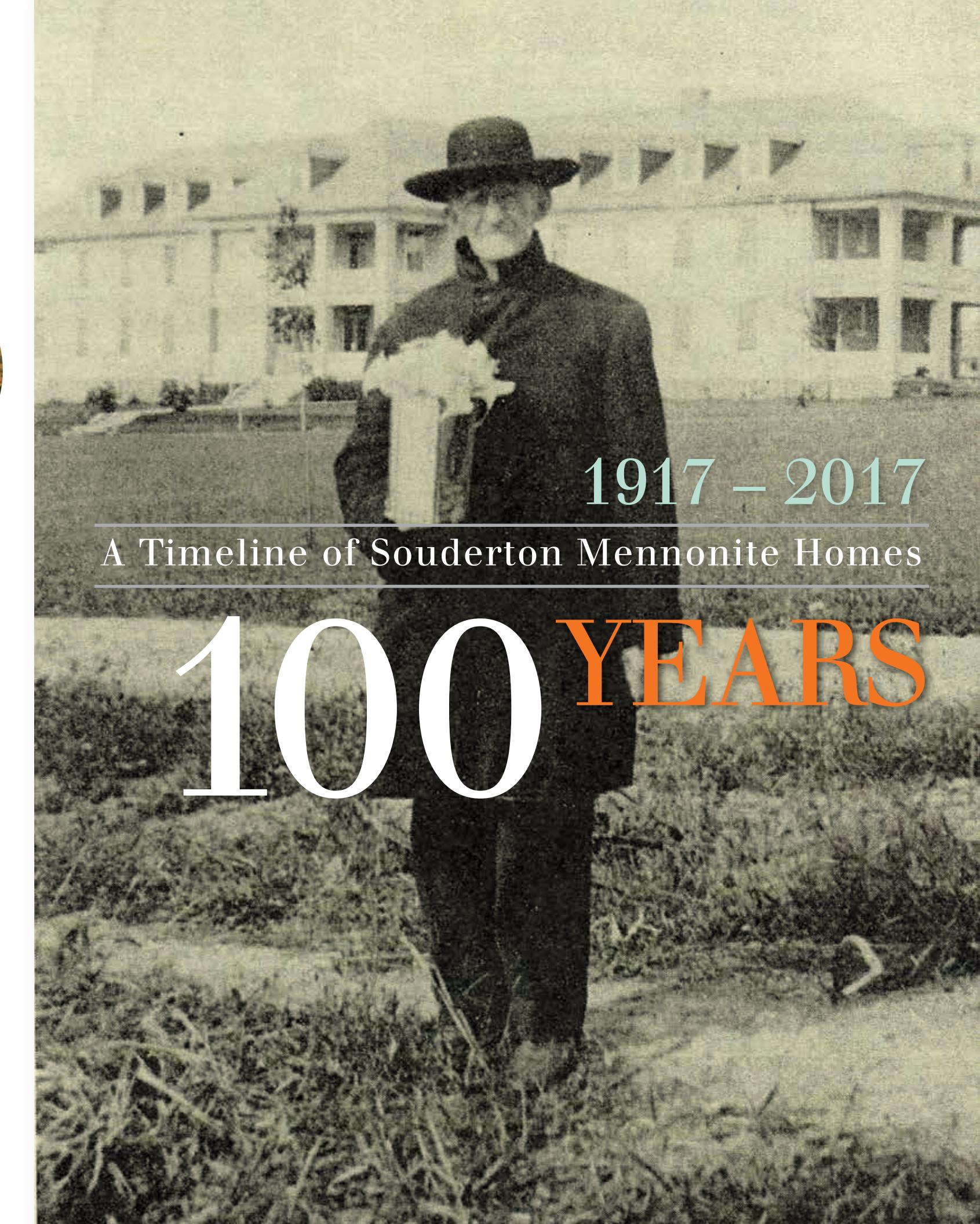
1. Chop vegetables the desired size
2. Cook separately until tender, not soft
3. Drain cook vegetables and mix together
4. Combine sugar, mustard, and vinegar
5. Bring to boil
6. Add mixed vegetables to hot liquid and bring to a boiling point
7. Put into hot jars and seal.

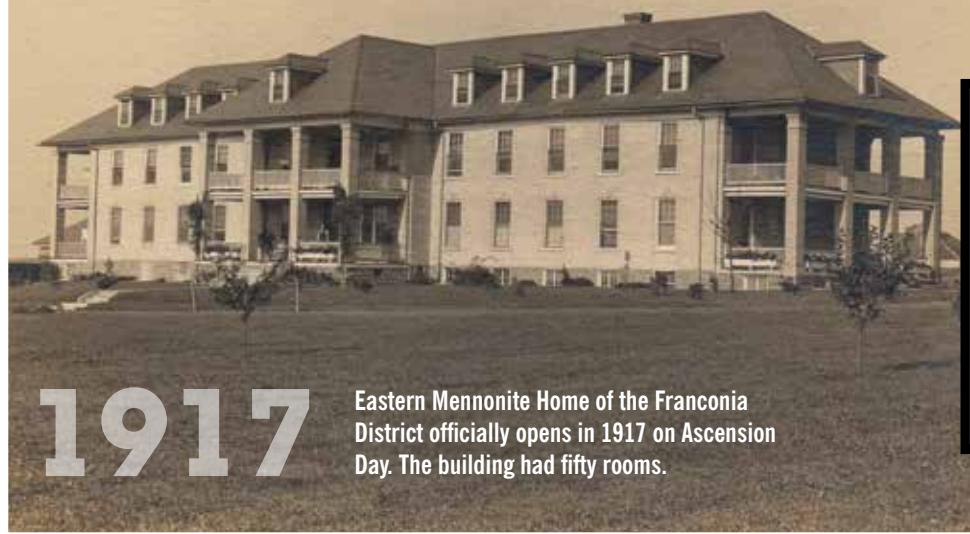




Dock Meadows Renovations

The renovations at Dock Meadows continued this winter in the north wing. The renovation included new wall coverings, carpet, paint, light fixtures, and furniture. Additionally, a lounge which was previously used for chapel services has now been renovated to a game room with a pool table and game tables. New chairs were purchased so that chapel services could take place in the activity room which is centrally located and more convenient for all residents. We want to thank the residents and staff at Dock Meadows for their patience and cooperation during the renovation. All are welcome to stop by and see the updates!





1917

Eastern Mennonite Home of the Franconia District officially opens in 1917 on Ascension Day. The building had fifty rooms.



1917-1919 – Alpheus K. and Margaret Cassel Allebach served as the first steward and matron.

1917 – Christian B. Allebach was the first resident. He paid \$3.50 a week.



1917

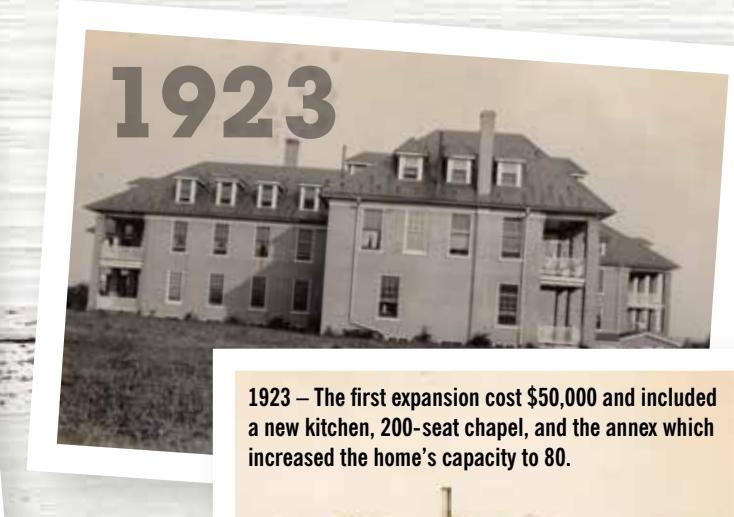


1919-1922

Daniel and Mary Anne Detweiler Gehman served as the second steward and matron.



1923 – John and Katherine Gahman, the third steward and matron, pictured celebrating John's birthday with family.



1923

1923 – The first expansion cost \$50,000 and included a new kitchen, 200-seat chapel, and the annex which increased the home's capacity to 80.



1927

1927 – Frank G. and Mary Moyer served as steward and matron from 1923-1927. Jacob and Lizzie Moyer, pictured, served as steward and matron from 1927-1952.



1951

Marvin M. Anders becomes the first official minister.

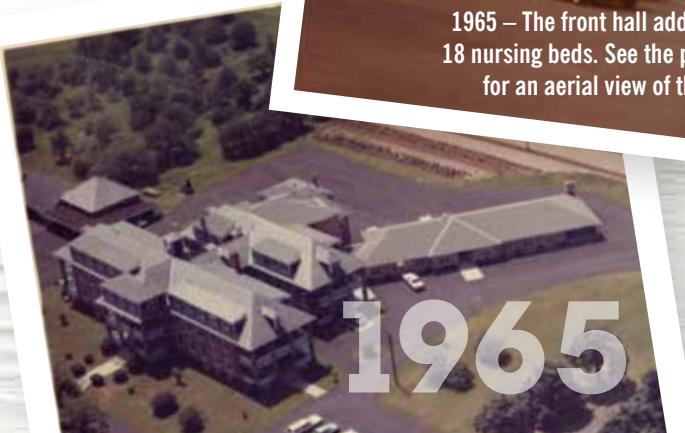


1952

1952 – Curtis and Martha Alderfer Mininger left their farm in Hatfield to apprentice with Jacob and Lizzie Moyer. In May, Jacob and Curtis quietly exchanged seats at mealtime to signify the change in leadership. Curtis and Martha served as steward and matron from 1952-1978.



1965 – The front hall addition added 18 nursing beds. See the photo below for an aerial view of the addition.



1965



1968 – The first retirement cottage was built.

1968



1970s

1970s – Marion Landis developed the Auxiliary.

1985

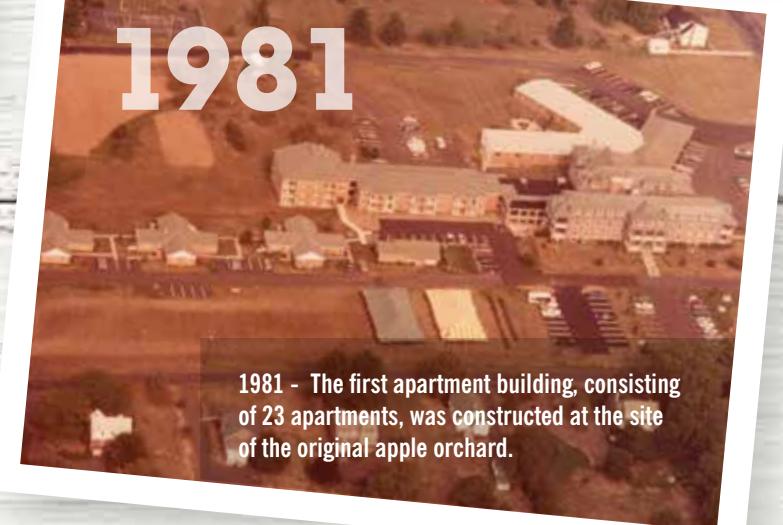
1985 – On October 1, Eastern Mennonite Home was officially renamed Souderton Mennonite Homes.

*Souderton
Mennonite Homes*



1976 – Paul D. and Esther Alderfer Moyer joined the Mininger administration. In 1978 Paul became administrator and Esther became assistant administration. They were the first administrators of the home and the first couple to live off-campus. Curtis and Martha Mininger remained by serving in maintenance and the kitchen and laundry.

1976-1980 – Five four-plex cottages were built on Menno Home Drive and the original 18-bed skilled nursing unit was expanded to 59 beds.



1981 – The first apartment building, consisting of 23 apartments, was constructed at the site of the original apple orchard.

1983 – The first bus was purchased for resident use.



1987 – The second apartment building was constructed, adding 36 apartments.



1993 – The third apartment building was constructed, adding 73 apartments. Additionally, six cottages with attached garages were built along Menno Home Drive.



1993 – Margaret Zook served as administrator and executive director of Souderton Mennonite Homes from 1993 to 2008.

1995



1999 – 40 villas were constructed along Green St and Cowpath Road.



1999

1995 – Park View, the memory care area at Souderton Mennonite Homes and first of its kind in the area, was constructed.



2001-2003



2001-2003 – Community space was added, including the Summit View Auditorium. Personal Care rooms were also renovated.



2010



Ed Brubaker

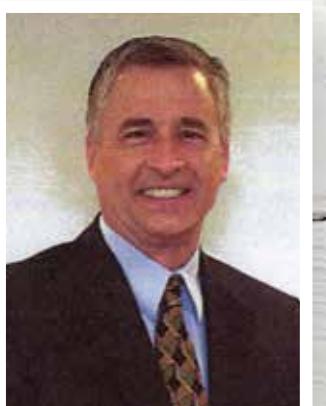


2008

LIVING BRANCHES



2009-2014 – Brent Nafziger served as executive director.



2015-2016 – J. David Shenk served as executive director.



2010

2010 – Elizabeth's Garden was created in memory of longtime resident, Elizabeth Longacre.

2012



2016



2016 – Renovations are currently underway to the community spaces and master planning for the future has begun.

FLIK RECIPE CONTEST (1)

Each year a theme is introduced by FLIK Lifestyles, the dining management company, for special meals in the dining room at Dock Woods. The 2017 promotion is called Heirloom: From My Family to Yours and features residents sharing their favorite family recipes and the stories behind them. Residents from all FLIK Lifestyles communities were invited to submit recipes and we are proud to say that Margie Briggs and her "Audrey Cake" recipe were selected as one of the winning entries! Margie was interviewed by FLIK and was photographed for various promotional materials that will be distributed at all FLIK communities. Congratulations Margie!



1



2

CLINICAL COMPETENCY FAIR (2)

Living Branches had its first Clinical Competency Fair over the course of four days in February. Over 100 clinical staff persons attended the fair and received education and hands on practice performing various nursing skills such as proper hand washing, wound care, and administering IV medication. The fair was a collaboration between the Health Care and Personal Care areas at all three campuses and the physical therapy and infection control departments. This will be an annual event to provide our nursing staff the opportunity to review and update their practices, ensuring that residents receive consistent, excellent care.



3

VALENTINE'S CELEBRATION (3)

The 42nd annual valentine celebration was the kickoff event for the 100th anniversary celebration at Souderton Mennonite Homes. Entertainment was provided by Emulate Chamber Ensemble from Eastern Mennonite University. The highlight of the event was when Emulate sang a song specifically commissioned for Souderton Mennonite Homes. As always, a huge thank you to Gordon and Velda Beidler for their generous donations which make the event possible. This evening is always a highlight of the winter for residents and staff!



4



2

ALIVE INSIDE SCREENINGS (4)

The Dementia Care Strategy initiative was announced in November and officially began in February with screenings of *ALIVE INSIDE*, a life changing documentary that won the 2014 Sundance Film Festival Audience Award. The film documents the magical role that music can play for persons experiencing memory loss. Persons are awakened when headphones are placed over their ears and they're given an iPod filled with their favorite music. Over 300 residents, staff, family members, and persons from the community were able to attend and were greatly impacted by the film. Kathleen Roberts, director of dementia care strategy, announced that the Music & Memory program, which is modeled in the film, will begin at Living Branches this spring. For more information, contact Kathleen at Kathleen.Roberts@livingbranches.org.



2

Legacy Giving Spotlight

By: Danielle Leheny



ANNUAL NURSING SCHOLARSHIP COMMEMORATES THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF LERA SALMON

Tony Salmon's first meeting his wife Lera may have been a blind date, but his eyes were always wide open when it came to seeing exactly how wonderful she was – on that first date and through 66 years of marriage. Every day, he witnessed her love of life, particularly her excitement of exploring new places, and the pair spent many years travelling the world together. Tony saw her become a loving mother – and later, a wonderful grandmother – to their three children and eight grandchildren. Throughout her life, Lera greatly enjoyed people, and it never failed to make Tony smile to see people warm to his wife so quickly and easily.

The staff at Country Cottage, where Lera moved after her dementia progressed, also remembers Lera's easy charm and friendliness. Tony and Lera had moved to the Dock Woods community in 2004, and because Lera's own mother had suffered from dementia many years ago, it was important to Tony and Lera to find a community that could provide loving, supportive care as their needs changed.

When Lera passed away in 2016, Tony sought a way to commemorate her life, so that others could see – and live – the beauty of her legacy. Because Tony felt that Lera's care at Country Cottage was stellar, he chose to institute an annual

donation toward a nursing scholarship for a member of the Living Branches staff.

"Everyone was always very pleasant and positive with us," said Tony. "They liked Lera very much – that was easy to see – and they took the time to keep me updated. All of the little things they did made a huge difference. For example, Lera was very particular about her appearance, and her team made sure that she always looked lovely, from applying her favorite color lipstick to styling her hair just as she liked."

From his regular interactions with the Lera's care team, Tony knew that the scholarship would make a difference in helping the staff advance their skills, which in turn, would enable them to continue to serve and enhance care for residents like Lera.

"This scholarship is definitely a way to say 'thank you,' because I know the young folks here are trying to build a future by going back to school," said Tony. "And in doing that, I can also ensure that Lera's memory will forever be connected to some of those bright futures."

The first nursing scholarship was awarded in 2016 to Lori Sell, a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) who had been part of Lera's care team. Lori is

currently pursuing an associate's degree at Excelsior College – a professional stepping stone that will help her become a Registered Nurse (RN).

"I took care of my parents when they were ill – a part of my life that greatly influenced my career path – and when I came to Dock Woods, I knew right away it was the right place to pursue my dream," said Lori.

The scholarship came through for Lori at exactly the time she needed it the most. In mid-2016, Lori had decided to suspend her college courses in the fall due to financial reasons, and she was saddened by the necessity of putting her dreams on hold. But thanks to the new scholarship, Lori can keep her momentum going, and she's aiming to wrap up her degree in June 2017.

"I can't even describe how much of a blessing this has been for me," said Lori. "It came along at exactly the right time, and I am so grateful to both Tony and Lera for this opportunity."

Tony, who can still recall the sparkle of his first date with Lera, knows better than anybody the beauty of blessings that come along at exactly the right time. And thanks to his generosity – and Lera's precious memory – the new nursing scholarship will continue to make an important difference to the dreams and growth of the Living Branches team. Lori is

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SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES – 2:00 P.M.

Tuesday, April 18
Tuesday, May 2
Thursday, May 18

DOCK WOODS – 2:00 P.M.

Thursday, April 27
Tuesday, May 9
Wednesday, May 24



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.**



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