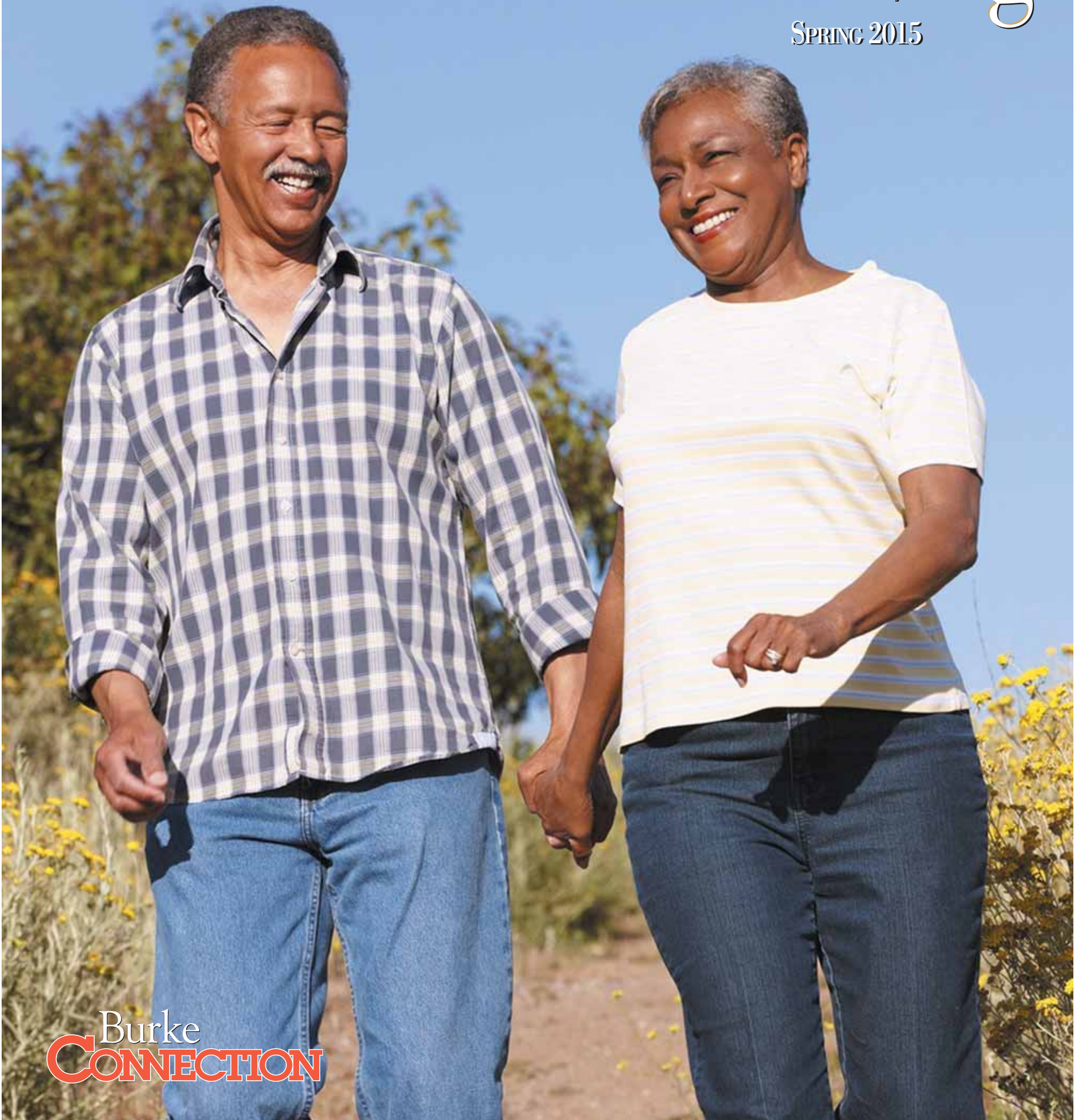


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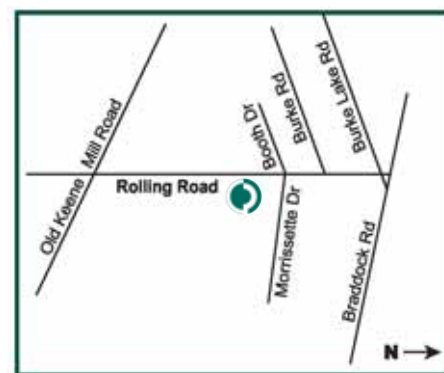
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Senior Living

'Your Life Is Today and Tomorrow'

Residents of local senior living communities share their experiences.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

“I didn’t want to come here,” said Bill Woessner, referring to Brightview Assisted Living Community in Great Falls.

“That’s right,” agreed Sheila, his wife of more than 50 years, with plenty of her native Scottish brogue to be heard in her voice. “He really didn’t. We have a lovely house here in Great Falls and I don’t think he was ready to budge. But how long after we got here did that change?” she turned to her husband and asked.

“At least a day,” he laughingly replied. “Seriously,” said Bill Woessner, “it probably wasn’t more than the first 48 hours.”

What changed his mind, especially after what many would call a major life-upheaval?

“The food!” was his answer. “We have



PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION

Always ready for a few hijinks around Brightview Assisted Living Community in Great Falls are L-R: Sheila Woessner, Porta Nickles, Sophia Coulopoulos, Bill Woessner, and director of Community Sales, Joanna Banks.

gourmet food at every meal, served by the nicest people in the most beautiful surroundings, and we never have to cook it or clean up afterwards.”

According to Sheila, while the food really is that good, what probably impacted her husband’s initial attitude was “the amazing staff, the friendly and interesting residents, and the freedom. Of course, we’re retired, so we’re not bound to the responsibilities of work.” But neither are the Woessners bound to home maintenance concerns, housekeeping, cooking and cleaning.

Or “shoveling snow, like we would have been doing last month if we weren’t right here,” gloated Bill. “We have the time to do what we like, to try new things and meet new people, without that worry.”

Bill and Sheila Woessner chatted about their experiences as residents in a senior living community with friends and fellow residents Porta Nickles and Sophia Coulopoulos, over lunch in the Brightview dining room.

Porta Nickles, who is 99, admitted to a bit of a sweet tooth. “My father owned a candy and ice cream shop in upstate New York,” she said, recommending the homemade coffee ice cream for dessert.

The ice cream is made using the recipe of the area’s beloved Thelma Feighery. Brightview is built on the site of Thelma’s Ice Cream, once the hotspot for local gathering in Great Falls. Thelma and her husband Frank

started with a gas station on the site in 1950. Thelma took over and served her own recipe ice creams and other goodies after Frank’s death in 1988, until her own in 2001.

Long-time Great Falls resident Sheila Woessner said she used to go to Thelma’s “just to catch up on all the local doings” even though she’s not one for sweet treats. “I think Thelma would be pleased. Not only do we have our own “Thelma’s” on site and make ice cream to her specifications, but it’s still the place for us to gather and keep up with what’s going on.”

Porta Nickles came to Brightview after living the last 70 years in Middletown, N.Y., where she helped run the family’s Coney Island hot dog franchise, and later went on to enjoy a career in education with the local school district. Having lived somewhere that long, it’s understandable that the move took some adjusting to, but Nickles found herself comfortable and more than content in short order. “I was lonely there,” she said. “And I didn’t even know how lonely until I got here, starting making new friends, finding out there were so many things I could still do and learn and enjoy. And now I get to see my kids, grandkids and great-grand kids.”

“And so do we all,” added Bill Woessner. The youngsters in Porta’s extended family (many of whom live close by) are favorites at family related social events held at Brightview, holidays, birthdays, and some “just because” occasions. Having family nearby, the visits, and having opportunities designed to promote interaction with different age groups, all help make Brightview

a home environment in the estimation of this group of residents.

The Brightview Great Falls location has only been open since September of last year. Sophia Coulopoulos, who had lived for several years in the Maryland suburbs around the District, actually came here from another area community, where she lived with her ill husband until his death. Speaking of him caused a quick smile, but also brought a hint of tears. Porta on her one side and Brightview Community Sales Director Joanna Banks seated on her other side, were immediately offering hugs, pats and encouragement.

“Get involved and take advantage of your time,” was Sheila Woessner’s advice for new

SEE ‘YOUR LIFE.’ PAGE 4



With Dale Jarrett on the piano performing some of the residents’ favorites, Garrey Stinson, owner of Dancing With Garrey, Therapeutic Ballroom Dancing for Seniors, brings a smile to Sophia Coulopoulos.

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Your Life Is Today and Tomorrow

FROM PAGE 3

residents.

Sheila Woessner has always been a game player “and she knows the words to every song going,” Porta Nickles said in admiration.

During her days with the British Information Services in New York City with Bill, Sheila Woessner took home some hefty prize money by playing on the televised “Name that Tune” game show, money that she used to finance their wedding. The couple even appeared on Johnny Carson’s “Who Do You Trust?” game show. Nowadays, Sheila uses her ability to help out at the community’s sing-a-longs.

Many activities are organized and facilitated by Brightview’s Vibrant Living Director, Josh Graf.

Bingo is Sophia’s favorite. She’s been pretty lucky, winning often enough to splurge with her earned Brightview “bucks” at the monthly “gift shop” where you never know what interesting items might be on offer.

Brightview Great Falls is part of Baltimore-based Brightview Senior Living, LLC with a number of communities in Virginia, Maryland and beyond. Brightview Great Falls offers independent living, assisted living, and accommodations for residents with Alzheimer’s and memory impairment. The community also offers outdoor space with unspoiled views and a Natural Wildlife Habitat accreditation.

Transitioning to senior community living is not always as easy as the lunch lunch at Brightview experienced. Sometimes the move starts with heartache or circumstances that speed up what should be a more lengthy and considered process. That was certainly the case for both Jim Draper and Rachel Garbee,

residents at The Hermitage in Alexandria.

Draper was a pastor for many years in the southern portions of the Commonwealth. He and his wife of 53 years were actually engaged in ministerial duties when she fell and hit her head. “It was a simple fall outside a Wendy’s, could happen to anyone.” Two weeks later, Draper was a widower. He continued on, but experienced several medical episodes associated with his own health issues. Eventually, the decision was made for him to move to Northern Virginia, close to family. “It’s been hard,” he admits. I really had my heart set on a retirement place near Richmond. And I miss my wife so much.” To make the transition more difficult, because of his medical condition, Draper can no longer drive. “That’s a real blow,” he said.

Rachel Garbee was living in North Carolina and “doing pretty good.” Then one night her furnace exploded. Living alone, she had no one with her to handle the situation. “It was very scary. I didn’t really know what had happened, couldn’t figure out how to turn off the alarms. I went to my neighbors for help and that’s when we found out about the furnace.” Luckily, Rachel Garbee and her home survived the experience, but when her son received the call in the middle of the night, “I was packed up pretty quickly and here I am.”

Both Jim Draper and Rachel Garbee have taken some time to adjust, but things are getting better with the help of staff like Lynette Mitchell, The Hermitage director of marketing and outreach. “She’s a special lady,” said Draper, “really made for the job.” Other residents have also helped Jim, Rachel, and others settle in to this new phase of their lives.

Gladys Laclède knows what it’s like to be a “newbie” from out of state. Moving here to be closer to her sons, she offers support and assistance where she can.

Peg Bixler remembers when Jim Draper



PHOTOS BY ANDREA WÖRKER/THE CONNECTION

In the lounge at The Woodlands Retirement Community in Fairfax, Col. James McAllan (US Army-Ret) with Riley on his lap and Linda McAllan offered up some thoughts on their senior community living experience. The McAllans were celebrating their Woodlands one-year anniversary that day.

first arrived. “I remember when we met in the elevator,” she told him. “I could tell it was hard.” She recalls telling him to just “Wait a bit. It does get easier.”

Of course, by the description of her daily activities, it sounds like Peg Bixler doesn’t have much time for waiting. A former nurse, she volunteers at the Kennedy Center, with the Wounded Warrior and Honor Flight projects, and more. She also fits in some serious walking to keep fit and limber, as well as activities offered at The Hermitage and visits with her daughter who lives in the area. Peg is grateful that she is still in good health and still able to be “a fairly quick walker.”

She tilts her head at friend Bea Larson, who is laughing that Peg “nearly finished me off” when she took Bea for their first few walks together.

Rachel Garbee also walks, but mostly sticks to Hermitage hallway strolls, often in the evenings after dinner. “It’s quiet then, and where else could I take a walk in my pajamas, bathrobe and slippers?”

The Hermitage offers its residents a number of activities and amenities, although Peg, Bea and Gladys think that more people should take advantage of what’s on offer. Gladys Laclède was on the community’s activities committee and they were always on the lookout for something new and fun to get the residents involved.

Peg Bixler offered advice to those who might have such a move coming in the future. “Get rid of a lot of stuff as soon as you can. Don’t wait. And do what you can to make it easier on your kids.” Bixler thought she had done a good job of downsizing before the move, but still found herself “with a lot of stuff I just don’t need.”

Rachel Garbee encourages other “newbies” to not be afraid to ask questions or ask for help, especially if your move to senior community living is an abrupt one like hers.

“All of my questions and concerns have been met with nothing but genuine care and helpfulness here.”

“Be open,” is what Gladys Laclède advises. Pastor Jim Draper, who has started using more of his time to help others in need around the community, thinks just speaking to everybody and actively looking for friendship is key to making the most of this next life chapter.

Bea Larson certainly hasn’t lost her sense of humor with her new living arrangements. “My advice,” she said, “is don’t be hard of

hearing!”

Col. James McAllan (U.S. Army Ret.) and his wife Linda, who retired from an administrative career with the IRS, started their research on retirement living options six years ago. As you would expect from a military intelligence officer (Army, Civil Defense/FEMA) and a woman who made order and efficiency part of her life’s work, these two had a plan and a checklist of requirements. While living in Falls Church, they visited dozens of communities over the years.

“We didn’t want one of the really big places,” said Col. McAllan. “We were looking for someplace with a diverse population and where we could comfortably remain, even if our health circumstances changed.” The couple also decided they would prefer a community that was locally owned, and better still, locally managed. Their extensive research and personal inspections eventually took them to The Woodlands Retirement Community in Fairfax. “It checked all the boxes.”

The community is, in fact, locally founded and operated by the Bainum family. The size fits for the McAllans, as well, with only 102 units. The Woodlands is also what is known as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC), meaning that residents can avail of a lifetime range of care, from the independent living that the McAllans now

enjoy, to more assisted living through to advanced nursing care without having to uproot and move to a completely new community.

The McAllans hadn’t planned to move in when they did. “My knees really made that decision for us,” said James. But once they decided, they found that only one apartment was currently available. Not wanting to risk a long encampment on the waiting list, they went ahead and closed the deal on their two bedroom, 2.5 bath apartment with separate kitchen, dining room and den. Their daughter, who lives just minutes away, told them it was “all meant to be.” And the icing on the cake was that The Woodlands would accept the other member of the immediate family, 4-year-old shih tzu Riley, who has been dubbed “The Mayor” by many of the other residents. Riley is not particularly fond of the only other four-legged community dweller, but he adores visiting – and being properly fussed over by – residents, staff, and visitors.

“Coming down to the lobby is his favorite activity,” said Linda. “I think he fakes some of his requests for his outside needs,” she added, “since half the time when we get down here he suddenly finds plenty of time to check out whoever is around.”

The Woodlands offers physical and entertainment activities, including an indoor heated pool and a well-equipped exercise room, but Linda noted that the variety of groups, clubs, lectures and discussions available.

“We’ve had the first Ambassador to Israel as a speaker, a violinist who spent 40 years with the Washington Opera orchestra, a retired opera singer, and so many more, in addition to book clubs, poetry clubs, gardening,” Linda McAllan said. A presentation by the authors of “Worry Free Retirement Living” was on the March schedule, and “Aging Well: Aging is Not a Spectator Sport” is on the April agenda. The McAllans also like that co-founder and manager Kevin Bainum holds monthly “Kevin Talks.” There are other regular town hall-type meetings and several councils or committees, but in Mr. McAllan’s words, it’s “this kind of relaxed, open communication that really brings us all together.”

Betty Marshall, whose apartment is frequently used as a stop on any tour of The Woodlands, couldn’t agree more with her neighbors, the McAllans. A Fairfax resident for more than 25 years, Marshall,

who was born on Cyprus when her South Carolinian mom followed her father to his native Greece for a time, has also seen a bit of the world thanks to her husband’s military postings in Alaska, Okinawa, Greece and Paris. Like the McAllans, Betty did quite a bit of planning for this move. When her husband, Col. Charles Marshall (Ret) died in 2013, she put those plans into action. Picking which pieces to take with her from a lifetime of international travel wasn’t as hard as she thought it would be. Of course, Betty Marshall, a music major who taught the instrument wherever the couple went, couldn’t leave the piano behind. Nor could she leave her favorite furnishings and artwork, many from her Okinawa days.

When not busy with activities outside of The Woodlands world like volunteering at the Fair Oaks Hospital gift shop or heading up the Flower Guild at the Providence Presbyterian Church, Betty is involved with the goings on in her own community. “And the people here make it easy on every level.” Betty sings the praises of the maintenance and facilities staff, in particular. “They are so willing to do anything you need. Hang a picture, move furniture, fix anything. They even prepare the plots for us gardeners. I just have to get out there and do the planting.” Of course, she does reward them with the fruits of their combined labor. “Zucchini bread for everyone this year!”

Having learned flower arranging, Betty teaches those skills as well as crafting to interested residents. She’s also organizing

a Caribbean cruise for a group of residents and family members. The Woodlands staff will be handling the transportation to and from Baltimore when the travelers embark on their sea-faring adventure.

“I would just tell people to never look back,” Marshall said. “Keep the memories, they are what made you. But your life is today and tomorrow. Keep looking ahead. Plan. And find a place where you can really thrive.”

If it’s time to start contemplating the transition to senior independent or assisted living for yourself or a loved one sorting through the information and the available properties and options can seem overwhelming.

There are properties that resemble four-star resorts. There are communities that are extensions of a particular faith institution or religion. Others, like non-profit Vinson Hall in McLean were founded to serve our large commissioned military officers population and government workers of equal rank. There are properties set in rural locations, while others like The Jefferson, a Sunrise Senior Living community located steps away from the Ballston Metro and Ballston Common Mall in Arlington, are set right in the thick of things. Westminster at Lake Ridge and Ingleside at King Farm in Maryland offer small town living right in the Washington area. There are communities offering every possible range of care, service and amenities in all price ranges.



Gladys Laclède, Bea Larson, Jim Draper, Rachel Garbee and Peg Bixler share a table and a photo op in the library of The Hermitage, a senior assisted living community in Alexandria. Peg is the veteran in the group and does her best to welcome newcomers.



Betty Marshall is so noted for her gracious hostess skills that she is often called upon as an “ambassador” for The Woodlands Retirement Community. One look around her two-bedroom apartment and you know why it is frequently chosen as a stop on the

County Adult Centers Offer Seniors Activities, Social Interaction

In 2014, the attendance at Fairfax County senior centers was 277,342.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

At the Kingstowne Center for Active Adults, volunteer Frank Bauer sees zumba and yoga classes “flowing into the main room sometimes,” he says, revealing how popular those classes are at the center, which caters to seniors 55 and older. This Kingstowne center, one of 14 senior centers throughout Fairfax County, offers classes and activities to keep seniors active.

“It keeps them mentally engaged, it’s a very friendly atmosphere,” said Bauer, who lives nearby and puts in about 30 hours a week at the Kingstowne center.

Fairfax County’s senior centers are sponsored by the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services that offer classes, health and wellness programs, and internet access, as well as trips and tours. The activities provide seniors an opportunity to socialize with others and stay connected with the community. In 2014, the attendance at the senior centers was 277,342, according to program officials.

“Our participants consistently rank developing social connections and enhancing emotional and physical health and wellness as the top two benefits from attending senior centers,” said Evan Braff, one of the regional managers at the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services. “We work to meet the needs and interest of our participants.”



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

The Kingstowne Senior Center is in the south part of the county.

According to the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), senior centers are valuable resources in communities across the nation. Many centers sponsor Meals-on-Wheels programs and provide volunteer opportunities, as Bauer has found. According to Ginger Thompson, the associate state director of communications at AARP Virginia, “some programs in the center are funded through the Older Americans Act which AARP is urging congress to reauthorize. AARP is calling on Congress to prevent seniors from losing access to services they count on for their health and financial security by renewing the Older Americans Act.” “The Older Americans Act supports services including Meals-on-Wheels, in-home care, transportation, elder abuse prevention and caregivers who make it pos-

sible for seniors to live in their homes. “The OAA also helps save federal and state tax dollars by keeping seniors out of costly nursing homes and preventing unnecessary hospital re-admissions,” Thompson said.

In Fairfax County, officials are also trying a different approach, called Centers Without Walls. These are senior centers without a county building to gather in, and an alternate set of basic activities the other centers may offer. Two of these programs are in Burke/West Springfield and Great Falls. The Senior Centers Without Walls are developed through a public-private partnership between the county and businesses to create centers in churches. So far, the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church, the Burke United Methodist Church and the Durga Temple were the first to support the Center Without Walls, but according to Braff, the county is looking at expanding that program. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors is supportive of that effort. “As additional needs present themselves, we stand ready to expand implementing the Centers Without Walls in another location,” said Braff.

There is a fee to participate at the county centers, based on income, ranging from \$24 to \$48 a year and meals are provided “if they need it,” Braff said. A meal donation is suggested based on a sliding scale. Transportation to the centers is available through Human Services Transportation.

The Kingstowne Center for Active Adults is open during the weekday hours, and Bauer sees many participants that live with their adult children and come over to the center when the children are at work. On the weekends though,

Center Locations

Bailey’s Senior Center

5920 Summers Lane, Falls Church, VA 22041
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-820-2131, TTY 711

South County Senior Center

8350 Richmond Highway, Suite 325, Alexandria, VA 22309
Senior+ Program
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-704-6216, TTY 711
Fax: 703-704-6699

Herndon Senior Center

873 Grace Street, Herndon, VA 20170
Senior+ Program
Operating Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. - 8 p.m., Friday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-464-6200, TTY 711

Hollin Hall Senior Center

1500 Shenandoah Road, Alexandria, VA 22308
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-765-4573, TTY 711

James Lee Senior Center

2855-A Annandale Road, Falls Church, VA 22041
Senior+ Program
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-534-3387, TTY 711

Kingstowne Center for Active Adults

6488 Landsdowne Center, Alexandria, VA 22315
Operating Hours: Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-339-7676, TTY 711

Lewinsville Senior Center

1609 Great Falls Street, McLean, VA 22101
Senior+ Program
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-442-9075, TTY 711

Lincolnia Senior Center

4710 North Chambliss Street, Alexandria, VA 22312
Senior+ Program
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-914-0330, TTY 711

Little River Glen Senior Center

4001 Barker Court, Fairfax, VA 22032
Senior+ Program
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-503-8703, TTY 711
Fax: 703-653-3548

Lorton Senior Center

7722 Gunston Plaza, Lorton, VA 22079
Senior+ Program
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-550-7195, TTY 711
Fax: 703-541-2092

Pimmit Hills Senior Center

7510 Lisle Avenue, Falls Church, VA 22043
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-734-3338, TTY 711

Providence Senior Center

3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax VA 22031
Operating Hours: Monday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Phone: 703-865-0520, TTY 711

Sully Senior Center

5690 Sully Road, Centreville, VA 20120
Senior+ Program
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-322-4475, TTY 711

Wakefield Senior Center at Audrey Moore RECenter

8100 Braddock Road, Annandale, VA 22003
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Phone: 703-321-3000, TTY 711
Fax: 703-764-2204

City of Fairfax

4401 Sideburn Road, Fairfax, VA 22030
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Phone: 703-359-2487, TTY 711

City of Falls Church

223 Little Falls Street (next to City Hall), Falls Church, VA 22046
Operating Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Phone: 703-248-5020, TTY 711

the center is occasionally rented for other activities such as board game events, or groups to gather. For example, on a recent Saturday, an instructional bee keeping lecture was held by a bee keeping group in one room, while a ‘gaming club’ was holding a benefit for wounded warriors in the main area.

The centers’ rental aspect came in handy for Bauer last year when his daughter’s rehearsal dinner picnic was threatened by tornadoes, and the outdoor location was suddenly nixed. Bauer stopped by the center, made a call, and rented the location for the group who got out of harms way just in time. “It worked out very nicely,” he said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

One of the county’s Senior Center activities involves mural painting at a local school.

Senior Living

Women of the Nova United, part of the National Senior Women's Basketball Association get exercise with a team sport. They are part of a new fitness trend.



Fit for the Golden Years

Fitness programs for seniors are part of a trend.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

One night each week, Sue Thompson can be found dribbling a basketball down the court, leading her team, the Nova United, to victory. Thompson, who is in her 60s, is one of the youngest players in her league, the National Senior Women's Basketball Association.

"There are women who play with me who are 80 and living out their dream to play basketball. We were way before Title IX," said Thompson, who is also a professor of physical education at Northern Virginia Community College in Annandale and Alexandria, Va. "The women are fit, but with seniors, the social part is really important. Some of the ladies have been widowed or have spouses with health issues. They've really been a support group for each other."

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, Thompson is part of a national fitness trend: fitness programs for older adults, including strength training and team sports. Fitness programs for the now-retired and retiring baby boom generation are increasing in popularity.

New research continues to show the benefits of exercise, aerobic and strength training, range from delayed cognitive decline and a boost in social functioning to an ability to manage chronic diseases and even turn back time.

"There are a lot of benefits for the aging population," said Lisa M.K. Chin, an assistant research professor at George Mason University's Department of Rehabilitation Science in Fairfax, Virginia. Exercise "slows physiological changes that come with aging. ... The other thing that exercise manages is chronic diseases that come with aging, such as cardiovascular problems or diabetes."

Mark Brasler, a 69-year-old who lives in Springfield, Va., has been active for most of the past 20 years. He moved into a retirement community four months ago and got a fitness assessment in the property's gym. The results led him to up his fitness game.

"I still walk every morning and do weights and resistance machines every other day," said Brasler. "I was also told that I needed to take balance class. We focus on agility, how to stand up straight and how to get up when you fall. We also do stretching, yoga and Pilates. I feel more confident about myself."

Such fitness classes can help preserve mobility and cognitive function, say researchers. "It helps in terms of preserving bone mass and maintaining mobility longer," said Chin. "If you're using your muscles, especially during weight-bearing exercises, ultimately it reduces the risk of falling and improves balance."

An exercise class that includes both aerobic, strength and balance exercises can help preserve freedom and independence for seniors. "The key components of staying physically active are having strong muscles, reasonable flexibility and endurance, such as the ability to keep walking or doing an activity and not getting tired and fatigued right away," said Rita Wong, professor of physical therapy and associate dean of graduate and professional studies at Marymount University in Arlington. "It's essential to keep oneself mobile and active."

It's almost never too late to increase fitness levels, Wong said. "Often with older adults, people think that they can't improve anymore so why bother. But research has shown time and time again that older adults have an ability to improve that is as similar as young adults'."

One fitness class that is multi-generational and incorporates aerobic exercise, balance and strength training is the newly formed TRUE Fit in Arlington, Va. The goal of the all-outdoor class sessions is to marry effective exercise with camaraderie, much like Brasler's experience.

"People need community [and are] finding it in a holistic approach to exercise at their own comfort level," said Nina Elliot, founder of the TRUE Fit program and co-owner of TRUE Health and Wholeness. "People work out to the best of their ability and everybody gets a workout that's right for their body. They're given modifications and the focus is to do your best, have fun and enjoy exercise."

Elliot believes exercising in groups has an accountability factor. "The number one thing that can keep you from aging is exercise," she said. "Aging can be very isolating for some people. The more people can get out and be around people, the better."

Hearing Loss in America Did you know...

- Hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic condition in older Americans after hypertension and arthritis.
- 1 in 3 people over age 60 have hearing loss.
- 1 in 6 Baby Boomers (ages 49-66) have hearing loss.
- 1 in 14 Generation Xers (ages 37-48) already have hearing loss.

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Creative Aging Festival Coming in May

Includes 114 performances, poetry readings, art exhibits, lectures, classes and more.

BY STEVE HIBBARD
THE CONNECTION

A Creative Aging Festival will take place throughout the month of May at 100-plus local venues in Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, Arlington and Alexandria. The month-long festival includes 114 performances, poetry readings, art exhibits, lectures, classes and more.



The festival is being sponsored by Fairfax County, AARP Virginia, the Fairfax County Arts Council and several other community organizations and businesses, and

coincides with Older Americans Month. It will also include programs that unlock the creative spirit through yoga, tai chi and even a walk through a garden labyrinth.

“What we’re hoping is that people will discover where the opportunities for art are for Fairfax County. We want them to know that it’s here; it’s in the community and we’re hoping they will participate,” said Grace Lynch, manager of communications with the county’s Division of Adult and Aging Services. She said the festival “gives us permission to do something that we may not have done before and to explore ourselves in a more creative and artistic way.”

“Fairfax County is home to over 200 non-profit art organizations many of them offering exciting events for the 50-plus com-

munity. The Creative Aging Festival is a wonderful opportunity for our arts organizations to market their existing programs by and for 50-plus residents, encouraging older adult participation in the county’s many arts offerings, and showcasing opportunities to engage in our community,” said Lisa Mariam, grants director and master arts plan coordinator at the Arts Council of Fairfax County.

Planners are now developing the program and expect to post the full calendar of events in early April (see sidebar). Some of the examples include:

- ❖ An open house allowing guests to participate in an organization’s dance, music, visual art, yoga, gardening programming;
 - ❖ A speaker on art, gardening, yoga, etc.; or
 - ❖ An older adult artist, writer, actor, poet, dancer or musician to speak about their art.
- “We’re not about bingo anymore. We’ve really raised the bar. We’re focusing on yoga, tai chi, in addition to painting and music, performing arts and dance,” said Julie Ellis, Director of Hollin Hall Senior Center in Mount Vernon.

Many Fairfax County programs will be held at local libraries, 14 senior centers, adult day healthcare centers and park programs are planning to be involved. For example, seniors here will have the opportunity to experience movement classes with professional choreographer Janet Storms of the Choreographers Collaboration Project. “She’s going to talk about the joy of movement as you age,” said Ellis.

The festival’s objectives are to encourage audiences for the arts, especially for art created and performed by older adults; encour-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY STAN SCHRETTER

Seniors take part in programs at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at GMU.

age older adult participation in the county’s many public and private art programs; promote public understanding of the benefits of older adult participation in the arts; establish the festival as an annual event each May with Older Americans Month.

“Research has shown a strong connection between participation in the arts and the cognitive health of older adults,” said Richard Chobot, chair of Fairfax Area Agency on Aging. “The Creative Aging Festival will provide examples of the variety of arts experiences available to older adults, and individuals of all ages.

“The Creative Aging Festival gives the public an opportunity to dive into the soul of the many programs the area offers for adults with dementia,” said Isabel Castillejo, CTRS, of the Herndon Adult Day Health Care Center. “Fairfax County’s Adult Day Health Care Centers understand the value behind creative arts and the opportunity to see someone’s unique expressions through art, music and various other mediums. We encourage the public to get a glimpse of these wonderful gems their community has to offer.”

“The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at (GMU) is excited to take part in the festival, offering four events that will showcase our popular acting and Tai Chi classes, fabulous musical performers, and first rate fine artists and photographers,” said Jennifer Disano, executive director.

As part of the festival, GMU will be hosting an “Arts, Aging & Well-being” panel on Monday, May 18 from 9 a.m. to noon, on the Fairfax campus. “When we connect with others through creative expression, great things happen,” said GMU Associate Professor Holly Matto, Ph.D. “The arts and health research shows that participation in the creative arts can enhance cognitive, emotional and interpersonal functioning,

Sampler of Events

- Creative Mindfulness: Movement and Art.** This two-part workshop will incorporate mindfulness practices including yoga and tai chi along with a creative, stress-free art project. May 1, 1:30 p.m.; Free. At **Insight Memory Center**, 3953 Pender Drive, Suite 100, Fairfax. Call 703-204-4664 or visit www.insightmcc.org
- Wretches & Jabberers.** Two men with autism, an accomplished artist and an activist, embark on a global quest to change attitudes about autism and intelligence. Tracy Thresher and Larry Bissonnette travel to Sri Lanka, Japan and Finland, dissecting, challenging, and reshaping public conceptions along the way. May 3, 1:30 p.m.; \$15. At **Angelika Film Center & Cafe at Mosaic**, 2911 District Avenue, Fairfax. Call 703-537-3031/703-537-3075 or visit www.jccnv.org
- Second Hand Rose.** A nationally known storyteller tells the story of Second Hand Rose. May 4, 10:30-11:30 a.m.; Free. At **Lord of Life Lutheran Church/Shepherd’s Center of Fairfax-Burke -Adventures in Learning**, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. Call 703-426-2824 or visit www.scfbva.org.
- Open Readers Theater Class.** Join OLLI Actors for a performance of monologues, short skits, acts or scenes from longer plays. May 4, 11:50 a.m.-1:15 p.m.; Free. At **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute/GMU**, Tallwood, VA-3, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax. Call 703-503-3384 or visit <http://olli.gmu.edu/>
- Encore Collage ... A RETRO-Introspective Workshop.** Join us as we CREATE a collage using recollections, introspection, aged copies of photos, and magazines to represent key moments from your life and pearls of wisdom. These works will be displayed at the centers Mother’s Day luncheon, May 8th. May 4, 10-11:30 a.m.; Free. At **Green Acres Fairfax Senior Center**, 4401 Sideburn Road, Fairfax. 703.273-6090 or visit <http://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/senior-center>.
- Cinco de Mayo Party.** Little River Glen will be hosting a Cinco de Mayo Party: Creative Aging Throughout Cultures, Food, Dance and Music. May 5, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Free. At **Little River Glen**, 4001 Barker Court, Fairfax. Call 703-503-8703 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ncs
- Encore/Potomac Chorale Spotlight on the Arts Performance.** Come join us for an evening of song and celebration! May 5, 7 p.m.; Free. At **Stacy Sherwood Community Center**, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Call 703-993-9889 www.PotomacAcademy.org

and studies on the arts in health care settings show biological effects such as pain reduction and improved immune functioning.”

Festival partners include: the Arts Council of Fairfax County, the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging, the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, Fairfax County’s Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, Public Libraries, Adult Day Health Care Centers, Long Term Care Coordinating Committee, George Washington University, the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations, the National Center on Creative Aging, Goodwin House at Alexandria and Bailey’s Crossroads, AARP Virginia, and Pure Prana Yoga Studio. Most programs are free. Because of the variability in venue space, participants should call respective venues to register and inquire about program information, fees and parking.

The festival calendar will be posted by early April at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/fairfax-creative-aging-festival.htm>



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY STAN SCHRETTER

Seniors take part in tai chi programs to stay fit at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at GMU.