

News from West River Valley Senior Housing



AUTUMN 2018

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Dear Friends A word from Susanne Shapiro, ED

I cannot begin to say how honored we are to receive the “Best of Brattleboro” Readers Choice Award from the *Brattleboro Reformer*. We have an exceptional team of professionals who strive to make the assisted living a safe and truly enjoyable place to live. It means a great deal to all of us to receive this vote of recognition from the community.

Of course, we are always looking for ways to improve and better meet the preferences of residents. This summer we conducted our annual Resident & Family Satisfaction Survey in-house so that we could ask targeted and useful questions rather than using a generic survey. We appreciate everyone who took the time to give us their feedback!

We noticed a few trends in survey responses:

- ★ Staff scored highly by both residents & family—As I noted above, we pride ourselves on the quality of our staff. They truly are a great team!
- ★ Food received various suggestions—So HCSG Kitchen Manager, Catherine Chavez, conducted her own follow up survey of residents to hone in on specific issues. As one resident wrote, “requests are quickly acted upon.”

- ★ The dining experience was identified as an opportunity for improvement—We are upgrading the dining room music system and have replaced old dining room tables. Residents are also welcome to change their seating.

We reflected upon each response and each comment. If you think of other suggestions, they are most welcome! I hope to see you at our Open House on October 28th!



WANTED: PIANO



For frequent performances
at the Assisted Living

Must be tunable
& in good condition.

Do you have one to donate?

Please Join Us for Our Annual
Open House
Sunday, October 28
2pm - 4pm
at West River Valley Assisted Living



Resident Highlight: Marge McAllister By Jean Allbee

“Is it true? Have you heard the Martians have landed?” “What should I do?”

Imagine being a telephone operator in Princeton, New Jersey on the night of October 30, 1938. The switchboard is lighting up with hundreds of incoming calls with a variation of the above panic generated query.

Marge McAllister was one of the Princeton telephone operators on that fateful night of the Orson Welles Radio dramatization of The War of the Worlds. I asked Marge how she answered the calls.

“I said, ‘Hang up and don’t bother me.’ I didn’t have time for that nonsense. Apparently some fools jumped in their cars with their guns and headed out of town.”

Learning from Marge about her years in Princeton was like being an eyewitness to world news events of the early 20th Century. Not only did she play a small part in the chaos surrounding that fateful radio broadcast, but Marge was 10 years old when Charles Lindberg made his historic solo transatlantic flight from New York to Paris. She lived only eight miles from Lindberg’s home town of Hopewell N.J. and, of course, heard about his flight as well as his son’s kidnapping as these events were all over the news in 1931 and 1932. The historic flight and kidnapping

were the talk of the town, the country and the entire world.

Also, only 36 miles from Princeton, in 1937, The Hindenberg, the German zeppelin, crashed and burned killing 36 people as it was trying to land at the Lakehurst Naval Base. Although she didn’t witness the fatal crash she knew some people who drove the 36 miles to see the devastation.

Taking a three mile walk about the town nearly every day was one way Marge and a friend often passed the time. Occasionally they would see an elderly gentleman coming and going. They considered him an eccentric old man who lived with his sister. His name was Albert Einstein. The girls themselves gained minor fame as many people came to recognize them on their walks and would greet them as friends. They even had their pictures appear in a local newspaper.

Marge’s first job as a teenager was working behind the counter in a bakery. It was there she met her future husband who drove a delivery truck for the bakery and who would sometimes fill in as a baker, taking over from the proprietor

who often had a bit too much to drink the night before.

Her parents were not happy when Marge married this ‘baker.’ He had been divorced and was fifteen years her senior.

Marge has one daughter, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Marge moved to Valley Cares a few years ago to be nearer her daughter who lives in Londonderry.



Walking Paths Honor Memories By Becca Schaefer

Over the past couple years, Valley Cares held benefit concerts on Townshend Common to raise money to increase the availability of accessible outdoor activities at West River Valley Senior Housing. Donations from those concerts have purchased new benches located around the property for residents to rest and chat. They have allowed us to resurface the walking paths (an annual process of fighting back the grass and clover that seems determined to claim that real estate). This year we also installed distance markers which named our two of our most popular loops: Cecil's Circle and Kronemeyer Courtyard.

"Cecil's Circle" is the hard-packed gravel path that loops around the yard along side of the assisted living. The loop itself is approximately 400 feet. Some residents walk around it a couple times each day. Others connect it to a longer walk around the property.

The loop was named after Cecil Bills, a beloved community member who loved to chat with friends and neighbors. When he moved into the Heins Home in Townshend, he was often found at the puzzle table, where folks would be inclined to stop and chat on their way by. Upon his death in 2003, many community members gave donations to the Cecil Bills Memorial Fund, set up by the family to benefit residents of Heins Home. To honor him, these funds were used to commission a screened gazebo by local builder, Norm Flynn, to provide a place for Heins Home residents to gather and enjoy the company of one another. When the Heins Home closed and Valley Cares' senior housing opened, this screened house was brought to its new location so that Valley Cares' assisted and independent living residents could enjoy it. Today the screened house sits on the corner of Valley Cares' property along Cecil's Circle and near Rte 35 where, like Cecil's puzzle table, all residents can visit and watch as people come and go by.



Measuring approximately 300 feet, Kronemeyer Courtyard is a cement sidewalk that passes right by the red brick house that serves as Valley Cares' administrative office and circles around the gardens between the assisted living and independent living buildings. This courtyard is a favorite among those who prefer the hard surface of the pavement or enjoy peering upon the beautiful flower and vegetable gardens maintained by residents.

This courtyard was named after Warren Kronemeyer, who donated his house and property in exchange for lifetime care, which he received at the Heins Home. (Unfortunately Warren passed away just before Valley Cares' housing opened.) The brick house had been home of many adventures before becoming our office, including serving as Warren's home and the location of Warle Antiques, the beloved business that he and his friend, Leon Ingall, began in NYC and relocated to Townshend. It is thanks to Warren's generosity that Valley Cares has this affordable senior housing here today.

Thank you

to everyone who purchased tickets for our Activities Program Quilt Raffle.

- ★ The raffle raised **\$505** in support of the music and activities that we enjoy so much!
- ★ Congratulations to the raffle winner: Mary Rowell O'Brien!

Thank you, again, to Helen Short for creating and donating this beautiful quilt!

Local Businesses Donate Garden Bed and Plants

By Becca Schaefer

We wish to thank Washburn Vault Company of Hinsdale and Dutton Berry Farm or Brookline for their generosity and kindness!

This summer Washburn Vault Company donated and delivered a large, precast concrete, raised garden planter. That was followed by a donation of various flower and vegetable plants from Dutton's.

Together these donations have made a lovely garden, enjoyed by all, near the entrance of our assisted living. How nice to have a raised bed that green-thumbed residents can easily reach and tend to!



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We Enjoy Life at Valley Cares!



Valley Cares Inc. is an independent community-based 501(c)(3) organization committed to providing high quality, affordable, housing and compassionate care allowing seniors to age in place with respect and dignity.