



Journeys

A newsletter for residents, clients, families and friends.

Love knows no boundaries

"That's the love of my life," comments John Mastran as a personal care assistant escorts his wife of 63 years from their apartment at Country Meadows of Lancaster.

Sitting in the couple's living room, one could easily mistake it for an art gallery. Fine paintings adorn the walls along with photographs of a loving family, awards and accolades, and a degree from Harvard University.

It is hard to imagine this apartment is located in the secured Connections Memory Support Neighborhood. Mastran lives here with his wife, Carol, who struggles with severe dementia. Mastran, sharp as a tack and healthy at 94 years young, could live in his own apartment in an independent living setting; however, he refuses to leave his wife's side.

"We started at [another retirement community]. They said we would live in different buildings and I said, 'no, I have to be with her. . . we're married 63 years.' I told my daughter to look for other places, and she found Country Meadows," he says.

When Mastran and his daughters first noticed his wife's memory loss, the trio tried to find a cure. "When the doctor told me she was getting Alzheimer's, I took her to three clinics; each one took two to three months but nothing helped. The results were always the same and she's gotten steadily worse. Now she's now like a three-year-old girl."

It's difficult to imagine this woman with a child's spirit spent her life as a talented, successful artist. Carol Mastran is a name known in the art world. Art is in her blood as her grandfather, Frank Fithian, was a painter famous for magazine covers including those adorning the cover of the Saturday Evening Post. "[Her grandfather] told her that someday she was going to be like him. She went to art school for four years, had her own gallery. . . she is like him," Mastran says.

Mastran also was a successful businessman. After receiving his degree from Harvard University, he went to work for RCA and eventually became Vice President of Organization and Planning.

Before moving to Country Meadows, Mastran did his best to care for his wife in their large home in Moorestown, NJ. He recalls, "It got more difficult. As a caretaker, I had to do all the shopping, cooking and cleaning. Sometimes she'd fall and couldn't get up. I had trouble getting her up so I had to call a neighbor to come over. I knew I had to do something."



John Mastran holds a photo of his wife, Carol, taken on their wedding day. The couple has been married 63 years, and lives in the secured memory support neighborhood at Country Meadows of Lancaster.

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COUNTRY MEADOWS
RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

Life gets better.®



Ecumenical Retirement
COMMUNITY

At Home COUNTRY MEADOWS
Personal Care Services

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Journeys is published by Country Meadows Retirement Communities and Ecumenical Retirement Community.

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Our Mission

Country Meadows Retirement Communities helps seniors lead purposeful lives and enjoy independence, friendship and respect.

Country Meadows operates retirement communities in Allentown, Bethlehem, Hershey, Lancaster, Mechanicsburg, South Hills of Pittsburgh, Wyomissing as well as two locations in York. Country Meadows also owns a community in Frederick, Md.

Ecumenical Retirement Community is a not-for-profit retirement community managed by the George M. Leader Family Corporation, which also manages Country Meadows and Country Meadows At Home.

Country Meadows does not discriminate in resident admission on the basis of race, ancestry, religious creed, age, sex, handicap, disability or national origin, provided the resident, in the sole opinion of Country Meadows, can be cared for legally and responsibly.



Residents find art rewarding in many ways

The only limit to art is one's imagination. For the second year, residents prove that you're never too old to dream.

Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community held the second annual art contest to find the design for the organizations' 2013 holiday greeting card. Residents and Country Meadows At Home clients were invited to enter winter-themed artwork. More than 75 entries were submitted.

Members of the Leader family, organization owners, were tasked with choosing one winner and 10 finalists.

"My sister, Jane, and I spent a lot of time perusing the entries; it was a very difficult decision," says Michel Leader, president & CEO. "The final decision was very difficult to make because we have many, many talented artists in residence at our communities."

The winner's name might sound familiar. A painting by David Livirrie, a resident at Country Meadows of Bethlehem, was chosen. Livirrie also won the 2012 competition.



"Carolers on Campus"
by David Livirrie



"The First Sign of Winter"
by Jack Hyde



Works of art entered in the Holiday Card Art Contest were displayed publicly in an exhibit at the WITF-TV Public Media Center in Harrisburg, Pa. Several campuses took their residents to view the exhibit and tour the public television station.

"I was surprised. I didn't expect to win again," says Livirrie, who adds that he is already planning his painting for the 2014 contest.

His winning painting, "Carolers on Campus," was inspired by happy childhood memories. "When I was in elementary school in Bethlehem, for fun at Christmas time, a group of us children in the neighborhood would go caroling in the evening. The air was usually heavy and chilled us to the bone, but for several hours we knocked on doors and as the family answered the door, we would break into song. And how we loved doing it. We saw joy in many faces. For our efforts, we would receive an apple or candy or fresh-baked cookie. This long ago memory is what inspired me to paint 'Carolers on Campus' and now as I gaze at the children in this painting, I realize how very precious those moments were for each one of us."

Livirrie wasn't the only winner. A second painting was selected to use as the design for the Country Meadows At Home holiday card. That painting, "The First Sign of Winter," was created by Jack Hyde, a resident at Country Meadows of York.

Hyde says he never did anything artistic. That changed after moving to Country Meadows when he took an art class taught by a co-worker. He says, "She got me hooked. I find painting is very relaxing. I'll paint in the morning, and then a little in the afternoon, and especially when I come back from dinner. I'll sit down and paint and before you know, it's 10 o'clock! I just keep going and going—I really enjoy it, everything else is out of your mind."

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Pet-friendly campuses, pet-loving seniors inspire new program

For many, one of the day's biggest joys is opening the door to be greeted by wagging tails, wiggly behinds and whimpers of joy from our pets.

At Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community, pets are welcome to move in too, and every campus has house pets for all residents to love and enjoy.

Pets are an important part of life for many people, and science has proven they provide their owners with numerous health benefits. As we age it may become more difficult to care for pets due to health issues, or finding a reliable pet-sitter when on vacation or during a hospital stay. To help, Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community created a Pet Care program.

Designated Pet Care Coordinators offer services including dog walking, filling bowls, changing litter boxes, brushing, coordinating grooming and veterinary visits, administering medications, exercise...nearly everything an animal needs to remain happy and healthy while living with their human.

Hershey campus Pet Care Coordinator/Housekeeping Associate Sharron McIntyre says her favorite part of the day is walking her canine clients. "They enjoy it. This was a bad winter and [the residents] didn't feel that they needed to go out in the cold and risk falling on the ice because I could walk the dogs," she says.

One resident, a dog mom, appreciates the service. "They help take her out and that sort of thing. At my age, I don't think I could handle that by myself."

Services can be scheduled anytime—weekdays, weekends, holidays—whenever a pet needs care. And program costs are added to the resident's monthly bill.

Just as co-workers create personalized services for residents, Pet Care Coordinators offer a care plan for pets, and keep records for every animal residing on campus.

Animals can be a valuable tool in healthy aging. Scientists have completed numerous studies that explore the way animals contribute to better health in humans, particularly older adults. A study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* demonstrated that seniors who have pets tend to have better physical health and mental wellbeing than those that don't. They're more active, cope better with stress, and have better overall health.



Pet Care Coordinator Sharron McIntyre enjoys time with one of her clients, Daisy. She and Daisy walk together nearly every day.

The responsibility of caring for an animal provides a sense of purpose, a reason to get up in the morning and to be needed.

Daisy, a black and white Papillon dog, is important to her human mom who says, "I wouldn't want to go without her. She's a good girl." Daisy rewards Mom with a kiss.

Another benefit to having an animal is that he/she helps the owner make friends. "Everybody loves Daisy. When they see her, even if they don't know me, they are right there to see her and talk to me about her," says the resident.

McIntyre says that she benefits from the program too. "Whenever I walk Daisy, [Daisy's owner] always is overjoyed and happy about what I am doing for her. I can tell she really appreciates it and it's rewarding for me too."

When McIntyre returns with Daisy after their walk, the pooch greets her mom with a wagging tail, wiggly behind, and whimpers of joy.

"Just to see the smile on their faces is enough for me to do this. My dog is my baby and he means so much to me," McIntyre says. "Being able to have a pet [at Country Meadows] is a great thing, and I know I would love it if someone helped me if I could no longer take care of him myself." 🐾

For more information on the Pet Care program, simply request a visit from your campus' Pet Care Coordinator. Readers also may visit CountryMeadows.com/pets.

Residents find art rewarding *continued from page 2*

Livirie and Hyde had an opportunity to meet when the two attended a public display of all the holiday card contest entries at the WITF-TV Public Media Center in Harrisburg, Pa. The one-month exhibit was part of the station's "Art in the Atrium" program in which the public is invited to view rotating art exhibits.

Livirie and Hyde looked at all the art contest entries and were surprised at their wins after seeing the high quality of the other entries.

Both men are preparing for next year and encourage other residents and clients to create a work of art for this year's competition.

Hyde says his neighbors should consider trying a new hobby. "This is entirely, a new adventure for me and I love it!" 🐾

Be kind to one another

Spring is a very special time at Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community. Not just because the snow is gone, flowers are waking from their winter naps and trees are budding; rather, it is a time to honor the late Mary Jane Leader, organization co-founder.

According to her son, Michael Leader, Country Meadows President & CEO, "Throughout her life, Mother was a daily example of kindness to others, and she inspired us to do the same for our families and in our communities. We feel it only appropriate that her memory live on by encouraging others to act kindly."

Mrs. Leader and her husband, the late Gov. George M. Leader, founded Country Meadows upon treating people with kindness. In her honor, the Leader family has designated April as Practice Random Acts of Kindness month at Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community.

During this month, and always, our co-workers, residents and their families are encouraged to remember the little things that can truly brighten someone's day. Random acts of kindness can be as simple as smiling at a stranger, helping someone with their groceries or just paying a visit.

Examples of kindness co-workers experienced last April include:

- A Country Meadows van driver waiting for a resident at a doctor's office saw a mom with two small children navigating



"Practice Random Acts of Kindness"

Life Advice from Mary Jane Leader
Co-founder of Country Meadows and Believer in the Power of Kindness

a parking lot in the rain. The driver pulled up and asked her if she would like a dry ride to her car. She gratefully accepted, and her boys loved riding in the van.

- A co-worker paid for a family's lunch in The Bistro. The family was visiting their loved one on hospice for the last time.

- A co-worker paid for the driver's coffee in the car behind her at a McDonald's and then witnessed a contagion of kindness as that driver paid for the car behind her, and the next two cars in line did the same.

Everyone is encouraged to join in the kindness. Start by stopping by the front desk of your local Country Meadows campus or Ecumenical Retirement Community, where you can pick up free window clings and bumper stickers displaying this simple yet powerful message. Kindness cards also are available to give to those in need of a pick-me-up.

Leader says, "Every day we try to make life better at Country Meadows and whether the grantor or recipient of a kind act, the generosity of the human spirit provides great rewards. I encourage you to pay it forward with a random act of kindness." 🌸

For ideas and inspiration, visit www.CountryMeadows.com for our tip sheet 51 Ways to be Kind to Seniors.

State organization selects co-worker as Most Valuable Employee



Confucius said, "If you love what you do, you never work a day in your life." Many co-workers at Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community feel that way about working with residents and clients. One was honored for dedication to her vocation.

Kathy Grasso, chaplain at Country Meadows of Allentown, was selected by the Pennsylvania Health Care Association/Center for Assisted Living Management as the 2013 Most Valuable Employee in the organizations' Hero Awards.

Every year the statewide organizations recognize workers across the Commonwealth for their outstanding work with older adults. For Grasso, it's just an extra benefit to work alongside residents on a daily basis.

"I humbly accept the award and for me, it's just an honor and a privilege to be able to minister to so many wonderful, wonderful residents. I consider myself blessed in that way and there's no award that could ever surpass," says Grasso. "I get so much more than I could ever give—it's such a blessed place to be when I'm journeying with the residents." 🌸

To watch a short video about Grasso, as well as six other award winners, visit www.YouTube.com/user/CountryMeadowsCares.

Home care associate exceeds client's expectations in unexpected way

"Master craftsman" is not a necessary qualification for a job with Country Meadows At Home. However, Dawn Callantine, home care associate, used her carpentry skills to make life better for a client.

Callantine met Mary Morecz, 99, nearly 18 months ago. Morecz's children contacted Country Meadows At Home to provide help in their mother's home following a fall during which she broke her neck. Morecz spent more than three months in a rehabilitation hospital and returned home wearing braces on her neck and chest.

At first Morecz was unsure how Country Meadows At Home was going to help her. "I was pretty weak when I came home from the hospital and thought, 'how am I going to do what I did before? Well, I have to try it,'" recalls Morecz. "I had no idea what to expect until [the home care associates] came. I'd ask what they did and they said, 'anything, whatever you need.'"

Callantine recalls the early days working with Morecz and says, "We took Mary to her physical therapy sessions. We learned the routine and did the exercises at home. We still do those exercises to keep the muscles limber. As we continue to do the exercises, I feel if she were to have a fall again, perhaps the injury wouldn't be as bad. The balance exercises are obviously helping because she doesn't need a walker anymore."

Morecz receives visits from Country Meadows At Home six days a week for assistance with house cleaning, cooking, exercise and errands, and says, "I like the girls coming, the times they come, and it's nice that they leave notes for each other and know exactly what was done. Everything is so scheduled—right on the button." Morecz says that if it weren't for Country Meadows At Home, she would try to do all her regular activities, despite her health challenges.

Callantine agrees. "Mary has that will; she feels like things have to be done, whether she feels well or not. We gave her the break that she needed to heal and recover from her injuries. She would have worked her way through her injuries and probably would still be suffering."

Morecz is surprised at the wide range of services provided by Country Meadows At Home. Home care associates frequently go above and beyond their daily duties to provide items for clients that will improve their lives. "They go to the store for me, run errands; it's pretty nice and is everything I need," she says.



Country Meadows At Home Care Associate Dawn Callantine and client Mary Morecz proudly show off the closet Callantine remodeled into a pantry.

"I can get groceries, cleaning—they even do the windows and iron. I thought they'd run the sweeper and maybe dust, but they do everything—they really do anything!"

She's not exaggerating. Callantine exceeded Morecz's expectations ten-fold. For years, Morecz longed for a pantry on the same floor as her kitchen. For the more than 50 years she's lived in her home, Morecz stored food items on basement shelves. This meant a trip downstairs every time she wanted to cook or bake. "From the time we moved here, my husband would say to

me, 'are you sure you don't want to add a pantry there?' I'd say not because I needed the closet that was there. I got so tired of running downstairs any time I needed anything, and one day I said to Dawn, 'I'm going to have to get somebody to make shelves. I can't do it anymore; run downstairs for everything.' She said, 'I can do it.' I didn't believe her!"

Callantine made good on her promise. She learned home improvement skills years before when fixing up her first apartment, and was up to this challenge. She measured, purchased wood to build shelves, painted and nailed them into the closet, completing its transformation into a pantry.

"I could not believe it! I was never as thrilled with anything as I was with these shelves! She did such a good job which made it even nicer," Morecz beams.

In fact, Morecz was so impressed that she kept the pantry door open for the first two weeks just so she could see it from her living room. Callantine chuckles, "The first few days you could see that frown on her face when she realized she needed something downstairs. Then she realized what she needed was right here, and she would glow!"

Callantine is quick to note that she and her fellow home care associates are learning from Morecz, too. "We benefit just as much being here with Mary as she does having us here," she says.

One of her colleagues is learning to bake. Morecz says, "I asked 'did you ever bake,' and she said 'no, can I watch you; would you teach me?'" She really was interested in learning. She was good, she learned! It makes me feel good."

Callantine says, "Mary is my hero—at 99 nothing stops her—she does what she wants when she wants—she is so independent. 'Help me or not, I'm going to do it anyway when you're not here!'" 🐾

Life gets better.® at C



← Country Meadows in Mechanicsburg invited couples married 50 years or more to special brunches. Cutting the wedding cake are residents Marty and Betty Schaffer, married 67 years.

Five couples at Country Meadows of Bethlehem, with more than 200 combined years of marriage, reaffirmed their wedding vows at a ceremony held on campus. Following the ceremony, the couples enjoyed wedding cake and entertainment with family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors. Pictured, residents Art and Faith Madarassy, married 41 years, enjoy wedding cake. →



Residents at Country Meadows of South Hills near Pittsburgh, competed in and won a local Chili Cookoff competition! Their secret recipe was concocted by a former co-worker. According to Connections Coordinator Maureen Sirianni, "I'm happy to say that we have a secret ingredient no one has ever guessed!"

Left to right: June Babka, Phyllis Kerr, Ginny Yankovich, Joan Rudd

Residents at Country Meadows of Leader Heights near York, kicked up their heels at a Valentine's Day celebration. According to Director of Community Life Kathy Bowers, "Our entertainer really got the crowd going and even had residents up dancing that we never imagined would dance!"



Country Meadows

Residents and co-workers at the Hershey campus were struck with Spring Fever. During one of the many snowstorms, folks gathered to build a tropical snowperson and were inspired to write a message in the snow to residents inside the warm, cozy building: Life Gets Better.



Bethlehem campus residents enjoyed an outing to the Clinton Heritage Trail. The group had lunch and walked around the quaint shops on Main Street.



Country Meadows of Allentown residents enjoyed German music during a Fall Festival on campus.



Talk about pet therapy! Residents at Country Meadows of Leader Heights near York, enjoyed meeting and petting alpacas from the American Heritage Alpaca farm in Elizabethtown.



Department store founder entertains residents

Country Meadows of Wyomissing residents enjoyed an hour of history, laughter and song as Boscov's Department Stores Chairman Al Boscov paid a visit. He was the special guest of resident Bob Smith, the retired voice of the department store chain who made the slogan "Did you Boscov today?" famous.

"I told him 'you have got to come and address the people where I live,'" says Smith about his invitation. Boscov, 83, happily agreed to join his friend, and during the hour-long informal presentation with residents, the two shared stories and jokes about the Boscov family history serving Berks County.

It all began when Boscov's father came to America from Russia and found work as a peddler. In 1921 he realized the American dream when he opened a store in Reading where the family lived on the second floor. That store expanded, moved into the suburbs, and today Boscov's is the largest family-owned retail chain in the country.

Boscov credits his family's success to a solid team. "Success is never due to one person; it's the result of a lot of people who care," he says. Smith was part of that team for many years



Al Boscov, left, shares stories with Country Meadows residents about his family's retail chain. The former voice of Boscov's department stores Bob Smith, right, shared his memories.

and regards his time as the store's advertising announcer as some of his happiest. Smith is quick to add that Boscov's gives back.

"We try, in every city we're in, to make it a little nicer because we're there. Anything good we can do is a step in the right direction," says Boscov.

Country Meadows residents peppered Boscov with questions about his retail business as well as his family and history in Berks County. Vera Smith told Boscov that she loved the temporary Christmas job she had at one of his stores. "It was the best job I ever had... I loved that job," she says.

Smith notes that most residents grew up with the Boscov family as part of their lives. "There's a significant change in your life, the way we look at things; they are all memories that we have today to look back on," he says. "You were a significant part of our lives and we grew old with you."

Boscov concludes, "When [Smith] was talking about selling his home and moving here I said, 'are you sure?' He said, 'yes, I've been there and met some nice people. I think I'll enjoy my years.' It worked out great. Bob is always praising not only [Country Meadows], but the people. He loves being here, he loves being with you, and that is a wonderful tribute to you." 🌟

Love knows no boundaries *continued from front page*

Since moving to Country Meadows, Mastran can relax knowing that his beloved wife receives the care she needs. He has gone on trips with other residents and participates in activities in other areas of the campus. "I go to exercise class and I meet some of the fellows and chat with them about current events and sports. I've adjusted to living here to be with her, and [the co-workers] love my wife too."

A priority at Country Meadows is to keep couples together and support both spouses and their varied needs.

According to Executive Director of Memory Support Services Joel Kroft, "We look at every couple individually to determine what is in the best interest of both spouses. We recognize and honor the decades of commitment they've had in life together. If a couple is able to stay together, one spouse can spend as much time as they want with their partner but can leave the neighborhood to do activities on their own, without having to worry about caregiving—they don't have to worry about their loved one because we've got them. It's good for the person with dementia because their loved one is right there. They eat their

meals with them and are with them at nighttime so they're not worried and anxious about where their loved one is."

Kroft cautions that, sometimes, living separately may be a better option for couples. "Both spouses need to be careful not to become isolated in their room. If that happens, neither benefits from the memory support and community life programs we provide. The spouse with dementia may not get the benefits of living in the Connections Neighborhood—the socialization, activities, feeling successful. On the other side, the spouse without dementia may be stuck in the room and not get out engaging in things."

Mastran is thankful he can remain with his wife and enjoy activities on his own since Country Meadows co-workers tend to his wife's personal care needs. "All the things I did as a caretaker... here I don't do anything at all; it's amazing!" he shares.

But in the end, it all boils down to a love story in which the couple's number one priority is to spend time together. Mastran concludes, "She knows me, she needs me and wants to be near me. Even more important, I need her." 🌟

Journeys in... PURPOSEFUL SERVICE

Journeys in Purposeful Service is a regular feature. Each edition highlights a resident or client who regularly engages in service both to the retirement community in which he/she resides as well as the community-at-large. If you would like to nominate a resident or client for recognition in this feature, please contact Kelly Kuntz, editor, at kkuntz@countrymeadows.com.

Caring extends across the globe

At Country Meadows in Frederick, Md., resident Addie Childs loves to bake goodies for her neighbors; volunteers to lead exercise classes; and always is willing to lend a helping hand. The last three years, she's taken her generosity and loving spirit overseas.

Childs' son works in diplomat security at the American Embassy in the country of Muldova—an Eastern European nation bordered by Romania and Ukraine that was part of the former Soviet Union. It is the poorest country in Europe.

It is obvious Childs passed on her giving spirit to her sons. "My son found an orphanage in Muldova where 450 handicapped children—all girls—live," she says.

"Their parents simply didn't want them and were too poor to raise them. [My son is] a very loving, giving person, and when he learned about this place he said, 'there's got to be something we can do.' It makes me feel good because he's helping a lot of people."

When Childs first visited her son's family in Muldova three years ago, she became emotional during a trip to the orphanage located in Hincesti. "When I walked in there, people were so nice, and I walked by several rooms where kids were in bed lying down. I started crying and said, 'I cannot do this,' and the woman said 'yes, you can,'" she recalls. "It just really hits you."

As she met the orphanage's residents and staff members, those emotions turned into joy. "They are so loving—everybody came up and hugged us. I've never seen people so happy to see somebody else. They were just so wonderful, smiling all the time just to see somebody," she recalls, choking back tears.



Addie Childs enjoys spending time with the children who reside at the Hicensti Orphanage in Muldova. She has visited the orphanage every Christmas for the last three years.

Visiting with the orphans and observing their poverty struck a chord with Childs; it reminded her of her own childhood in West Virginia. "I was raised poor. There were eight in my family, but I don't have anything but happy memories. Being close and picking berries together—my mother canned things so we could eat through the winter. We raised our own chickens and had our own eggs, and made our own butter," Childs recalls.

When she came home, Childs shared photos and stories with her neighbors about the orphans' living conditions. The Country Meadows of Frederick knitting group responded, knitting scarves and sweaters for the orphans. The residents enjoy receiving photos

of the children wearing their creations. "You can't believe what [our knitting group] has sent over there. It was really neat to see the kids wearing the things we sent. I love every one of [the residents in the knitting group], they are absolutely wonderful—they are knitting all the time," Childs says.

Prior to her latest trip, her third and final journey to Muldova, Childs hosted an educational presentation for her fellow residents. She shared photos and keepsakes collected on her trips, passed out Russian chocolates, and suggested ways her neighbors could help.

This trip was bittersweet for Childs. "I've gotten close to quite a few of the people over there and I long to see them, very much. It's sad because I probably won't ever see them again. It's hard, but you know your work is appreciated so much." 🌸

Chaplain heads worldwide organization to improve communication with persons with dementia

As a chaplain, the Rev. Jim Day is naturally a caring, compassionate soul.

In addition to his dedication to residents at Country Meadows of Lancaster, Day is a leading advocate for persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia around the globe.

Day was elected president of the North American Validation Association (NAVA)—an organization that promotes the use of the Validation Method when communicating with older persons with dementia.

The Validation Method is a powerful technique that couples empathetic listening with questions to help people with dementia express their emotions. Basically, it requires the caregiver to enter the reality of the person with dementia rather than expect that person to enter ours.

Day explains, "For example, Grandma is looking for a dog that's been gone for 15 years. If the visitor corrects her and tells her the dog is dead, she might get mad and after a few visits the relationship might be over. But if we can teach the visitor to center and become empathetic, to get his or her agenda out of the way, go into Grandma's world and say, 'tell me what the dog was like, what's the favorite thing you liked to do with little Fluffy,' Grandma will start sharing memories of Fluffy and then you have a relationship."

As an Authorized Validation Organization (AVO), the first in the United States, Country Meadows requires co-workers take Validation courses to work with residents and clients with dementia. It helps co-workers in their jobs, and also the individual to find peace.

A Country Meadows co-worker for more than 12 years, Day struggled to reach residents when he first started with the retirement community. Now he uses Validation nearly every day to successfully communicate with residents. "I love our residents, but I didn't connect with them well," he recalls. "When I first got into Validation it was for the purpose of connecting. My heart wanted to go there, but I didn't have the techniques, knowledge and experience to do it. Validation was a tremendous eye opener."

Based on input from Validation founder Naomi Feil, Day has set lofty goals for his term. "We would like to get the



*Rev. Jim Day interacts with a resident.
Photo courtesy of Online Publishers.*

medical community to interact with us more and accept Validation so we could present some of our findings and physician testimonials to congressmen to make Validation reimbursable by Medicare/Medicaid as part of holistic care for seniors."

Validation is a standard part of care in Europe, and Day will work with the medical community with the hope to work it into the nursing curriculum at American schools.

Validation is a tool that also can help families interact with their loved ones. An added benefit is that co-workers find it beneficial in their own family lives. "It helps co-workers to grow personally. They begin to become more emotionally

aware in their own lives," Day says.

Day recalls one experience during which Validation helped a resident come back from a terrifying memory when she was imprisoned in a German concentration camp during World War II.

"I stood next to her, mirrored her movements and asked basic questions that validated the trauma that she was re-experiencing. I know that a common response would be for her rabbi to pray so I held her hand and I prayed with her in Hebrew. As I went on, she relaxed, sat there and while she was still shaking, I held her hand and started singing. Then she put her head on my arm and leaned on me," Day recalls. "I wasn't trying to calm her down, I was trying to meet her where she was. We sat there with her leaning on my shoulder for five minutes. It was a privilege." 🐾

For more tips on interacting with a loved one with dementia, visit the Country Meadows website at www.CountryMeadows.com/tip-sheet-library.



Connect with us online

Visit Country Meadows on Facebook for information, care tips, ideas and more at www.facebook.com/CountryMeadowsSeniorCare.

For information about a career with Country Meadows, visit www.facebook.com/CountryMeadowsCareers.

We look forward to interacting with you online.

Do you have a story to share?

Call our story hotline at **855-772-2734**.

From the desk of... **G. Michael Leader, President & CEO**



I'm certain you echo my sentiments as I write hooray for spring! It's been a long, hard winter and all of us look forward to the warmth and colors brought on by a season of renewal. This time of year is bittersweet for me as my mother's birthday was on April 7, and we lost Dad last May.

As we near the anniversary of Dad's passing, he would be proud that we continue to move forward to fulfill his vision to serve seniors with dignity and respect, and provide purpose and independence. He was a great role model; he worked until age 95, keeping purpose in his life right to the end. Our family misses Mom and Dad every day, and we continue to explore ways to preserve their memories by giving back to the community. I am moved that we honor Mother every April by encouraging Random Acts of Kindness. (Please see the article about this initiative on page 4.)

Mom and Dad founded our organizations, and the senior care field continues to change rapidly due, in part, to the Affordable Care Act and seniors coming to us with higher medical needs. Our leadership team has responded by creating clinical models for our nurses and personal care assistants. A main goal is to keep residents from going to the hospital for services that our communities can provide right on campus. Our hope is that these efforts also will reduce return trips to the hospital which will reduce anxiety and stress for residents and their families.

I am thrilled to write that we again placed as a Best Place to Work in Pennsylvania for the tenth time. (See article on page 12.) We continue to work to recruit dedicated co-workers who will become long-term members of our team. In fact, we have formed a task force to examine various

levels of human resources including co-worker retention and satisfaction, education and training, orientation, and compensation and benefits, to make sure our policies are up to date and competitive, and to create new ways to support co-workers.

Also on the good news front, thanks to our co-workers' hard work, our organizations have recovered from financial challenges brought on by the great recession. We continue to enjoy a higher occupancy rate than most in our field and as a result, are able to develop and maintain innovative programs for seniors with memory loss, a vibrant program for community life activities, as well as provide opportunities for purposeful service. Basically, we strive to make life better for residents as well as co-workers.

As we begin to see members of the next generation of seniors moving in, we notice different expectations than those of the Greatest Generation. In response, every campus has received refurbishments and upgrades from remodeling bathrooms and hallways, to replacing windows and enhancing beauty shops. Our goal is to keep our campuses modern and attractive for our customers. You will continue to see improvements for several years.

Recognizing that food is one of life's pleasures, we continue to improve our residents' dining experience to move toward made-to-order restaurant-style cooking, giving residents more choices. The aforementioned renovations include upgrading our kitchens and dining spaces to accommodate this process.

As I hope you will agree, these are exciting times at Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community. If you have suggestions to improve life on any of our campuses, please contact me directly at 717.533.2474, or via email at MLeader@CountryMeadows.com. Thank you for choosing Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community. We're happy to have you as part of our family. 🍷



Members of Country Meadows' leadership team, along with project partners, cut a ribbon to celebrate the Leader Heights' campus renovation project.

Finished in February, the year-long construction project added a new bistro restaurant, covered entrance, piano lounge, dining room and upgrades throughout the community.

Inside:

- 🌀 Resident's art on display
- 🌀 Generosity travels overseas
- 🌀 Chaplain heads international organization



*Senior Vice President of Operations
Michelle Hamilton accepts Country
Meadows' Best Places to Work in PA
honor plaque from Pennsylvania
Gov. Tom Corbett.*

A great place to work

We may sound like a broken record, but the music is beautiful. Once again, Country Meadows was selected as a Best Place to Work in Pennsylvania.

The organization ranked #14 in 2013, and has been chosen as a Best Place to Work 10 times.

"We are very blessed to have such an exceptional group of co-workers who are, in my opinion, some of the best in our profession," says Michael Leader, president and CEO. "We value our co-workers and I am grateful and humbled that once again, Country Meadows co-workers value their workplace."

Leader adds, "We strive to support co-workers in a variety of ways including the Co-Worker Foundation that provides grants to co-workers experiencing a financial emergency."

Best Places to Work in PA was designed to identify, recognize and honor the best places of employment in Pennsylvania, benefiting the state's economy, its workforce and businesses.

Companies from across the state entered the two-part process to determine the 100 Best Places to Work in PA. The first part consisted of evaluating each nominated company's workplace policies, practices, philosophy, systems and demographics. The second part consisted of an employee survey to measure the employee experience. The combined scores determined the top companies and the final ranking. 🌀

Celebrating 10 years as a

BEST PLACES
to work in **PA** 2013