



# Journeys

A Newsletter for Residents, Families and Friends.

2017 – Issue 1

## Fine Art Miracle

*Program reaches residents with dementia in new ways*

The “mother tone” in the resident’s voice stops co-worker Maureen Sirianni cold in her tracks. The woman, who does not speak due to advanced dementia, is having a loving discussion with three stuffed bears. As she listens, Sirianni, Connections memory support manager at Country Meadows of South Hills near

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## Bloodhounds search for “missing” residents

It is a call feared by anyone who cares for a loved one with Alzheimer’s disease: that person is missing. Recently that call was made for two “missing” residents during the dinner hour at Country Meadows of York. Thankfully it was just a drill.

The residents volunteered to participate in a missing person simulation with handlers and bloodhound dogs from Summit Search and Rescue based in Lewisberry, Pa. The non-profit agency has bloodhounds trained in “man-trailing” and has assisted law enforcement with missing persons and criminal cases. Drills such as the one at Country Meadows provide opportunities to keep search and rescue dogs’ skills sharp.

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K-9 Briggs visits with resident **Wilda Laughman, 87**, after “finding” her during a training session.  
Photo Credit: John A. Pavoncello/The York Dispatch



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- 🕒 Resident schools medical students on reality of aging
- 🕒 Power of the written word bonds duo

  
**COUNTRY MEADOWS**  
RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

  
**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,  
Forks, 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.

Country Meadows and Ecumenical  
Retirement Community do 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 or Ecumenical  
Retirement Community, can be  
cared for legally and responsibly.



## Bloodhounds search...continued from front page



York resident **Mary Knitter**, 84, shares a kiss with K-9 Bodhi after being found during a missing persons drill. Photo Credit: John A. Pavoncello/The York Dispatch

Today one in nine people age 65 and older is living with Alzheimer's disease, and that number is expected to triple by 2050. It is a sad reality that as the number skyrockets, community agencies need to hone skills to provide safe care as well as appropriate emergency services.

The dogs take turns participating in multiple drills to seek the residents. To begin the search, each dog sniffs an item belonging to the missing person. Immediately the dog is on the trail.

"The average person loses 40,000 skin cells each minute," shares Terri Heck, who with her husband, Jim, operates Summit Search and Rescue. "That scent leads the dog along the trail someone took."

Summit Search and Rescue bloodhounds Briggs and Bodhi, along with Lt. Lou from the York County Sheriff's Department, know when it is time to go to work. The handler puts the dog's work vest on the animal and tells him/her to go to work. "She's not a dog now," says Jim Heck after K-9 Briggs sniffs a resident's item. "Now she has a job to do."



*To read a complete version of the story and check out news articles and TV coverage from the drill, visit our website at [CountryMeadows.com/bloodhound](http://CountryMeadows.com/bloodhound).*

## Visit us online!

Do you like reading stories about our residents, like the ones in this newsletter? Are you or is someone you know looking for tips and information about senior care concerns?

Check out the Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community websites to visit our advice libraries, read helpful articles on our blog and learn more about our amazing residents in our story bank. **CountryMeadows.com; EcumenicalRetirement.org**

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

For information about work-life advice or a career with Country Meadows, visit **Facebook.com/CountryMeadowsCareers**.

We look forward to interacting with you online.



# Veterans tribute unites old friends

It is a small world, after all. And Forks in Easton campus residents Dorothy Eck and her late husband, Paul, were reminded of that fact.

The charming couple moved into the brand new Country Meadows of Forks in Easton when it opened last July. For Dorothy Eck, this move was a long time coming. "I'd wanted to move to [a senior community] for years," she says. "When we found out about this location, we crunched the numbers, and it was very feasible. I was bound and determined to move."

Moving is not new for the Ecks. As a textile mill manager, Mr. Eck's job required the couple to move frequently, and they set up house in South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia and several locations in Pennsylvania.

Despite the many new addresses, an old friend always managed to track down the couple. "Our son was killed in 1977, and he had a very, very good friend since high school," shares Mrs. Eck. "This friend tracked us down everywhere we went."

By the time the couple had moved to Country Meadows, the friend lost touch. But a twist of fate united them yet again. "He was driving past [the campus] one day when he saw a veteran's banner with Paul's name on it. Right away he called the front desk, gave his phone number, and I called him," says Eck, adding that the friend was thrilled he found the couple. "He was an only child, and his mother died when he was very young. We were like his second set of parents," she adds.



New residents **Dorothy** and **Paul Eck** enjoy a champagne mimosa on move-in day at Country Meadows of Forks in Easton.

The veteran's banner he saw is part of a tribute at every Country Meadows campus and Ecumenical Retirement Community. In honor of Veterans Day each November, the organizations create signs which are placed at the entrance to every community listing the respective campus' residents who are veterans.

Sadly, the friends were unable to visit before Mr. Eck passed away Dec. 27 but were reunited at the funeral. "He's a great guy. He goes to the cemetery to make sure everything is okay at my son's [grave] and he was able to attend Paul's funeral. He's been a very good friend through the years."

Since her husband's death, Eck is happy she lives in a retirement community. "I am such a scaredy cat. When I lived in a house and I'd go home and he wouldn't be there, I'd have to look under all the beds, open all the closets, check the garage ten times," she says. "I think he knew that he wasn't going to make it and I wanted to move, and I am so happy here."

The Ecks' daughter, Peggy Prentiss, enjoys peace of mind knowing her mother is safe, comfortable

and among friends. "The staff is all so nice and friendly. That must be a pre-requisite here to getting a job; you have to be nice!" she laughs. "They would do anything for the residents. Anything."

Eck feels like she is at home, and her neighbor of 16 years also now resides at Country Meadows. "We both just love it here," she says. "We were next door neighbors and good friends, and now we're neighbors again."



This veterans tribute sign posted at Country Meadows of Forks helped reunite old friends.

# Resident helps medical students understand challenges that come with aging

Most of us agree that one of the most important traits a good physician needs is a kind bedside manner. But how does one teach understanding and empathy?

Recently 103-year-old Country Meadows of Hershey resident Alma Bobb took on the role of “teacher” as she shared her first-hand knowledge of aging with medical students at Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey.

As part of the humanities curriculum for first-year medical students, Dr. Dennis Gingrich, a family physician and physician educator at Penn State College of Medicine, invited Bobb and two other seniors to meet with his students.

After showing students several video clips of “stereotypical” seniors, Gingrich’s special guests spoke about their experiences and answered students’ questions. This invaluable lesson teaches aspiring medical professionals to interact with their future patients regardless of age.

Bobb confidently addressed students in the packed lecture room with her bright, hazel-green eyes and a contagious smile which reveal her positive attitude and support her mantra, “Don’t be afraid of age.” She walks easily without assistance, crediting her youthful gait to many years of dance study as a child and the professional dance career that took her to Europe as a young adult in the 1930s.

“I think Alma is such a delightful surprise for anyone who encounters her. She shows our medical students what is possible for their patients if they set high expectations and work together,” says Gingrich. “The more Alma shares of herself, the more people can see the possibilities for aging gracefully and successfully.”

Using her training as a performer, Alma rehearsed her hand-written speech called “My Ode to Aging,” several times in advance. She relied on her notes for the presentation, she explained to her audience, because forgetfulness is one of those things that happens during the aging process.



**Alma Bobb, 103,** joins Dr. Dennis Gingrich to share her insights on aging with first-year medical students from Penn State College of Medicine.

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Bobb suggested students consider the basics of their patients' life experiences because a person's family, economic and educational environment, whether he or she has siblings and even birth order help shape a person and his/her needs.

Noting that becoming old is a good fortune that includes ups and downs, she shared the two main events that changed the course of her adult life: losing her spouse in 1982 and giving up driving, which she did voluntarily at age 90. Among the "ups" that help her sustain her current lifestyle are good eyesight which allows her to continue reading, a love she shared with her father, and being able to show hospitality, as her mother taught her.

She told the students that she continues to lead a fulfilling life and continues to travel, typically by train.

She believes that part of her longevity is the result of her family genetics and some life choices. Her diet has never been too restrictive, she eats what she enjoys not necessarily what she believes is good for her, and she has never smoked.

Gingrich suspects that her attitude plays a big role, too. "Attitude makes a big difference in a person's life because it impacts how they handle problems as they arise," he says.

Gingrich says the session on aging is one of the most popular lectures of the semester with the potential for high impact, especially on students who may have little or no experience with older relatives or friends.

"Most of these students have not had a lot of patient care experience and are at a very formative stage in their career," says Gingrich. "Hearing from Alma, a totally inspiring speaker who has an interesting life and exemplifies the best of how to age successfully, can impact how they work with and treat older patients to help aging be a very positive and satisfying part of life."

# Centenarian shows off his first Christmas gift

When Joe Koch celebrated Christmas in 1917, at one year old, his parents gave him a toy train.

Now, 99 years later, he still has that gift.

"This was my Christmas present when I was one," says Koch as he holds the small metal train. "I put a string on the front and pulled it around."

While he doesn't recall playing with the train, he does remember his father reminiscing about it. This past Christmas, Koch again received the toy train as a gift, but this time from his son.

"My son saw it, and he thought it would be a good thing for me to have [at Country Meadows.] He put it in a box and gave it to me. He thought people would like to look at it," he says, adding that his neighbors are curious about the toy's value.

Koch is curious, too, but has never had it appraised. "I tried to get some missing parts to repair the train but couldn't find them," he says. "My parents were from Germany, and I don't know if they brought it with them from over there or where they got it."

Koch, who turned 100 years old Nov. 5, spent his career at Bethlehem Steel. He attributes his longevity to healthy living. He says, "All my life I behaved myself. I didn't drink to excess, didn't smoke and I did a lot of walking. I guess I did something right."



**Joe Koch** received this toy train for Christmas 99 years ago, when he was just one year old.



# Life gets better.® at Country Meadows and



Country Meadows of Allentown residents do everything big. Check out their homemade version of giant KERPLUNK™!

Timing is everything. Residents and co-workers from our York campus held a giant bake and craft sale the day before Thanksgiving to benefit the Alzheimer's Association. Visitors could purchase cupcakes, cookies, pies, cakes and many other delicious items. The sale raised more than \$1,000.



At every Country Meadows campus and Ecumenical Retirement Community, co-workers were extra busy on Election Day shuttling residents to local polling locations.

Hershey resident Charles just turned 100 years young and has voted in every election for the last 80 years.



Country Meadows of Forks in Easton residents joined Executive Director of Spiritual Life Howard West, an avid birder, for a nature and birding walk through local wildlife areas. The explorers enjoyed seeing beautiful birds and scenery.



# and Ecumenical Retirement Community

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Residents from Country Meadows of Wyomissing enjoyed an outing to the Wolf Sanctuary of Pennsylvania, located near Lititz. The visitors enjoyed learning about wolves and seeing the animals up close.

Residents of Country Meadows in Mechanicsburg modeled their favorite outfits for a Fashionista Style Show. Each model selected the ensemble he/she wore down the runway. The goal was simply to have fun!

A couple of adorable pooches tied the knot at Country Meadows of South Hills near Pittsburgh.





# Duo bonds over writing and poetry

Dorothy Jacobs, 93, a former English teacher, loves to write letters and poetry. A resident at Country Meadows of Leader Heights, Jacobs corresponds with friends, family members and former students and colleagues. But health issues have robbed her ability to hold and use a pencil.

That's when she turned to Country Meadows At Home.

"I was specifically hired to be her corresponding secretary," says Country Meadows At Home Care Associate Wanda Boone. "Every time we are together we work on some kind of correspondence. I write down Dorothy's voice and the words she wants to share in her letters. We share a lot of happy memories and fun, silly stories."

Jacobs taught English at Ridgeway and Shippensburg High Schools, both in

Pennsylvania. Last year some of her former students held 50- and 60-year class reunions. "They shared Dorothy's mailing address in case anyone wanted to correspond with her and several have," says Boone, who adds that Jacobs has a drawer filled with cards of appreciation from former student teachers and stories of how she touched their lives.

Jacobs is surprised at how many of her former students remembered her and wrote her notes. "I was overwhelmed. I felt so proud of them and honored they would care to write to me," she says explaining that she always writes back. "It's important to write to people to let them know we're thinking of them."

Writing also can serve as a form of therapy from time to time and Jacobs enjoys writing poetry. She has published a collection of poems *"After the*

*Rain,"* which features her work, including poems she wrote while her late husband struggled with Alzheimer's disease. (Read one of her poems, "The Rain Falls," on page 9.)

Working with Jacobs has awoken Boone's inner writer. As a home care associate, Boone's typical workday is spent helping residents get dressed for the day, driving them to medical appointments and providing medication reminders. With Jacobs, she enjoys writing and reading poetry—another one of Jacobs' loves. She even completes "writing assignments" and is composing poems of her own.

"She is a good student—she is eager to learn," says Jacobs. "We make a good team."

The women were thrilled when they found a connection they shared. Jacobs was an 11th grade English teacher at Shippensburg High School at the same time Boone was a student. "I never had her for English, but she is in my yearbook!" laughs Boone.

Over the holidays, the duo wrote more than 35 holiday cards for friends and family as well as greetings for Halloween and Thanksgiving. Their next project is a cookbook using Jacobs' recipes.

Jacobs is delighted that her "secretary" has become a good friend. "She's closer to me than some of my family," she says.

Boone enjoys her work and says, "I love my job. I meet the most special people and learn a lot about their lives. It doesn't seem like I'm Dorothy's caregiver. We're friends."



**Wanda Boone and Dorothy Jacobs** enjoy their time together, mostly spent writing letters and reading poetry.



To read more of Dorothy Jacob's poems, visit [CountryMeadows.com/Jacobs-poetry](http://CountryMeadows.com/Jacobs-poetry).



Pittsburgh, realizes the resident is talking to her three children to resolve a family situation. For a moment, the mother, who is typically locked deep within symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, emerges and finds her voice.

"That's very powerful," says Sirianni. "You don't stop being a mother just because you have a challenge with memory. It doesn't take away your role in life. So to see her have that moment was very humbling for me."

The moment occurred during a pilot series of multi-sensory sessions for residents with Alzheimer's disease and advanced dementia held at Country Meadows. Laughter, conversations, increased alertness, relaxation, stronger gait, recognition of the instructor and easier transitions to the next activity were among other promising results observed.

The pilot program is provided by Fine Art Miracles, Inc. (FAM), supported by grants from the Jewish Health Care Foundation and the Buhl Foundation. Tess Lojacono, CEO of FAM, credits Sirianni with helping her rethink programming for memory care residents and providing an opportunity to test the result.

"Maureen is one of those people who doesn't say 'no.' She says 'how can we make it work better?'" says Lojacono.

After noticing that memory care residents didn't respond to traditional art therapy sessions for seniors, Lojacono spoke to Sirianni about her desire to create a more beneficial program. Rather than try to draw them into her world, she wanted to put the focus on entering their world through multi-sensory engagement. Through research and observation, Lojacono found a variety of tools to test, and Sirianni invited her to bring them to



Country Meadows residents and family members participate in the Fine Art Miracle program.

Country Meadows. As they met, two memory care residents came into the room and took interest in the items on the table.

"I love to share ideas and create new opportunities," says Sirianni, who has worked in memory care for 21 years. "I feel very fortunate that at Country Meadows, we are constantly looking for new ways to reach our residents, and I'm given the freedom and encouraged to be creative with that."

Sirianni and Lojacono presented the pilot program's findings at a recent Alzheimer's Association conference, and Lojacono now offers the multi-sensory sessions as a regular part of her FAM programming.

"Family members are really drawn to this because they can see their loved one becomes engaged. One family member said, 'I feel like I have my mother back for this hour.' I've also heard them say 'it's great to see her smile,' or 'hear him speak,'" says Sirianni. "It gives family members a new way to interact with their loved one."



To read the complete story, visit [CountryMeadows.com/Miracle](http://CountryMeadows.com/Miracle).

## "THE RAIN FALLS

### Alzheimer's: Thief of the mind"

By Dorothy Jacobs

Like the ticking of a clock  
that takes life by small degrees,  
the rain falls in syncopated drops  
through the vigil that I keep  
as you sleep-  
unaware that quietly, slowly,  
stealthily,

your mind is being purloined  
of memory, reality, reason-  
like the ticking of a clock,  
the rain falls in syncopated drops  
through the vigil that I keep-  
and I weep.





**Vera Cardimona**, right, enjoyed portraying “the boss” for the photo shoot representing the 1990s.

# Residents don costumes from eras past to **raise** money for Alzheimer’s **research**

A group of residents at Country Meadows of Hershey can add “calendar model” to their list of accomplishments.

To raise money for the Alzheimer’s Association, co-workers came up with the idea to create a calendar featuring residents sporting attire from different eras in time.

June highlights residents in gangster and flapper gear from the 1920s, while August features peace-loving hippies.

Resident Helen Barhyte enjoyed the experience. “They asked me to do it. It sounded like fun, and I had a good time,” she says. “It gives you something to get out and do and be with other people, socializing. It was a good day out. It was fun.”

“Our goals were to fundraise for Alzheimer’s in a way that would be memorable and create memories for our residents,” says Samantha Simmons, director of Community Life. “It was a special day helping our residents feel glamorous. We all have those moments like when you go to the prom or your wedding day. We wanted to recreate that special feeling.”

Simmons spearheaded the project along with Pathways Manager Amber Kuhn and Connections

Club Coordinator Amy Stoner. The trio managed and directed the calendar project, and resident Georgann Miller, who worked on a Philadelphia children’s show as a youngster, enjoyed the experience. “Socializing was the best part of the day. I was glad I was involved, and I appreciate the hard work that went into it,” she says.

Resident Vera Cardimona says the calendar had a special meaning. She tears up as she shares that she lost her brother to Alzheimer’s disease. For that reason she is thrilled the money raised is going to benefit Alzheimer’s research. She adds that she enjoyed her photo shoot. “I liked the excitement when they dressed me up. It was a lot of fun. We need excitement!”

Borrowing costumes from Hershey Area Playhouse and Masquerade Costuming, Kuhn says residents were matched with costumes based on personalities, hobbies and sizing. She adds the excitement wasn’t limited to the residents who participated. “Once we started this concept, everything from figuring out costumes to getting our first proofs, the buzz kept going. I can’t name another activity we’ve done at this campus that has had this much buzz for such a long time

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and brought so much joy, for such an extended period of time," she says.

Kuhn and Simmons are quick to note that the calendar is a success because of the extraordinary team effort made by co-workers including Executive Director of Risk & Safety Mike Fure who handled graphic design, Employment Specialist Laura McGee who shared her photography expertise, Fitness Coordinator Shari Pichini for costumes along with several other co-workers.

Barhyte recalls that, at first, she didn't want to give up her home and move to Country Meadows three years ago. Her daughter's concerns about her living alone and using stairs prompted her to move. Now she's made new friends and enjoys fun activities, such as the calendar shoot. "You know you're not alone and there's always someone there for you. That's great."



**The calendar project raised more than \$1,700 for the Alzheimer's Association.**



**Resident Georgann Miller** dons her Western era outfit sitting on a whiskey barrel.

## From the desk of...

**G. Michael Leader,**  
**President & CEO**

*D*uring much of the past 30 years, the pace of change in the senior living profession has been moderate. Prior to 1980, only nursing homes were licensed to provide health care for those needing skilled care. In the early 1980s, assisted living, known as personal care in Pennsylvania, became an alternate level of support for persons needing some assistance with activities of daily living, but not at the level of a skilled nursing home.

It wasn't until 2007 that Pennsylvania's legislature approved licensure of assisted living residences in the Commonwealth. While looking very much like personal care communities, they are permitted to offer several supplemental skilled nursing services ordinarily not available in personal care. Country Meadows of Forks, which opened in July near Easton, is our first licensed assisted living community in Pennsylvania. (Country Meadows of Frederick in Maryland, also is licensed for assisted living.)

The moderate rate of change during the first 30 years of our industry picked up speed quickly with passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. Much of the change has occurred around us rather than within personal care or assisted living. Many independent hospitals have merged into multi-unit "health systems" like Allegheny Health Network in Pittsburgh, St. Luke's University Health Network in Bethlehem and Geisinger Health System in central Pennsylvania.

Ostensibly these mergers have resulted from new payment systems like Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), bundled payment and Medicare Advantage plans. Hospitals have concluded that size matters because it permits them to provide more specialized care while improving operational efficiency.

Two aspects of the Affordable Care Act have touched us at Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community. First, Medicare has imposed financial penalties on hospitals for readmissions within 30 days. If a Country Meadows or Ecumenical Retirement Community resident is readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge, the hospital must return some of its reimbursement for care of that patient to Medicare. (This applies only to patients with certain conditions like heart attack or congestive heart failure.) Consequently, hospitals want to know our organization's readmission rates, which, by the way, are very low among personal care communities. For our part, we have designed staff training and developed new programs to monitor and help residents better

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manage these conditions to reduce return trips to hospitals.

Second, Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community are seeking to join independent networks of health care providers serving seniors. These networks typically include a wide range of service levels from acute care hospitals to personal care and skilled nursing to rehabilitation therapies. The goal is to do more to place seniors needing care at the right level at the right time with the least amount of confusion.

Much about these changes takes place behind the scenes and is not apparent to our customers and their families. Nevertheless, I want to assure you that we are always on the lookout for better and less costly ways to serve your needs and provide a higher level of customer service. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have comments or questions about what's been happening in our profession.

## Residents or mannequins?

*W*ant a good laugh? Visit the Country Meadows website to watch a group of residents from our Forks campus participate in the mannequin challenge.

The mannequin challenge is a viral internet video trend where people remain frozen in action like mannequins while a moving camera films them. The challenge is popular on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.



Check it out at [CountryMeadows.com/Mannequin](https://CountryMeadows.com/Mannequin).