

Journeys

A Newsletter for Residents, Families and Friends.

2017 – Issue 2



Winter art contest spreads warm wishes

Artistic talent abounds at Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community.

Every year the Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community Holiday Card Art Contest invites residents to submit their artwork that reflects the winter holidays and/or the beauty of the holiday season. The winning

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It's Never Too Late for Love

The newlyweds sway slowly to the music. Looking into each other's eyes, they sing the words to Irving Berlin's "Always," the song they chose for their first dance. As they finish the last refrain,

"Not for just an hour,
Not for just a day,
Not for just a year,
But always," their lips meet for another kiss.

Like any bride and groom, they are giddy with love and looking forward to sharing the next chapter in their lives. But for Jane Zaffiro, 92, and Ervin "Erv" Walcheske, 89, residents at Country Meadows of Wyomissing, that chapter is beginning a little later in life. As Zaffiro says, "It's never too late for love."

Their story began in January when Walcheske noticed Zaffiro in the dining room shortly after she arrived at Country Meadows of Wyomissing.

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Newlyweds
Jane Zaffiro and
Erv Walcheske
enjoy a moment
with Community
Life Coordinator
Amber Long.

Inside this issue:

- 🕒 No kidding – goat yoga
- 🕒 Foundation helps co-workers in financial crisis


COUNTRY MEADOWS
RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES


Ecumenical Retirement
COMMUNITY



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, 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.



Downward dog, upward goat

Set amongst fields of lavender at Mad Lavender Farm in Milford, NJ, hummingbirds feast on wild flowers, roosters greet the morning, and farm guests gather to find inner peace, breathe deeply and mingle with Dwarf Nigerian goats.

Seniors from Country Meadows of Forks in Easton joined the class to enjoy a relaxed morning participating in a craze that is sweeping America...goat yoga!

"Yoga is about expansion: expansion of what we expect in our lives and opening the heart, and goats are good at that," says Adrienne Crombie, farm co-owner.

Curious goats wander throughout the class space, interacting with guests. It brings a light, joyful energy to the already tranquil experience. It's not the most quiet yoga class, but definitely the most memorable.

"It was very different. I was raised around animals, but I didn't have them climbing on my body," laughs Country Meadows resident, Barbara Vones, 81. "It was a very good session, and I enjoyed it!"

Country Meadows of Forks Director of Community Life, Brenda Kennedy, arranged the outing for residents. "Studies have found that connecting with nature, animals and movement improves cognitive skills," she says, adding, "goats and yoga seem to be the perfect pairing!"

At 93 years young, Country Meadows resident Florence Komisar loved the interaction. "It was lovely, and I love the goats. They are very gentle and very sweet."

The class included easy to moderate poses, breath work and meditation connecting participants to the earth and each other in celebration of all living things.

Vones takes yoga class every week at Country Meadows and, as a widow, says experiences such as goat yoga make life worth living. She says, "If I stayed in my home, I would be living alone and wouldn't have

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**Country Meadows
of Forks** residents
enjoy a yoga class
with Dwarf Nigerian
goats at Mad
Lavender Farm.

"I was at lunch one day and saw her at another table," he explains. "There was an empty chair next to her, I asked to sit at the table and that's how we met." Soon they were sitting together at social events.

"As we talked, we found out we had a lot of the same interests. We both love tennis and golfing, and we were very attracted to each other," says Zaffiro. "He's a good Christian man and that's very important to me."

Soon they weren't just sitting next to each other, they were holding hands and arriving for events together. Community Life Coordinator Amber Long noticed their smiles and made sure they were seated next to each other during activities.

"They are so happy with each other. It's beautiful just to see true love still exists," says Long. "The Country Meadows slogan is true-life does get better."

"We feel the Lord brought us together," says Zaffiro, who had firmly told her granddaughter that she would only be staying at Country Meadows for one month of rehabilitation when she moved in. Walcheske moved to Country Meadows a year earlier to build upon progress he made in his recovery from a broken hip.

As Walcheske's son in-law and best man, Gary Yost, explained during the wedding toast, "When we moved Erv from Florida to Pennsylvania in 2015, our hope was that he would regain his health and strength. We worked with doctors and nurses, and it seemed for every step forward there were two steps back. Then Country Meadows said 'we think we can help,' and the rest was history. Erv regained his health and stamina, and then Jane came, and he regained his joy—that spark in his eyes and someone to look forward to seeing every day."

Zaffiro's granddaughter knew something had changed when her grandmother called after two and a half weeks to tell her she loved Country Meadows and wanted to stay. She suspects Walcheske had something to do with that. "She went from calling me daily to now rarely calling me at all," she says. "But that's a good thing. It means she's busy and happy."

As Zaffiro and Walcheske became inseparable, Zaffiro confided to Long that she hoped her beau would propose. In the meantime, Walcheske told Amber that he planned to propose.

"I was just waiting for it to happen," smiles Long.

While his daughter, Jan Yost, was visiting, Walcheske introduced her to Zaffiro and hinted that he was "very fond" of her, but Yost was surprised when Long mentioned there might be a wedding proposal soon.

"My dad called on my husband's birthday and said 'I proposed to Jane tonight.' They wanted to get married as soon as possible, but we wanted to have everyone in the family here. It's so wonderful to have a happy reason for all of us to come together," says Yost. "There was a lot of planning, and Country Meadows was just incredible, wonderful in helping us."

Yost recalls that before Zaffiro arrived, her dad participated in some activities, but now he's involved in everything.

"We just think it's wonderful," says Yost. "I feel like he's my dad again—laughing and smiling and cracking jokes. He hadn't been like that for some time, but that was my dad, and I couldn't ask for anything more."

Long noticed the change, too. "Erv used to be very impatient, but when he started hanging out with Jane, he always had a smile on his face. They are always very concerned about and looking after each other, and are very loving and caring. It's beautiful to see them open up and to see the happiness."

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Newlyweds **Jane Zaffiro** and **Erv Walcheske** enjoying the first dance at their wedding.



Fidget quilts provide outlet for restless hands



When she craves a few minutes of quiet, co-worker Robin Malloy likes to visit with residents living in the Connections Neighborhood—a secure neighborhood at Country Meadows of Hershey for residents with dementia.

“It’s always such a peaceful place,” she says. “It brings me a lot of joy to get to know the residents and hear their stories while they are still able to remember things.”

Malloy thought of the residents who have advanced memory loss when she discovered directions for making fidget quilts.

“I’m a long-arm quilter,” she says, referring to the special 12-foot sewing machine she uses to stitch quilt tops, batting and backing together. “So I was looking around for ideas to use up my fabric scraps. I saw the fidget quilts and was intrigued.”

Fidget quilts can help people who have Alzheimer’s disease and dementia cope with anxiety and restlessness. The quilts are the size of a large placemat, 20” x 24,” with zippers, buttons, laces, ribbons, keys, small toys and/or beads securely attached to the fabric to provide a focus for restless hands. The quilts typically have a theme such as farming, animals, fashion or cooking, which is carried out through pictures on the fabric and may even trigger memories. Unique textures such as burlap, vinyl, and fake fur add to the sensory experience.

After talking with Shannon Harvey, director of Country Meadows of Hershey’s Connections Neighborhood for residents with severe dementia, Malloy made a fidget quilt prototype for her to review. Based on Harvey’s feedback, Malloy created three fidget quilts for residents.

“The quilts really do help. We keep about four on hand, and the residents like to reach out and touch them as they go by,” says Harvey. “When we have residents in the latter stages of memory disease, it’s common for them to pick at buttons, grab things or engage in repetitive motions. We find it very helpful and soothing for them to spend time holding a quilt and playing with it for a while.”



Robin Malloy with one of the fidget quilts she makes for persons with Alzheimer’s disease.



To read more about Malloy’s fidget quilts, visit CountryMeadows.com/quilt.



Residents and co-workers from **Country Meadows of Leader Heights** enjoy a tour of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. The group celebrated a milestone of raising more than \$20,000 for a Weekend Backpack program to support local school children.

Residents **battle** local child hunger

“Friday afternoon until Monday morning is a long time not to eat.” Elementary School Counselor Suzanne Howe says this is true for many children in the Northeastern York School District.

When seniors from Country Meadows of Leader Heights in south York learned about hungry children living locally, they took action. Determined to be part of the solution to end students’ hunger, seniors worked with campus chaplain, the Rev. Dennis Hamsher, to find ways they could help.

Hamsher teamed with Howe to identify opportunities for residents to help needy students. Howe says that for many students, the lunch they are

served at school may be one of the only meals he/she receives all day and might have very little to eat over weekends when school is not in session. To combat this issue, the duo developed a Weekend Backpack program which provides backpacks filled with “kid-friendly” nutritious food items such as cereal, nutrition bars, apple sauce, fruit juices, pretzels and fruit cups, to students who qualify for free or reduced lunch programs.

Country Meadows residents embraced the program, raising funds by selling homemade candy, baked goods, flowers and holiday luminaries. They’ve also held book sales, festivals, fine dining events, fashion shows and many other fundraising activities. Now, six years later, residents

have marked a milestone of raising more than \$20,000 to purchase food to fill backpacks.

According to Hamsher, “It all began by sharing a need with the seniors and then getting out of the way and letting them show what they can do.”

It’s been a lot of hard work, but residents say it’s worth it.

“It is mind-boggling. I never realized that we sold that much. Some days the amount of money we raised was \$200 or \$300, and I thought, ‘what a day,’” shares resident Ginny Morris, “I never dreamed it would amount to such a high amount. I was sort of taken back.”

No school district funding is used to support the program, and all money raised is

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Life gets better.® at Country Meadows and

Country Meadows of Bethlehem residents Rodney Christman, Leonard Siegfried and Charles Spallitta, enjoyed a visit to the Bethlehem Steel exhibit at the National Museum of Industrial History. The trip brought back memories for the trio who all worked at Bethlehem Steel. Don't look down!



Country Meadows of Frederick residents enjoyed a nature walk and pontoon boat tour at Little Seneca Lake in Black Hill Regional Park. The group learned about aquatic life and enjoyed a tour with a naturalist guide spending time in nature.



Country Meadows of Allentown celebrated Gorgeous Grandma Day by honoring all the gorgeous grandmothers who reside on the campus. The ladies were treated to a day of pampering in the campus beauty salon followed by a social event.



A beagle puppy named Elliott brightens the day for everyone at Country Meadows of Forks in Easton. In addition to sharing kisses and love with residents, co-workers and visitors, Elliott inspires everyone he meets. Elliott is blind; he was born without eyes. He doesn't let his disability get him down and spends his days exploring every nook and cranny of the Forks campus. A typical dog, Elliott loves running, playing and just being spoiled by his huge extended family.



and Ecumenical Retirement Community

Veterans Day



More than 100 people gathered in the Rose Room at Country Meadows of Hershey to honor veterans. The "Honoring our Heroes" program featured patriotic songs, dancing and a speech from Pennsylvania state Rep. Tom Mehaffie, who provided a certificate and pin for each resident.

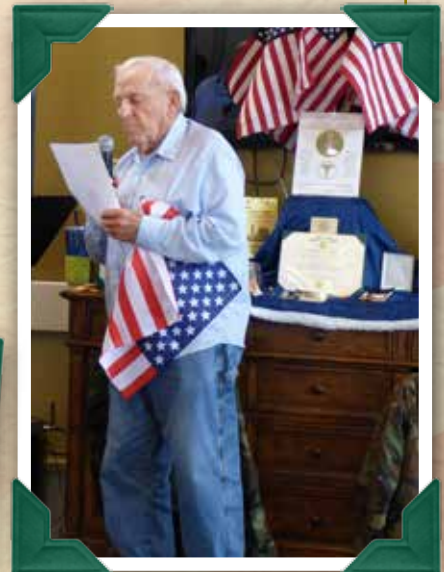


Veterans who live at Country Meadows of Lancaster enjoyed a social with members of the local American Legion. The groups enjoyed the day so much they are planning regular get-togethers.

Country of York celebrated Veterans Day with a show. Co-workers set up the rotunda to look like an army barracks and Director of Wellness, Rodney Glass—a 27-year veteran—provided the military gear.

◀ Co-workers re-enact the Iwo Jima military statue in Washington, DC, along with resident and veteran Bob Bush, 100, wearing his military uniform from World War II.

➤ York resident and World War II veteran Irv Baughman, pays tribute to comedian Bob Hope's one liner jokes.



Designers create warm and beautiful surroundings

A crowd gathers around the bar in the library during happy hour. In the cozy lobby, a fire glows in the stone fireplace, and small groups of friends can be found chatting or playing a game while enjoying music from a baby grand piano.

Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community work hard to create welcoming environments like this—places where people feel very much at home. That feeling is part of the experiential interior design orchestrated by the organizations' own design team comprised of three interior designers.

"Everything is planned with our residents in mind and how they will use and experience the spaces. It's design that encourages a lifestyle that supports our residents' wellness and well-being," explains Susan Seiple, senior design coordinator.

Experiential interior design goes beyond style and function to influence the way a person feels

about and interacts with a space. The design team uses color, fabric, textures, furniture, accessories and finishes to create a look and feel that inspires warmth, activity, friendship and community.

The team is charged with interior design from concept to completion for renovations as well as new buildings, selecting attractive carpeting, draperies, furniture, plants and décor; nearly every item in each building was selected by a team member.

"We really work well as a team. We set a vision, divide the work and plan different areas separately," says Seiple. "It's really so well integrated that you can't tell who did what."



To read more how design is used to create attractive, functional retirement communities, visit CountryMeadows.com/design.



Renovations and new construction such as this dining room at **Country Meadows of Allentown**, utilize modern design techniques and elegant touches in concert with ergonomic features, to capture a warm environment while providing function for residents to move about the community.



Foundation provides help for co-worker emergencies

Donations can be made to the Co-worker Foundation by sending contributions to:

Co-worker Foundation
Country Meadows Home Office
830 Cherry Drive
Hershey, PA 17033.



The **Rev. Norma Llewellyn**, left, worked with **Avril Toppin** to apply for a grant through the Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community Co-worker Foundation to help Toppin move to a safe location.

*A*vril Toppin, 60, a co-worker at Ecumenical Retirement Community, can sleep at night again. She is thankful for the Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community Co-Worker Foundation and its donors for giving her peace of mind.

Shortly after moving into a new apartment with her 89-year-old mother, Toppin noticed noise coming from the apartment above them. The floors creaked beneath the feet of a boisterous teenager who was on the move late into the night. Their neighbors smoked heavily through the day, and the fumes seeped through the vents, sickening Toppin's mother.

When Toppin raised her concerns to the apartment complex managers, they suggested that she write a letter to her neighbor. Toppin wrote three different letters, but

nothing changed.

"We couldn't get our sleep at night, and I was concerned for my mom during the day. Now that my neighbors knew I was complaining, I was concerned for her safety," she says. "I told her not to answer the door. To avoid the smoke, she had stay in her room all day."

When Toppin found another apartment to rent, the apartment managers told her it would cost \$2,000 to break her lease. "I didn't have \$2,000, and I had no idea how to get it, and also pay my security deposit and rent at a new place."

Toppin's sister, who also works at Ecumenical Retirement Community, reminded her about the Co-Worker Foundation, which provides grants for co-

workers experiencing a financial emergency. Funded by donations from the Leader family, residents and their family members, grants have been awarded to co-workers to avoid eviction, maintain utility service, recover from fires and floods, and cope with many other unexpected emergencies. The Co-Worker Foundation has provided more than \$256,000 to help more than 160 co-workers since its creation in 2010.

"The Leader family established the foundation to help co-workers so they don't have to worry about their home life when they are taking care of our residents," says Brandi Levenduski, executive director of employee relations and chair of the foundation. "Emergencies happen sometimes and when co-workers know they have somewhere to turn, they can keep their focus on taking great care of our residents."

"I want other co-workers, who may find themselves in a position like me, to know there's help, and they don't have to feel ashamed to ask. We all come up short sometimes, but this is something good [Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community] does for co-workers, and I'm so thankful," says Toppin.



To learn more about the Co-Worker Foundation, visit CountryMeadows.com/Foundation.



Country Meadows residents peruse the many, many thank you notes and drawings from Northeastern York School District students who participate in the Weekend Backpack program.

forwarded to the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank where it is placed in a specific fund used to distribute food to fill the backpacks.

Since starting the program in 2011 at York Haven Elementary School, the number of children served by the program has grown. Originally offered in just one elementary school, the program has expanded to support five schools in the district and provides backpacks to more than 200 students, with more than 550 children impacted by

the program. Last year more than 2,600 backpacks were distributed to needy families.

"I was a nurse for 40 years, so it just came naturally for me to help people, and I'm also a Christian," says Morris. "It means everything. I never knew there was so much hunger in our area."

The children receiving the food are thankful. One child wrote in a note, "Thank you for giving us the food that we never ate before. We try everything that [we get]."

"This would not have been possible without the connection with our dedicated residents," says Hamsher. "Feeding children to give them the opportunity to be healthy, grow strong, be ready to learn and to not be hungry, is no small task."

To mark their fundraising milestone, residents were treated to a tour of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank which organizes and distributes the food for the backpack program. The group also was honored by administrators at the Northeastern York School District.

Howe says "I cannot thank you enough for all the things you do to make this possible. It makes me think when I retire I've got a bar set very high because you have shown that retirement doesn't mean you quit."

President & CEO, Michael Leader, echoes Howe's sentiments as he congratulates the residents. "Thank you. You've all been involved in charitable and religious organizations where you have served your fellow man in the community. When you move into a retirement community, it doesn't mean you stop doing that. I commend all of you for continuing to support others."

Never too late...continued from page 3

Zaffiro's granddaughter says at first her young children were skeptical, not wanting to see their great-grandmother sharing a kiss with Walcheske when they visited her, but now they love seeing the couple together. She says, "My husband and I joke that they are like teenagers reliving that first young love. She's over the moon. She's so happy, and that's our main goal."

"It's nice to share the day with so many people," said Walcheske shortly before the ceremony. "All the caregivers are very nice people, and we're extremely happy to see so many family members here."

Co-worker Natassja Torres says, "It's beautiful, emotional, to know that at any age you can find love."

entry is used in the design of the organizations' annual holiday card.

Now in its sixth year, the 2017 contest broke records with more than 220 entries.

"I was overcome when I saw all the wonderful paintings, collages and projects laid out together in the same room," says Michael Leader, president & CEO. "The amount of talent in our communities is absolutely amazing."

Ultimately "The Winter Countryside," painted by Frederick resident Dorothy Norris, was selected as the winner, with 10 entries earning finalist honors.

To encourage residents to enter, Community Life teams at every campus held special events including Christmas in July, art classes and art shows.

"It is wonderful to see that so many of our residents participate in hobbies like painting and other artwork," notes Leader. "Really, any one of the entries would make a beautiful holiday card. We spent a lot of time admiring every entry."

In addition to cards, the winning and finalist entries are featured on a holiday poster displayed at every campus. Residents are encouraged to start work on their 2018 entries.



Visit CountryMeadows.com/art2017 to see the finalist entries.



From the desk of...

G. Michael Leader,
President & CEO

Winter is here, and it can be a mixed bag for everyone. There is excitement with the holidays and testing our discipline with New Year's resolutions.

(If you are like me, you probably dust off an old one, like getting more exercise or eating healthier, and hope you can stick to it.)

But shorter days, treacherous walking and driving in ice and snow leave some of us depressed and/or housebound. That situation leads me to the topic of "socialization."

Socialization, the activity of mixing socially with others, is fundamental to being human. When our social circle narrows, whether due to loss of our spouse, friends moving away or simply because of winter weather, it can leave us in a depressed state.

I believe the number one benefit of residing in a senior living community is socialization. It's the opportunity to make new friends. And you don't need to be a social butterfly for that to happen. It happens naturally. At meals you get acquainted with your table companions. You socialize while exercising with another group. Even church services bring together people in yet another group. Finally there is the most popular social activity on campus—*Happy Hour!* What makes this event a favorite of so many is not the alcohol served, rather it's the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones during a social activity.

Senior living communities and senior centers offer a myriad of opportunities to overcome loneliness and depression, no matter the cause. I encourage you to share this information with friends who might be suffering from the winter doldrums this time of year. It might be the best advice you ever give them, because it can give them a new lease on life.



Celebrating a century

Founders of Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community, Gov. George M. Leader and his wife, Mary Jane Leader, both would have celebrated their 100th birthdays in 2018. To commemorate the anniversaries of their births, the organizations will host special events including birthday dinners, historical presentations and celebrations. Keep an eye out for the fun!

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- 🕒 Resident art shares warm wishes
- 🕒 Quilts help residents with dementia

Downward dog...continued from page 2



A goat enjoys snuggling with Country Meadows resident **Blanche Vargo**.



A goat channels the peaceful energy during a goat yoga class, resting on the mat with Country Meadows resident **Barbara Vones**.

the inspiration to walk and get around. At Country Meadows there is so much to do, and I'm involved. It's a wonderful place to be."

According to Kennedy, "Getting out of your comfort zone is always a good thing, and moving into a retirement community should be about new and exciting opportunities. The journey should have twists and turns and, by golly, take the path less traveled because one never knows what will be discovered!"



To watch a video of the goat yoga class, visit CountryMeadows.com/GoatYogaVideo