

Journeys

A Newsletter for Residents, Families and Friends.

2018 – Issue 1

Retired firefighter boards engine one last time

No one batted an eye when firetrucks roared onto the Country Meadows of Lancaster campus this past April.

It wasn't a fire call. The engines were accompanied by dozens of firefighters who came to honor resident Paul "PJ" McCracken, who served the city of Lancaster for nearly 40 years as a professional firefighter.

McCracken, 93, was receiving care from Caring Hospice Services, who contacted the fire department to arrange the celebration of his life and service. One of the engines visiting the campus was particularly special to McCracken—he served on that very truck during his career.

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Celebrating the life of Leaders

This year, founders of Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community, Gov. George and Mrs. Mary Jane Leader, would have celebrated their 100th birthdays in January and April, respectively.

To honor this milestone, Ecumenical Retirement Community and Country

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PJ McCracken holds the hat he wore while serving as a Captain in the Lancaster City Bureau of fire.

Inside this issue:

- Residents help premies
- Resident shares first-hand account living in a retirement community


COUNTRY MEADOWS
RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES


Ecumenical Retirement
COMMUNITY



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

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Journeys story ideas, suggestions
and general comments are
welcome and should be
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Our Mission

to serve residents with meaning,
offer our co-workers purpose
and lead our company with
innovation.

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 in Harrisburg 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.



Country Meadows wins **national award** for developing “Workforce for the Future”

*Organization recognized for creating innovative
programs to recruit and retain co-workers*

One of the top issues facing health care providers
is recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce. In the
senior living industry, this challenge is intensified by a growing
senior population. Country Meadows Retirement Communities and
Ecumenical Retirement Community are working on solutions to
address the hiring crisis and were recently honored with a national
Best of the Best Award for the “Workforce of the Future” initiative.

Presented by Argentum—the leading national association for senior
living organizations, only five organizations across the entire country
receive the Best of the Best honor, which recognizes innovative
programs and best practices working to improve the future of senior
living. This is the second consecutive year a Country Meadows/
Ecumenical program was chosen for a Best of the Best Award and
eight years overall.

“Workforce of the Future” features several programs to address
co-worker recruitment, development and retention.



*To read more about the initiative,
visit CountryMeadows.com/BestofBest2018.*



Allentown campus residents
surprised students with
sunshine boxes packed with
fun and delicious items to thank
them for their visits throughout
the year. Emerging Health
Students from Lehigh Career
& Technical Institute stop by
campus to gain experience
working with seniors.



PJ McCracken receives an American flag to honor his service to the country, state and city of Lancaster.

"We wanted to give him a good sendoff, a good tribute for what he did for his country and for what he did for the Lancaster Bureau of Fire," says Lt. Dusty Dommel-Lancaster Bureau of Fire.

During his career, McCracken rose to the rank of Captain and trained many probationary firefighters on techniques to graduate into the city program and become excellent emergency responders.

According to retired firefighter, Lt. Ed Knight, "His passion was service to the fire bureau and the community—an inspiring leader if ever there was one."

Several dozen current and retired firefighters, many trained by McCracken, attended to wish him well and catch up. As he was raised in a truck bucket with two firemen, the department's trumpeter played "Taps" in his honor. There wasn't a dry eye in the house, including McCracken.

"You could tell his eyes were all bright. He just loved it," shares his daughter, Sharon Yeaglin.

After the honor service, McCracken was presented with a United States flag for his service to country, state and the city of Lancaster. Yeaglin says her father told her, "Today was amazing."

Editor's Note: Paul "PJ" McCracken passed away just two weeks after this tribute, on April 24, 2018. According to his obituary, "One of his life mantras was "Make a difference." He saved lives and property, and he taught a generation of young men to become excellent firefighters. He taught his family, through his actions, the importance of honoring and respecting all people and doing the right things right."

Rest in peace Mr. McCracken and thank you.

To watch news coverage from the Lancaster Bureau of Fire's tribute to PJ McCracken, visit CountryMeadows.com/firefighter.



PJ McCracken steps into the bucket on the truck on which he served. The bucket was raised while a trumpeter played "Taps" in his honor.



Ede Moore started a knitting group called Project Linus at the South Hills campus to help premature babies and their families.



Resident **project** aids premature babies

Every Tuesday morning, Ede Moore joins her friends at Country Meadows of South Hills near Pittsburgh. They aren't gathering for coffee, rather, to knit and crochet.

When Moore moved to Country Meadows last year, she started a knitting group—Project Linus—a knitting club which makes blankets for premature babies. In its first year, members of the Country Meadows Project Linus group made more than 100 blankets.

Country Meadows supports the project by providing all the supplies. Project Linus does more than help babies. "It also helps women," notes Moore. "I knew that there were women here who could knit or crochet, but they didn't have a purpose. Now they have one."

The blankets are donated to West Penn Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Pediatric Burn Unit, as well as Children's Home of Pittsburgh and Lemieux Family Center.

"It's very important, and it means a lot to the families," Moore says, adding, "I'm very proud of Country Meadows for their support of this important project."

In addition to knitting, Moore enjoys the plethora of activities available to her at Country Meadows, especially spiritual services, exercise classes and happy hour. She is an avid Bridge player and still belongs to four Bridge groups outside Country Meadows.

Perhaps most importantly, Moore enjoys peace of mind. "I like the security. I know if I fall, if I'm sick, they're here. It's a relief for my son to also know that I'm not by myself," she says, adding, "I never thought at 93 I'd be so busy. I'm really happy here. I would give this place an A-plus."



The Project Linus knitting group meets every week to share their time and talents.

Resident **shares** first-hand accounts of **life** at Country Meadows

*M*aking the decision to move to a retirement community can be difficult. Then, when the move is done, the resident needs to adapt to a new way of living.

Country Meadows resident, Judy Wolfman, shares her experiences and observations in a blog located on the Country Meadows website. Wolfman covers searching for retirement accommodations, moving to Country Meadows of Leader Heights in South York and finding her way in her new home.

Through Wolfman's blog posts, Country Meadows aims

to help seniors overcome fears when considering a move to a retirement community to embrace a new way of living. Additionally, by sharing stories from and about active, engaged residents, we strive to reduce negative stigmas associated with senior living.

A published author, Wolfman has written 26 books, theatre scripts, plays and more than 300 magazine short stories, articles and poems. She founded the Belmont Theatre's Reader's



Judy Wolfman shares her personal journey moving to a retirement community on the Country Meadows website blog.

Theatre Troupe and conducts classes and workshops on storytelling, public speaking and writing. She presents author talks to schools, libraries and a variety of organizations.



Visit CountryMeadows.com/blog/category/resident-author to check out her posts.

Celebrating the life...continued from front page

Country Meadows Retirement Communities held special events including birthday parties complete with cake and champagne, dinners with special presentations from members of the Leader family sharing memories of the dynamic couple, poetry readings from Gov. Leader's books and random acts of kindness to remember Mary Jane Leader.

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During a special birthday dinner and celebration to honor Gov. and Mrs. Leader, residents at our West Shore of Mechanicsburg campus signed a huge card that was later shared with the Leader family.

Life gets better.® at Country Meadows and

Residents and co-workers pay it forward with kindness

If you can only be one thing, be kind.

Every April, Country Meadows and Ecumenical Retirement Community honor co-founder, the late Mary Jane Leader, by making extra efforts to practice random acts of kindness. Mrs. Leader and her husband, the late Gov. George M. Leader, founded Country Meadows upon treating people with kindness.



At Country Meadows of Hershey, residents showed appreciation to the local volunteer fire department by making and delivering homemade treats.



Leader Heights residents packed and delivered goodie bags for York emergency service personnel.



Wyomissing residents packed "Grandma's Goodie" boxes for Penn State Berks students who regularly hold events with residents at Country Meadows. The boxes, which went like hotcakes, were filled with granola bars, pens, pencils, candy, lip balm, tissues and other items to help students get through finals.



Residents at Country Meadows of Frederick handed out kindness by delivering blessing bags to clients at the American Red Cross, Olson House for Men in Recovery, Frederick Rescue Mission and Serenity Treatment Center.



To see more photos of kind acts, visit CountryMeadows.com/kindness2018.

and Ecumenical Retirement Community



Allentown resident Ruth Van Leer, 102, and her daughter, lead the senior stroll around the bases after a Philadelphia Phillies game at Citizen's Bank Park. Van Leer, a lifelong Phillies fan, was thrilled to walk on the field. She attended the game with fellow Country Meadows of Allentown residents.

To celebrate National Nurses Week, Country Meadows of Leader Heights in south York held a nurses mix and mingle. Campus nurses gathered with 10 residents who are retired nurses. The group enjoyed sharing experiences and learning how things have changed over the years. One former nurse shared, "Once nursing is in your heart, it stays there!" Thank you to all nurses!



Mary Sanders, a resident at our York campus, is 103 years young and taught in the West York School District for more than 40 years. She was thrilled to be part of an intergenerational reading program with children from a local elementary school. At the program's conclusion, residents met and spoke to the children, encouraging them to keep reading and learning.



Bethlehem campus residents spent the school year sending letters to third grade pen pals from a local elementary school. Resident Marion Harmon and her pen pal, Kylie, were very excited to finally meet.

**New
this year!**
EVERY campus
will have a local
winner!

Share your talents

*D*o you love to paint or are you taking an art class for the first time? If so, please consider sharing your artistic talents by entering the Country Meadows/Ecumenical Retirement Community Holiday Card Art Contest.

The winning artist will have his/her artwork used in the design for the organizations' annual holiday greeting card. New to this year's contest is that every single campus will have a local winner whose work will be featured in a packet of holiday cards shared with our residents.

Entries should be based on the winter holidays, beauty of winter and/or love and friendship

All entries must be received by Sept. 12, 2018.

Original artwork should be sent to:

Kelly Kuntz, executive director of Communications
Country Meadows Home Office
830 Cherry Drive, Hershey, PA 17033

In lieu of the original, a high-resolution image of the piece of art can be mailed to KKuntz@CountryMeadows.com and DSellers@CountryMeadows.com. This contest is open ONLY to current residents of Country Meadows Retirement Communities and Ecumenical Retirement Community.

See your Community Life Director for an entry form and complete contest rules.

Good luck!



Residents of Country Meadows of Forks in Easton work on their Holiday Art Card Contest at a Christmas in July event on campus. Members of the Forks Art Society stopped by to share some painting techniques and advice.



Seniors **celebrate** fitness, share why exercise is **critical** to healthy aging

Every May, Country Meadows Retirement Communities and Ecumenical Retirement Community are proud to participate in National Senior Health & Fitness Day. Our organization recognizes the critical importance of senior fitness, and employs professional fitness directors to manage fitness centers and offer personal training and group classes.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), exercise and physical activity are some of

the best things older adults can do to stay healthy. Without physical activity, older people tend to grow weaker in areas important for staying healthy and independent. National Senior Health & Fitness Day provides an opportunity to spread the word through fun activities which require movement. Senior fitness is a lot more fun than you think!



To check out photos of fitness events at all our locations, visit CountryMeadows.com/FitnessDay2018.



Residents from **Country Meadows of South Hills** near Pittsburgh formed teams of two to compete in a balance relay on National Senior Health and Fitness Day. One resident worked on a cardio machine while his/her teammate completed an obstacle course while holding a narrow cup with a ball on top. Exercises helped strengthen balance, endurance, gait stability and problem-solving.



Vietnam veteran brings joy, and toy trains, to Ecumenical

Even before graduating from Franklin Marshall College in 1966 at the age of 21, Ecumenical Retirement Community resident, Wayne Manson, knew he was going to become a military officer in the United States Marines.

Manson served in the Marines during the Vietnam War as a Second Lieutenant, Infantry Lieutenant for three months before becoming severely injured in 1967. "My battalion was guarding a brand new bridge when we were attacked by the Vietnamese army at 1:30 in the morning. We were at half-strength already, and we suffered about 40 casualties that night. Out of six officers that were assigned to my unit, I am the only survivor. And I'm only alive because I've had about 24 blood transfusions," he says.

Manson went through multiple surgeries to repair his legs before leaving the Navy Hospital in Queens, N.Y. in 1968. Shortly thereafter, he started working towards a master's degree in Business Administration.

"Business is a wide ranging subject, and you have to hone in on something that really interests you, so I really focused on marketing," he says.

Manson completed his master's degree in 1970 and started working for the Xerox Company in New York City. While working, he officially retired from the Marines in 1973. He is grateful for



Wayne Manson loves sharing his toy train hobby with fellow residents at Ecumenical Retirement Community.

what he learned in the service, saying, "You learn the ability to survive crises, personal crises... and to never give up."

Manson spent time working in California until he moved back to Pennsylvania and officially retired in the mid-2000s. He has lived at Ecumenical Retirement Community for nearly two and a half years. When he moved to the campus, he brought his favorite hobby—his train set.

The train, set up in Building II, attracts visitors including residents and community members from the Harrisburg area. Children from the neighboring U-Gro Learning Center visit Manson and his train set often.

Manson says his love for trains started when his family owned

a business in his hometown of Ashland, Pa. The store sold toys, including train pieces. He enjoys sharing his love for trains with everyone who comes to see it.

Manson emphasizes the benefits he gets from having the train with him at Ecumenical. "It's important to have a goal or a project that you're very interested in. It keeps you going," he says. "As long as we're all here on this Earth, we have a purpose. We have to find the purpose, stay involved and find the good things in life. I think the train helps residents find purpose in their daily lives."



From the desk of...

G. Michael Leader, President & CEO

*F*AMILY-OWNED, FAMILY-MANAGED. These four words characterize the Leader family's role in the senior living profession for more than 55 years. This summer, the *third*

generation of our family in the person of Meredith Janeczek Mills, granddaughter of Country Meadows founders George M. and Mary Jane Leader, has taken on a senior leadership position in the company—chief operating officer. Meredith has a master's degree in Health Care Administration from Penn State and has served as a campus executive director, regional marketing director and, prior to her promotion, vice president of Strategic Planning.

So, you might say, "What's the big deal?" The deal is about quality and experience. My father used to say, "You pay a lot more attention to what's happening and work harder when your name is attached to the business." And, I might add, because we love what we do.

Meredith is one of nine members of the Leader and Janeczek families employed by Country Meadows. Her mother is my sister, Jane, married to Ted Janeczek, our chief financial officer. Five of the

nine are in the *third generation*. Collectively the nine of us have more than 150 years of experience in healthcare. I like to say the profession is imbedded in our family genes.

We understand the critical success factors in senior living and know when something is missing. Unlike providers whose corporate leadership is headquartered in another state or even on the West Coast, our family lives and works in central Pennsylvania. We can drive to every campus easily. Family members either work full-time on a campus or visit one or more of our communities every week. With so many years of experience, along with regular exposure to what's happening through personal visits, we are better able to assess problems when they exist and start the process to fix them.

Finally, please remember that when our customers are *unhappy*, we are *unhappy*, too...and you know where to find us...right here at 830 Cherry Drive in Hershey. You can reach us by phone at 717-533-2474, email at Corporate@CountryMeadows.com or via snail mail.

On behalf of Meredith and the Leader/Janeczek family, thank you for the opportunity to serve your family.

Celebrating the life...continued from page 5

The couple's passion, kindness and dedication were present at every campus on their 100th birthdays. The duo was honored and remembered throughout the company and continues to bring people together.

Through their legacy, Gov. and Mrs. Leader continue to positively impact the lives of residents every single day.



Co-founders **Gov. George Leader** and his wife, **Mary Jane Leader**, would have celebrated their 100th birthdays this year. Gov. Leader died on May 9, 2013, at the age of 95 and his wife passed March 15, 2011 at 92 years of age.

Inside this issue:

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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 blogs and learn more about our amazing residents in our story bank.

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