

— THE —  
*Bridge*  
FALL 2024





**Above:** Jim Miller weaves a little magic on the loom in the new art studio, turning threads into treasures!

**On the Cover:** Allen Driver carves away in WoodWerks, where every project starts (and ends) with a smile!

# From the President

What a fantastic summer we've had at BRC! I'm excited to share some of the highlights in this edition of the Bridge.

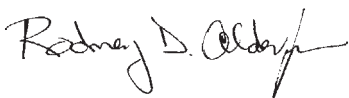
We kicked off the season in style with our second annual Senior Prom. This year's sock-hop theme had residents ready to rock around the clock in poodle skirts and leather jackets, while our team members jived right alongside them, making it a night to remember. We've also welcomed regular visits from local childcare organizations this summer, strengthening the intergenerational connections we cherish and bringing so much joy to our residents.

We're making strides in enhancing our green spaces, starting with the expansion of our community garden. This project not only enriches our outdoor spaces but also aligns with our sustainability goals. Additionally, the BRC therapy team is growing, with a new satellite location opening soon in Maple Terrace to make therapy more accessible for our Independent Living residents.

The farmers' markets have flourished this season, now welcoming Bridgewater town residents and featuring even more vendors. These markets are part of the 12 innovation grants awarded through funds raised by the LiveWell campaign, now in its second year. Among other exciting initiatives, we're planning an overnight trip to Smith Mountain Lake and expanding our support for the broader community.

In this edition, you'll get to know Anita Beckman, Doris Harsh, and Sharon Kiracofe. Anita, a new member of the Foundation Board, is deeply rooted in BRC and the wider community. Doris and Sharon, longtime volunteers at the ReRun Shoppe 'retire,' leaving behind a legacy of compassion, dedication, and friendship that will inspire future volunteers.

Thank you all for your commitment and support to Bridgewater Retirement Community. Your dedication ensures our residents live their best, most purposeful lives, and I'm deeply grateful. I can't wait to share more of our exciting happenings with you later this year!



Rodney D. Alderfer  
President | Bridgewater Retirement Community



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# News in Brief

## Holly and Chef Ben Win Sodexo Award



Congratulations to Chef Ben Miller and Environmental Specialist Holly Heatwole for receiving Sodexo's prestigious quarterly CARES Award! This honor is reserved for those who embody accountability, compassion, enthusiasm, respect, and service, and both Chef Ben and Holly have excelled in these areas.

Their dedication to Bridgewater Retirement Community has earned them well-deserved recognition across the country. Chef Ben went above and beyond by helping a resident record a poem, with the resident praising Chef Ben's voice as the perfect fit. Meanwhile, Holly made an extraordinary impact by helping a resident who lost the ability to speak find their voice again through innovative technology.

Their commitment to enhancing the daily experiences of residents makes BRC a better place every day!

## Senior Leadership Transition



Annie Frazier



Carrie Budd

Carrie Budd announced in June her decision to retire from her role as Vice President of Development and Community Relations with the BRC Foundation. Over the past 11 years, Carrie has been a guiding force, providing exceptional leadership that has significantly shaped the Foundation's success. Most notably, she spearheaded the transformative LiveWell campaign, raising over \$5 million to support BRC residents, team members, and the community.

As Carrie transitions from her full-time position, she will continue to lend her expertise in a part-time role, focusing on well-being initiatives that align with the LiveWell vision. Her ongoing commitment ensures that her legacy of care and dedication will continue to inspire us all.

With Carrie's retirement, Annie Frazier, current Manager of Organizational Design, Culture, and Training, will be transitioning into the role of Vice President of Development and Community Relations over the next year. During this period, Annie will balance her current responsibilities while learning from Carrie within the Foundation. Annie's passion for developing and promoting BRC's culture is evident in everything she does,

and her energy and vision will be invaluable to the Foundation.

Annie will fully assume her new role as Vice President of Development and Community Relations by fall 2025. Here's to both Carrie and Annie on their exciting new journeys!

## New Satellite Therapy Location Opens in Maple Terrace

To make therapy more accessible for Independent Living residents, a new satellite therapy location will open this fall on the second floor of Maple Terrace's Houff Community Center. This private space is dedicated to outpatient services including physical, occupational, and speech therapy. Audrey Showalter, Physical Therapist, will primarily work with residents from this location, but the entire therapy team is excited about the new space!



## Green Space Development

BRC has been enjoying the benefits of new outdoor spaces—The Retreat, Wellness Garden, and Crist Farm Walking Trails—for some time now. Building on that success, it's time to take the next big step in green space development!

BRC's community garden program is expanding into the green space adjacent to North Liberty Street and the Dogwood parking lot. The map above offers a preview of what's to come:

- Phase I (outlined in green) will introduce an expanded community garden, providing even more space for residents to cultivate and enjoy.
- Phase II (outlined in orange) will bring a dining production garden, where fresh, home-grown produce will be harvested for use in BRC dining venues and kitchens.

As BRC transitions to this new space, the current community garden behind Virginia Avenue will be retired, with future plans still to be determined. Our team members and residents have been actively gathering inspiration and ideas for this exciting new development. The endless well-being and enrichment opportunities this expansion will bring to residents, team, and the entire community are truly something to look forward to!



## New Innovation Grant Projects Underway

Building on the momentum from the successful LiveWell campaign, which raised \$5 million for programming, BRC's Foundation Board has awarded a second round of grants to fuel new and innovative initiatives that enrich the lives of residents, empower team members, and enhance community outreach. After wrapping up the first year of grant funding, the second round kicked off on August 1, with 12 exciting projects set to receive support this year, including the expansion of some standout projects from last year:

**1** **Cookin' up Some Conversation:** Dining team members Ethan and Solomon are hosting a YouTube series where they cook special recipes alongside residents, sparking engaging conversations in the process.

**2** **Farmer's Market Expansion:** This summer's market is growing to welcome new vendors and Bridgewater town residents, with a 'food pharmacy' offering team members insights into produce and healthy eating. A significant portion of the funds will be allocated to Assisted Living and Nursing residents, allowing them to make purchases at the market.



3

**Food Security Backpack Program:**

In partnership with John Wayland and Peak View Elementary schools, BRC’s community connections team will work to address gaps in existing food security programs. Assisted Living and Nursing residents will volunteer to assemble backpacks for students in need.

4

**Smith Mountain Lake Overnight Trip:**

This fall, a small group of Assisted Living and Nursing residents will embark on an overnight trip to Smith Mountain Lake. Funds will cover housing, food, and the necessary team support. “This is innovation—it’s giving people opportunities to try new things,” says Carrie Budd, VP of Development and Community Relations.

5

**Opening Minds through Art (OMA):**

Continuing support for this meaningful program includes training a new facilitator and purchasing additional supplies, with a goal for becoming self-sustaining through art shows—like the first one in March, which raised an impressive \$2,500.

6

**Third Annual Senior Prom:**

The much-anticipated 2025 Senior Prom planning is underway, bringing together residents, team members, and families for a night of fun and celebration. “We love it because it brings all levels of living, team, and family together to have a fun evening, and we want to continue to support that,” shares Carrie.



7

**Team Break Space:**

The WorkWell fund will provide a new break space for team members, designed as a place to recharge, make calls, enjoy lunch, and connect. Planned by a team committee, the space will also serve as a venue for team-focused events.

8

**Therapeutic Horticultural Programming:**

Assisted Living’s Garden Club and Nursing residents will benefit from horticultural therapy and expanded gardening opportunities in the Wellness Garden. Funds are going toward raised beds, equipment, and other necessary resources to make gardening more accessible to all.





**9 Tovertafel Expansion:** Following the success of the first Tovertafel in memory support, the Energized Life fund will support the purchase of seven additional units, ensuring each household can enjoy this innovative, therapeutic tool.

**10 WhisperGLIDE Swing:** A new WhisperGLIDE swing, designed to accommodate residents in wheelchairs, will be installed at the Oasis, replacing the old gazebo. WhisperGLIDE offers the feeling of front-porch swinging!

**11 Valley Program for Aging Services (VPAS) Vehicle Purchase:** BRC and VPAS have been long-time community partners, supporting initiatives

such as Meals on Wheels and VPAS Cafe. Their transportation program plays a vital role in supporting local, older adults, so BRC is matching their raised funds to help purchase a new vehicle.

**12 Wilbur Pence Middle School Partnership:** BRC will partner with the school's Ruriteen chapter to provide books for kindergarteners and sensory learning tools to students in need, while school supply backpacks will be stuffed with the support of resident volunteers.

It will be exciting to see these new and expanded projects come to life, each enhancing the positive energy and innovative culture at BRC.





## BRC Week 2024

The BRC Week committee delivered a spectacular “Christmas in July” celebration, celebrating BRC’s incredible team and their dedication to the community. The week started off with coffee and red velvet cinnamon rolls; continued with handmade ornaments and Christmas cards, a tough scavenger hunt throughout the BRC hallways, and a friendly non-Christmas tree Christmas tree competition; and ended on a high note with an unforgettable, wet relay race and other fun Christmas activities.







## See a Penny, Pick it Up

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Research shows that intergenerational connections are game-changers—they ignite learning and skill-sharing, reduce loneliness, enhance well-being, and break down age barriers. That’s why it was important for Bridgewater Retirement Community to host Connections Early Learning Center (CELC) for the second summer in a row this year. The series of intergenerational visits between school-age children and residents has been a hit with everyone. They enjoyed a variety of engaging activities together, including crafts, story time (with sign language as an added bonus), delicious snacks, and plenty of laughter. The goal? To bridge the generational divide and celebrate connections across all generations.



CELC opened its doors in August 2022 and operates out of the Bridgewater Church of the Brethren during the summer. Inspired by their speaker on BRC’s campus, shortly after their opening, Rhonda Collins, BRC Life Enrichment Specialist for the village, teamed up with Shay Yoder, CELC School-Age Lead. Together, they worked to bring one-on-one educational interactions between residents and children to campus. Shay emphasizes, “We’re intentional in connecting with the community—it’s important to us.”

These visits first took place last summer, and after enthusiastic feedback from residents, children, and parents, Rhonda and Shay were determined to make it happen again. The program became a true exchange: each Tuesday, Shay led her students through the Bridgewater College campus to BRC, while residents also made weekly trips to the church to assist in classrooms. “As they get to know each

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## SEE A PENNY, PICK IT UP

[continued]

other, you see residents and children forming real relationships,” Rhonda shares. “By the third visit, they’re on a first-name basis, and you can see the kids’ eyes light up—it’s clear they’re working together toward a common goal.”

Shay highlights that CELC’s commitment to intergenerational relationships extends beyond their visits to BRC; it’s woven into the fabric of their organization, where school-age kids even read to infants. “It’s incredible to watch them transition from interacting with infants to engaging with BRC residents, seeing how they respond and create their own connections—remembering details like what the residents did for a living. We’re very intentional about breaking the divide and building those connections,” she explains.

Shay has seen firsthand the benefits for CELC children, noting how their communication skills blossom and how they “break cliques,” creating shared experiences with both old and new friends, as well as with BRC residents. Rhonda agrees, adding, “It enriches all of their lives, gives our residents a sense of purpose, and becomes something they eagerly look forward to.”

Diane Ritchie was one of several Independent Living residents that participated in CELC’s summer visits. That is, when she wasn’t already busy watching her own grandchildren. She describes one



moment that stood out to her, as she and the girl she was partnered with worked together to paint a dream catcher. Charlotte, whom Diane guesses is a rising fourth grader, shared that she met a Nursing resident on the street last summer during her walk to BRC. She picked up a penny from the ground and gave it to the resident for good luck. Charlotte recalls how happy that made the Nursing resident and asked Diane about a reunion. Though one wasn’t possible, Rhonda located the Unity House resident, who remembered the moment well and kept the penny on her vanity ledge before sending it back to Charlotte for safekeeping this year. “The interactions are wonderful! The fact that BRC does so much to have all



residents participate in everything across campus, including visits such as these, is gratifying,” Diane concludes.

Rhonda and Shay are eager to continue the program every summer, with hopes of expanding it further. “Residents often hear about activities and programs by word of mouth from other residents. I hope more come in the future,” Rhonda shares. As these connections grow and flourish, they not only bridge the generational divide but also enrich the lives of everyone involved. BRC and CELC are creating a community where every age is valued, and shared experiences continue to bring joy, purpose, and lasting memories to all.



The lucky penny made its way back to Charlotte, who stepped away from learning for a quick moment to pose!

# Veteran Volunteers Leave Rerun Shoppe with a Legacy of Compassion & Collaboration

By Dawn Medley

You just have to trust Doris Harsh and Sharon Kiracofe, especially if you're a first-time visitor to Bridgewater Retirement Community's ReRun Shoppe. As they lead you from the Assisted Living entrance into an elevator and down a nondescript hallway on the lowest level of the building, you might become skeptical that the pair of longtime friends and BRC volunteers is pulling a prank, that they'll soon start chuckling because they've taken you to the middle of nowhere.

But soon you notice that the corridor isn't so average after all. There is a simple sign announcing the ReRun Shoppe, a rack of hanging clothes flanking one wall, and—not to be overlooked—a mannequin affectionately named Sophie, dressed in a colorful, seasonal outfit. It's then that you realize the duo is smiling not because they're being mischievous, but because they love being part of this unique little store. "We really get to know the residents—especially those who come in almost every day we're open," says Doris. "We listen to their stories, the struggles and the joys. And we don't even mind if they don't end up buying anything," she adds.

For nine years, Doris and Sharon had been the "dream team" at the helm of the ReRun Shoppe. The duo was so synonymous with the shop that when they both announced plans to retire from their posts as co-managers this spring, there was a bit of a collective gasp around the BRC campus. As part of the legacy of their leadership and the commitment of a core group of volunteers (who also happen to be their friends), the ReRun

Shoppe has weathered the transition gracefully.

"We knew that we had a solid pool of volunteers who would continue to make it the great, little, personal shop that it is, but I think all of us—even Doris and Sharon—were encouraged by how smoothly it went," says Development Officer, Missy Stover. They each stepped up in their own ways. One pair of volunteers travels from New Market once a month to spend a full day manning the shop. Jane Fulk took on scheduling. Couples Ruth and Rex Peters and Judy and Richard Winner take weekly turns working with new inventory and serving as cashiers. "It shows how much each of them cares about the shop, the people who come in, and each other," adds Missy, who oversees the ReRun Shoppe on behalf of the BRC Foundation.

## Pennies for Purpose

Since it opened in 1977, the ReRun Shoppe has relied on volunteers to gather, sort, price, and sell items. It continues to serve as a resource for residents who are downsizing and anyone who wants to donate, as well as a welcoming space for those with physical or financial limitations who want to explore the shelves for treasures or a new garment. "Residents can come here to find





a gift for someone or something to dress up their space,” Sharon says.

The greeting card selection is extensive—and popular—as are puzzles, knickknacks, and, of course, clothing. It’s no secret that the funds generated by the shop are secondary to what it offers as a spot for social interaction and moments of joy when that special item is spotted.

Doris, Sharon, and other shopkeepers know many of the regular visitors well enough to point out specific pieces they might like. In addition, it’s not uncommon for them to give clothing and other necessities to a resident free of charge when requested by a team member. “That kind of customer service is always appreciated,” says Laura Powell, Director of Life Enrichment and Volunteer Services. “They know that it’s about the experience, about celebrating what you come away with,” she adds.

Although many items in the ReRun Shoppe are priced at just a few dollars—some, available for mere pennies—the store netted \$18,000 in sales during the 2023 fiscal year. All profits are directed to the Forever Family Fund through the BRC Foundation, ensuring that every resident enjoys security and support, even if they have exhausted their financial resources. “We know we’re never going to be a big money-maker,” Doris says, “but it’s a good feeling to know that what we do make benefits residents in another way.”

## Return to ReRun

“It all started for me here when I lost my husband,” says Sharon. “Doris said to me, ‘Come down and work at the shop. I’m not going to let you sit around.’ And so I did. It was a good decision.” That was 14 years ago. Doris had experienced her husband’s passing just a year earlier. She had already been

volunteering at BRC for about a decade, a tenure that started with “whatever they needed me to do,” she shares, including pushing residents in wheelchairs to their appointments at the in-house beauty salon and making Easter baskets. Doris was aware how much having purpose and relationships helped her grieve. “I knew it was a hard loss,” Doris shares.

Acquaintances through church prior to their husbands’ deaths, Doris and Sharon forged a deeper friendship while carrying each other through that shared experience. When not working at the ReRun Shoppe, the pair traveled internationally, including trips to Canada, Austria, Germany, and Amsterdam. As it turns out, though, retiring from the ReRun Shoppe was a little harder than the veteran volunteers thought it would be. “When you’ve been part of something for so long, it’s just natural to keep doing it,” says Doris, whose involvement spans 25 years.

After a few months, Doris was grateful to be welcomed back in an official capacity as lead volunteer this summer. It’s a step back from managing, but it’s enough to maintain her connection and give her more time at home with her son, who lives nearby. “She just couldn’t stay away,” jokes Judy Winner, a volunteer for about two years. “Doris is great at delegating; she’s the thread that keeps us all on track,” she adds.

With children and grandchildren in the area and thriving gardens at home, Sharon has been keeping busy outside of the ReRun Shoppe. However, she explains she’s always available to come in to sort and shelve books in the dedicated book room. “This place has been good to us, and I don’t think we’ll ever stop wanting to make sure it stays here as a place that residents enjoy,” she said.

The ReRun Shoppe is open from 10 AM to 4 PM every Tuesday and Friday. To visit, enter through Assisted Living, take the elevator down to the lowest level, and follow the corridor—the Shoppe is on the right, and the book room to the left. If you’d like to donate items in good condition, but the ReRun is closed, you can drop off donations at BRC’s main administration building.



Jane Branch finds her strength with a smile, guided by therapist Audrey Showalter during physical therapy.





## BRC Therapy: EmPOWERing Independence

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**B**ridgewater Retirement Community's therapy team provides a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary program designed to enhance functionality, restore stability, and build strength. Available to both residents and community members, services span physical therapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT), and speech therapy (ST). Therapy offers a gateway for overcoming challenges that hinder independence due to injury, illness, or diagnosis. Through compassionate care, personalized therapy plans, and a strong sense of community, BRC's therapy team helps individuals navigate life's hurdles and achieve their personal goals.

The evolution of therapy at BRC has been remarkable, with Nikki Yeago, Director of Rehabilitation Services, witnessing this transformation firsthand. Nikki first joined BRC in 2010 under Genesis Rehab, where she supervised the therapy program and

played a key role in shaping it into the program it is today. She reflects, "For me, it's always been about the people. The most important part of someone's care comes down to that person and the relationship you grow with them. Then, you use all the tools you've learned to help them wherever they are in their journey." Nikki praises her diverse and skilled team, saying, "We see you as a whole person, listen to your goals, assess how your environment influences them, and provide tailored recommendations. Our shared mission is to make your life easier and help you thrive."

Audrey Showalter, who joined Nikki's team in December, primarily works with Independent Living residents, offering services in their homes, at the therapy center, the fitness center, and even on the sidewalks

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## BRC THERAPY [continued]

and streets of campus. She worked at BRC prior to attending Murphy Deming College for physical therapy and recalls appreciating the cultural support, describing it as a rare commodity. Passionate about helping people regain normal function and return home, Audrey loves the creative thinking and problem-solving her role entails. “Everyone needs something a little different,” she says. “I love BRC’s commitment to helping people as they age. It’s great to work for a place that offers tremendous support to help residents feel valued.”

One of Audrey’s recent success stories involves Jane Branch, an Independent Living resident since 2022, who recovered from a knee replacement under Audrey’s guidance. Despite the challenging healing process, Audrey helped Jane set benchmarks for progress. She met her therapy goals and resumed normal activities within three months. Audrey, who aims to empower residents, praises Jane’s determination, saying, “I gave her a boost at times, but mostly it was just Jane.” Jane, in turn, commends Audrey and the therapy team, describing them as wonderful and deeply respectful of each other.

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“ Anything BRC can offer that enhances the quality of life here is a plus. PT in a place like this is very important; it’s money and resources well spent.”

— Jane Branch

Jane’s positive experience with BRC’s therapy services began with treatment for shoulder pain shortly after moving in, which made her confident about choosing BRC for her knee replacement recovery. “Why would I go anywhere else? This is where I live,” she says. Jane values the camaraderie and motivation provided by the therapy team. She emphasizes the importance of therapy services across all levels of living at BRC, saying, “Anything BRC can offer that enhances the quality of life here is a plus. PT in a place like this is very important; it’s money and resources well spent.” Thanks to therapy, Jane and her husband, Bud, are both enjoying an improved quality of life at BRC.

Nikki sees a lot of growth potential for therapy at BRC among Independent Living residents, noting many residents are not aware of the extent of services available to them. “Our goal is for people to thrive and succeed where they are. That includes living safely in their homes. We always want to avoid a transition, if possible, which means catching things early,” she explains. To make therapy more accessible to residents in Independent Living, a new satellite therapy location will open on the second floor in Maple Terrace’s Houff Community Center this fall. The space is private and dedicated to outpatient



services including PT, OT, and ST. Audrey and Nikki are very excited about the new satellite therapy space. Though Audrey will work with residents from this space, it is available for all therapists to utilize. Nikki says, “This improves therapy’s reach. It allows for easier access, it’s at the center of campus, and it’s an extension for delivering services.”

As October is Physical Therapy Month, the therapy team at BRC wants all residents to know they have a supportive group ready to help. Nikki encourages residents to seek assistance with challenging

tasks, highlighting her ‘unicorn’ team’s dedication and expertise in the unique services they can provide; whether you’re navigating recovery, seeking to improve daily function, or simply looking for ways to enhance your well-being. Their compassionate approach and commitment to personalized care ensure that each resident receives the support they need to thrive. The therapy team at BRC continues to be an invaluable resource, empowering residents to achieve their personal goals and live their best lives.



## Anita Beckman



Anita recently joined Bridgewater Retirement Community's Foundation Board in January, bringing with her many strong connections to the BRC community. With a rich background in banking and a longstanding dedication to service, Anita is excited to contribute her expertise and passion over her three-year term. Her personal and family ties to BRC, along with her extensive experience in community engagement, make her a valuable addition to the board as she continues to support the mission of enriching the lives of BRC residents.

### **Tell me about yourself, both professionally and personally:**

I've been retired for five years now. I was in banking for 38 years, at several different banks, all locally. I started out as a teller, moved up, and I ended my career as a Senior Vice President at F&M (Farmer's & Merchant) Bank.

A little about myself: I'm still married. We have our 55<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this year. My husband, Jim, and I met in Morgantown, WV, where my father was a pastor at his church. After graduating from college, we moved to Bridgewater for Jim's job with the health department, and we've called it home since 1972. We've moved five times but have never left Bridgewater because we love it here.

We have two daughters, both married and living in the area, and four grandsons. Our oldest [grandson] is now married; he gave us a granddaughter as his wife and we're happy

about that! Jim still works a little bit for F&M as a courier. We enjoy traveling and spending time at our home in Highland County, where we own hunting land in the mountains.

As for hobbies, I enjoy counted cross stitch, reading, and flower arranging—I worked at a flower shop for nine years when we first moved to Bridgewater and enjoyed that. We're active at Bridgewater Church of the Brethren and have been for 50+ years. I had also been affiliated with committees and on the board at Central Valley Habitat for Humanity but when I retired, I became more active. I've chaired their annual fundraiser banquet for the last seven years.

### **How has your involvement with Habitat for Humanity influenced your views on community service and philanthropy?**

If you're involved with something, you must be passionate about it. Part of my career, I was in mortgage lending, and I wanted to also give back. Their mission of putting people in affordable homes, that was a good tie-in for me. I've worked directly with our families and seen what a difference it makes in their lives—when you give a single mother a home and what she can do to support her children; I'm very passionate about that.

### **Can you share your history with BRC and what drew you to support our community.**

It goes way back! In the 1960's, my grandfather spent his last days in Nursing care in the original



[Bridgewater Home] building. Both of my parents were also here—my mother spent 14 years in skilled care after a stroke, and I still say the excellent care she received here is why she lived so long. My father spent his last six months in Assisted Living, where he also received great care. He thought he was at a spa or something; the nurses doted on him, and he loved it!

My husband's parents also moved from Morgantown, West Virginia when they needed more care, living out their lives in a BRC duplex on Rainbow Drive. We've had other family members who received care here as well, and my husband even worked in dining services at BRC for five years before it was contracted out. He really enjoyed it.

Our oldest daughter is a registered nurse with Sentara, and she always said patients coming into the hospital from BRC were in better health than those from any other place. She saw a lot and said, "Mom and dad, you don't want to go anywhere else!" Now she's in case management, directly helping people find alternative care for their needs. She said, "You don't want to be left having to go to a place where I don't want you to go."

### **So, you plan to live here one day?**

Yes! We've been on the wait list for years. Knowing what our daughter says, and what our friends coming in to BRC are saying—if you want the best care and you ever need skilled care or Assisted Living—you better be part of the community. Not saying we're ready to move yet, but we want to be prepared.

When I completed the board orientation, I was really impressed with the culture that's been

developed here. I see a lot of changes in the culture, and I think it's great.

### **What inspired you to become a BRC donor and eventually a Foundation Board member?**

It all comes down to what BRC has done for our families. That's it, in a nutshell.

### **Can you talk about a particular initiative or program you're especially proud of supporting through the Foundation?**

We initially donated to the Capital Campaign for the expansion, and I helped with that campaign while I was still working at the bank, reaching out to commercial businesses. Given our family ties, we felt very strongly about our decision to donate. I'm still learning about all the different programs, so I can't say I identify with one, but I appreciate all the work being done.

### **How do you feel your contributions have made a difference in the lives of BRC residents?**

I feel our contributions have helped to build the culture here that I admire.

### **What's a special BRC memory that stands out to you?**

I would have to say the care my parents received. I knew my mother was loved and well taken care of, and the same was true for my dad. I know the nurses really hung onto him and took good care of him. He enjoyed the life he lived in Assisted Living.

### **What is one strength of the Foundation Board that you've witnessed?**

The wide range of experiences of the members who serve on the board. They come from all walks of life, and their diverse experiences are invaluable.

### **Would you like to add anything else?**

I feel very privileged to have been asked to serve on the board. I put Carrie off for a couple of years, due to other commitments. I didn't want to join just to say I did, I wanted to be able to contribute meaningfully. I'm really looking forward to it!



# Using Nature to Improve Your Well-Being

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By Carrie Budd

A year ago, I learned a new term for something I had always known—biophilia. The concept is new to me but was developed by E.O. Wilson in the 1980's. It suggests that humans are inherently connected and have an emotional affiliation to other living things (Haller, et al, *The Profession and Practice of Horticultural Therapy*).

Deep down, I think I already knew this because I have always felt my best when spending time outdoors in nature and, most recently, growing all kinds of things in my garden. My family and friends have a much deeper connection with animals than with plants, but the concept of the connection with other living things is still the same.

What does biophilia have to do with well-being, and why is it important for everyone at Bridgewater Retirement Community? With an organizational vision to enhance and energize healthy living and an intentional focus on the eight dimensions of wellness, understanding the human need for connection to nature should be part of our thought process when we consider how to create the best life possible for our residents and our team.

Part of the most recently completed BRC strategic plan includes reviewing and developing of our many outdoor spaces. Rather than being static places, how can they be incorporated into our programming and made accessible? Recent examples



Assisted Living residents put their green thumbs to work, identifying the fragrant herbs they planted in the Wellness Garden under Carrie's expert guidance!

include the Crist Farm Walking Trails and The Wellness Garden. Making these types of places available has had a tremendous impact on the physical, emotional, spiritual, and environmental wellness of so many individuals at BRC and in the greater community.

As I learned more about this concept, I became aware of the disciplines of therapeutic horticulture and horticulture therapy. During the last year, with the support of BRC, I have been taking classes through the Horticulture Therapy Institute to become a certified Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner. It has been an amazing and eye-opening experience that I am now beginning to share with our residents and team members.

In early 2024, the BRC Garden Club began in Assisted Living. We met and talked about what we were interested in learning

and doing with plants. Since then, this group has:

- Started seeds that became many of the plants in the cut flower garden.
- Designed and selected plants for the herb bed in the Wellness Garden.
- Arranged beautiful spring flowers provided by a local flower farmer.
- Pressed flowers and created pressed flower art.
- Selected, purchased, and planted the large pots in The Wellness Garden and The Retreat.
- Divided and planted new houseplants to be sold in the Christmas pop-up market this December.
- Had two sessions to learn more about herbs and their uses.

Along the way, we have shared many things—stories about gardening with our family, memories that the smell of flowers brings to us, and how good it feels to get our hands in the dirt and grow something. If that isn't the definition of well-being, I don't know what is. Happy gardening!

# Spiro100 Expands Online Hub with 140+ Fitness Classes

By Dawn Medley

One of the most popular fitness classes at Bridgewater Retirement Community doesn't need an in-person instructor. Twice a month, participants gather in the centrally located fitness center at Maple Terrace, where bell-laden belts jingle cheerfully around their waists. Before they start tilting their hips and lifting their arms, they cue up their favorite belly dancing video on Spiro100, an online hub for classes designed for older adults.

"It's actually a wonderful workout," says Polly Fravel, who has cycled through the

available belly dancing offerings with a group of friends several times in the past few months. "Now we're just waiting for new classes to be added!" Polly is one of many active BRC residents who embraced the array of virtual fitness class options when Spiro100 was introduced in March.

Initially procured to supplement BRC's relatively small team of instructors, the online resource quickly began to transform the fitness program, according to Fitness Coordinator Kristin Shifflett. "We feature different classes on our weekly schedule,"







Kristin says, “We try to highlight a variety of areas and listen to residents’ requests. There are so many to choose from—strength and cardio, yoga and meditation, and even classes for specific populations like those with Parkinson’s Disease,” she adds.

In addition to scheduled group classes, after completing a short fitness orientation, residents can browse the organization’s full library of more than 140 videos any time they’re ready to shake up their routine. “It allows us to give them another layer of access and the ability to self-direct their experience here,” says Laura Spicer, Vice President of Well-Being.

Laura and Kristin are also encouraged by the response of instructors to online training webinars included on the Spiro100 platform. Team members can watch videos that cover specific fitness topics and instructional tips, either individually or as a group. BRC Fitness Specialist Alli Dula recently logged into a virtual workshop about yoga, healthcare, and nutrition for seniors. “I’m not a huge yoga person myself, so I’m always trying to get more information about its practice

and benefits,” says Alli, who has been on the fitness team since 2022. “The workshop mentioned several studies, including one that showed yoga improved the overall health of older adults in 12 different countries. That was interesting to me. We’re still exploring everything that is available,” she says. “It’s fun to look through and see what we can offer.”

It’s no surprise that the fitness team started thinking about using online resources during the pandemic, but never found a good fit. When a new team member with experience in virtual technology joined BRC in 2022, ideas began to take shape. Then, when funds became available the following year through the successful Live Well Campaign, Laura knew it was their best chance to make virtual fitness a reality on campus. The team secured one of the first ten innovation grants from the BRC Foundation.

The \$1,800 grant allowed BRC to purchase a suite of virtual programs that includes Spiro100, CoroHealth—a wealth of therapeutic music and spiritual programming—and Curiosity University, which provides access to expert lectures, livestream talks, and Q&As with professors around the world. Virtual golf will debut soon. “We were thrilled to find something that touches on all dimensions of wellness,” Laura says.

The introduction of Spiro100 has expanded BRC’s fitness offerings tremendously, highlighting a growing trend where technology enhances well-being. As residents are benefiting from these virtual classes, the fitness team continues to research opportunities for future additions.



## A Trip to the National Museum of the United States Army

BRC resident veterans eagerly awaited this incredible exploration of the new Museum of the United States Army in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The museum's sleek stainless steel and glass exterior is as impressive as the innovative displays and immersive theaters inside. Residents were captivated by the rich memorabilia and inspiring exhibits that they wished they could have spent the entire day there! It's amazing to think that the entire building was funded through generous donations, a testament to the profound respect and appreciation for the sacrifices made by our veterans.

## Highland Games

BRC's fitness team brought the vibrant spirit of Scotland to life this summer with a fun-filled Scottish Highland Games event. Residents enjoyed traditional activities like the sheaf toss, haggis hurl, welly throw, caber toss, and even a seated version of the Highland fling dance. The festivities included a spirited kilt contest, with John Stone proudly taking the prize. The evening concluded on a high note with a stirring performance by Albemarle Pipes and Drums.





## The 2nd Annual Senior Prom in the Books

BRC's senior prom committee planned another spectacular event in May, taking residents on a trip down memory lane for an unforgettable sock hop. The ladies dazzled in their poodle skirts, while men dusted off their classic leather jackets; everyone embraced the retro vibe with style! The dance floor buzzed with excitement, laughter echoed through the room, and the smiles on everyone's faces were priceless.



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BRC deeply appreciates the contributions of each donor. We have made every effort to make this list complete and accurate. If you notice a mistake or omission, please accept our apologies and contact us at **540-828-2652**.



Village residents gather 'round a table in The Junction, sharing a laugh or two.

THE *Bridge* is made possible by the work of the following BRC team members and contractors.

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The *Bridge* committee would love your feedback! Email your thoughts on this edition to [communicate@brcliving.org](mailto:communicate@brcliving.org).

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**We are thrilled to share that BRC has been named the Best Retirement Community, Best Nursing Home, and Best Assisted Living in the 2024 Daily News-Record's Best of the Valley competition!**



*But that's not all...*

We were also honored as finalists for Best Company to Work for and Best Physical Therapy. Thank you to our incredible community, dedicated team, and everyone who voted for us. Your support and trust mean the world to us, and we're committed to continuing to provide exceptional care and a wonderful place to live and work. Come celebrate with us and see why BRC is the best in the Valley!