

THE
Bridge
WINTER 2025



60

BRIDGEWATER
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
OF ENERGY FOR LIFE



Above: Nancy Bryant shares a smile with Santa at the Grand Illumination Open House.

On the Cover: Judy Henneberger lights up the community, kicking off the magical Christmas season at Grand Illumination.

From the President

As the holiday season comes to a close and 2025 begins, it leaves behind the warmth of togetherness and the sparkle of cherished traditions. In this festive edition of *The Bridge*, I'm delighted to share the heartwarming highlights that made Christmas so special at Bridgewater Retirement Community.

We kicked off the season with a Christmas market featuring some of our favorite summer vendors and unique offerings from team members. Our annual Grand Illumination brought our community together to light up Houff Community Center in spectacular fashion. The celebration continued with an Open House, inviting everyone to admire the dazzling Christmas trees, each sharing its own story of joy and creativity.

Among the most enduring traditions of the season is the music of our village choir. This year, we're shining a spotlight on the choir's conductor, Jeff Schleifer, whose dedication has guided Christmas performances for several years.

I'm also thrilled to share the story of our overnight trip to Smith Mountain Lake, which made history as the first of its kind. This excursion was made possible through the support of our innovation grants, now in their second year. These grants exemplify how donor generosity transforms creative ideas into reality, allowing us to provide new and enriching experiences for our residents.

This edition of *The Bridge* also honors seven residents who participated in an Honor Flight trip to Washington, D.C. this fall—a day devoted to recognizing their military service and truly a privilege of a lifetime. You'll also discover the inspiring story behind Honor Flight Top of Virginia, founded by a Virginia woman whose dedication to veterans and volunteerism drives her to plan each unforgettable adventure.

As we celebrate the season of giving, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you. Your continued support ensures that Bridgewater Retirement Community remains a place where creativity, connection, and joy thrive. Together, we are making moments like these not just possible but extraordinary.

I hope you and your loved ones enjoyed a joyous holiday season filled with warmth and cheer.

Rodney D. Alderfer
President | Bridgewater Retirement Community



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News in Brief

Celebrating 10 Years of Resident-Centered Care: BRC's Compassionate Culture



November 19th marked the 10th anniversary of the opening of BRC's six nursing households, a milestone that highlights a decade of progress in redefining care. Since opening in 2014, BRC has embraced a resident-centered model, shifting the language and practices that prioritize individuality and the preferences of each resident. This cultural shift, supported by initiatives like Culture University, has promoted an environment where residents thrive. The anniversary celebration highlighted the success of this approach, emphasizing BRC's ongoing commitment to person-first care.



Community Garden Taking Shape

Phase one of BRC's Community Garden is officially underway. The maintenance and grounds teams, along with resident volunteers, have collaborated to build and install raised garden beds. A greenhouse and resident garden shed are also in place, along with a newly added fence and hedge border. Fruit bushes have been planted, and the installation of in-ground beds is next on the list to be completed. To wrap up the first phase, all raised beds are being overwintered.

Quilting Room Relocates, and Horticultural Therapy Finds a Home

The pathway from Garber Atrium to Assisted Living is transforming. The Quilting Room has found a new home in the Studio, making way for Assisted Living's Garden Club to expand its vibrant presence. This newly adapted space will also host *Opening Minds Through Art* (OMA) sessions, where residents living with dementia express themselves through art, supported by dedicated BRC volunteers.

Honoring Talent and Leadership: Awards Season Highlights



This award season was especially exciting for our talented OMA resident artists. This fall, four resident artists earned recognition in the inaugural statewide virtual OMA art show. Jackie Towers achieved top honors for two of her three entries and was awarded the prestigious Georgia O'Keeffe Award for her stunning piece, *Abundant Orange* (above). Sharon Gillespie, Charlotte Grimm, and Kent Stoneburner also received awards for their remarkable artwork.

Carrie Budd, Vice President of Development and Community Relations, was honored in November with the prestigious Sandra F. Neff Fundraising



Executive Award. This award recognizes an outstanding fundraising professional who practices in an exemplary manner, and Carrie has consistently demonstrated exceptional vision and fundraising expertise. Carrie's passion and commitment have not only secured vital resources for the community but have also enriched the lives of everyone who calls BRC home.

BRC Recognized as Leader in Wellness for the Second Year



BRC has been awarded the prestigious 2024 ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award, ranking among North America's Top 5 "Best in Wellness" senior living communities. This recognition highlights the dedication and passion of team members and residents who embrace wellness as a way of life. Additionally, President Rodney Alderfer has been named a Top 5 Wellness Executive Pinnacle Award Winner, exemplifying leadership focused on community-centered well-being. Out of North America's Top 25 senior living communities, BRC ranked #2, reaffirming its mission to empower purpose-driven, engaged living for all.

Holiday Recipes & Traditions

Shared by BRC Residents and Team Members

CHOCOLATE-PEANUT CANDY

Submitted by: Julie Swope, Resident

- 2 lbs. white almond bark
- 1 box German sweet chocolate
- 12 oz. milk chocolate chips
- 24 oz. dry roasted peanuts

Layer in above order in crock pot. Cook on low for 1 1/2 hours. Stir. Drop by spoonfuls on wax paper.



A Christmas Eve Tradition

Submitted by: Michele Dodrill, Human Resources Assistant

"Christmas has always been my favorite holiday because of the traditions we celebrate each year. Family means a lot to me, and that's clear in our special Christmas Eve tradition. Growing up, we'd go to my grandma's house for supper around 4 PM. Family members would eat as they arrived, but everyone had to be done by 6 PM to head to the Raphine Fire House to sing carols and see Santa. Afterward, we'd go to my grandma's church, Mt. Carmel Presbyterian, for the Christmas Eve service. I went to my first service there when I was only a week old. At first, our family only filled one pew, but as we grew, we filled more, sometimes three or four. Grandma always said the best Christmas gift was having all of us there. Afterward, we'd go back to her house for Christmas treats.

After my grandma passed away in 2011, Christmas Eve changed. Now, we gather at my aunt and uncle's house for dinner, visit the Fire House to see Santa, and attend the Christmas Eve service at grandma's church. For the last few years, our family has lit the Christ Candle in the Advent Wreath. I know grandma is proud to see us still celebrating together. After the service, we return to my aunt and uncle's house for treats and a gift exchange, full of laughter."



BLOND ROCKY ROAD CANDY

Submitted by: Nancy Simmons, Resident

- 1 pound vanilla-flavored candy coating (white chocolate)
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows
- 1 1/2 cups roasted unsalted peanuts
- 1 1/2 cups crisp rice cereal

Melt candy or white chocolate in a 2 qt. container in the microwave for 2 minutes, stirring after 1 minute. Do not burn the chocolate! Add peanut butter, stirring until smooth. Put marshmallows, peanuts, and cereal in large bowl. Pour chocolate and peanut butter mixture over remaining ingredients, stirring until coated. Drop by teaspoons onto wax paper. Cool completely. Yield: about 6 1/2 dozen.

CHRISTMAS TURTLES

Submitted by: Tim Hulings, Resident

Tim has been making these turtles every Christmas since 1978. Over the years, he has made a few adjustments: lowering the baking temperature to avoid overheating the caramels, as they only need to be softened, and more recently, switching from semi-sweet to dark chocolate chips.

- Pecan halves
- 1 lb. caramels, unwrapped
- 1 12 oz. Package semi-sweet chocolate morsels

Place two pecan halves side by side, touching, on an ungreased cookie sheet. Place a caramel centered atop the pecan halves. Continue until caramels are used up. Place in 250 degree oven until caramels are soft, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and mash on caramel to flatten. Cool. Then melt chocolate over low heat and carefully spoon over caramels. Allow turtles to cool completely. Then store in air-tight container. Arrange in glass container for gift-giving.





A Legacy of Music:

The Steady Flames of the Village Choir

For over 30 years, the Village Choir at BRC has brought music to life, blending tradition, talent, and a profound sense of community. This Christmas season, the choir delivered unforgettable holiday performances, filling Lantz Chapel with warmth and joy that truly captured the spirit of the season.

Under the guidance of their longtime conductor, Jeff Schleifer, the choir performed at the Lovelight Service and their much-anticipated Christmas concert. Both events showcased a repertoire that celebrated the season's beauty, including sacred hymns and festive carols. This year's Christmas performances appropriately reflected the choir's resilience and camaraderie.

The performances also marked the end of a chapter for Jeff, who is stepping down as its



conductor after 22 years of leadership. He recalls his tenure beginning with a simple request: an interim leader. "After six weeks, I asked, 'What progress have you made in finding a permanent director?'" he recalls. "One of the choir members said, 'We think we found him.' I've been here ever since." At the time, Jeff served as the Planned Giving Officer for what was then called the Bridgewater HealthCare Foundation, now known as the BRC Foundation. His connection to the choir deepened after his retirement in 2009, as he continued directing the choir as a volunteer and later as he became a BRC resident himself.

The Village Choir has grown from a modest 12 voices to 21 skilled singers, all bringing dedication and passion to their craft. Jeff describes the choir as a family of "steady flames," members



whose commitment and musicality elevate every performance. Key figures among these "steady flames" include John White, a bass who has sung with the choir for over 20 years, and Jean Petre, whose involvement stretches back to 1988. Judy Henneberger, a soprano with a storied history in local choral groups, is another cornerstone of the choir. Pianist Alaina Pfeiffer provides not only accompaniment but also artistry as a musician and dancer. As the owner of InMotion Dance Studio, her students often perform at the choir's concerts, adding an enchanting visual dimension to the music.

New leadership is bringing fresh energy, with co-conductor Wil Nolen stepping in to guide the ensemble. Wil's decades of choral conducting experience will enrich the choir's repertoire, and his wife, Joyce, a skilled soprano and pianist, has also been a key contributor to the group. A music

major from Bridgewater College, Wil shared, "I'm happy to have the opportunity to lead this group of BRC voices; it's a great choir."

Beyond their campus performances, the choir has historically extended its reach into the community, singing at local churches and serving as ambassadors for BRC. In fact, choir member Doris Viands first heard the group perform at a local church years ago, which inspired her decision to retire to BRC. She explains, "I enjoy it because it releases endorphins in my brain—it's like getting a little shot of morphine, and I'm addicted! I get my fix when I go to choir, and I absolutely love it. I'm so grateful they let me sing alongside such talented musicians." This year, the choir welcomed the Bridgewater Choral Society for a collaborative performance in November, adding another layer of connection and shared artistry.



The Village Choir's journey continues to be one of passion and purpose. With every rehearsal and performance, they remind audiences of music's power to unite, inspire, and celebrate. And while the decorations from this year's Christmas season are being packed away, the echoes of the Village Choir will linger, carrying on their legacy of always bringing harmony to BRC.



Larry Powell

Larry Powell has spent a lifetime working hard, helping others, and giving back to the community—and he's brought that same dedication to his roles on Bridgewater Retirement Community's Operating Board and Finance Committee. A man with an impressive professional background and a personal philosophy ingrained in hard work and generosity, Larry's contributions have strengthened the decision-making processes that shape the lives of BRC residents and team members.

A Life Rooted in Agriculture

Larry's career began in agriculture, working for an agricultural lender for 35 years across Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland. Starting as a frontline field representative, he rose through the ranks to become Regional Sales and Lending Manager before retiring over a decade ago. Yet retirement wasn't the end of his work—it was just the beginning of a new chapter.

The very day Larry retired, he rented two additional farms, continuing the farming life he began as a teenager in Augusta County, Virginia. "My parents taught me two things," Larry shares. "Work—when you get tired of that, you work some more. And always give to those in need, even if it might hurt. Just give."

Larry carries those lessons forward, offering free mediation services, transitioning assistance

for farm families, and financial consulting, mostly for young farmers. "It's impossible today to just buy a farm and go into it," he explains. "I work with 35-and-unders to help them get through tough times and plan financially."

Married for 51 years to his wife, Linda, Larry credits her with much of his success. "She's the governor on my throttle when I need to slow down and the turbocharger when I need to speed up," he says. Together, they raised three daughters, have three super sons-in-law, and now enjoy spending time with their eight grandchildren.

Connected to BRC

While working full-time, Larry farmed part-time, renting land from current BRC resident Marion Mason. "I highly respect that man," Larry says, while Marion describes Larry as 'a fine gentleman.' Marion encouraged Larry to join the Operating Board, and when Larry agreed, Marion asked why. Larry explained that his motivation stemmed from his father-in-law's experience at BRC. "They took such good care of him, even in the old-school days of Assisted Living," Larry recalls. "They cared for him, even when he didn't have money. I wanted to give back."

Larry jokes that he was set up—just a month into his tenure, he was named Chair of the Finance Committee after others rolled off. He reminisces what a memorable experience that was; while he had to learn quickly, he gained valuable insights along the way.

Known for his ability to read body language, Larry has a knack for identifying and addressing the "elephant in the room." His straightforward approach keeps meetings focused on the organization's mission. "We're here to use the knowledge and background that brought us to BRC. Our work is for the good of the organization," Larry says.

Making an Impact

Away from BRC, Larry wears many hats in his community. As President and Chairman of the New Hope Telephone Cooperative Board—where he's served for over 40 years—Larry has helped drive groundbreaking advancements in connectivity. Thanks to the co-op's dedication, their small community stands out as the only one in the area with 100% underground fiberoptic connectivity to every home and business.

Larry also represents the Middle River district on the Broadband Committee and brings his agricultural expertise to the Farmers & Merchants Bank Agriculture Advisory Board in Bridgewater. "I don't really have hobbies," Larry admits with a smile. "Just work, farming, family, and helping others—not necessarily in that order."

Larry's work as Chair of the Finance Committee for BRC has been pivotal. He approaches decisions with both financial insight and empathy, ensuring transparency in budgeting and rate adjustments. "We're a service-oriented organization that serves people until the end of life," he says. "We don't just raise rates; we explain why and show where that money goes."

Larry is proud of the board's efforts to modernize BRC, from eliminating outdated facilities to improving workspaces for team members. "This place doesn't run without the team," he emphasizes. "Their satisfaction is just as important as the residents'."

Driven by Purpose, Defined by Legacy

At 73, Larry has no plans to slow down. "I wake up every day with a purpose," he says. "I want to learn something new every day and keep asking the tough questions that push us forward." Larry's dedication shines through in everything he does. "I've seen a lot, and I plan on seeing more," he says. "If I can use my knowledge, abilities, and resources to make a difference here, that's what I'll do." His legacy, he hopes, will reflect the values that drive him: "I help people do the things they want to do, just like people helped me be successful."

Looking Ahead

Larry strongly believes BRC's future is bright. "This is the place you want to be if you're considering retirement," he says. "We're on the leading edge, and we'll continue to be. The community has a strong team of forward thinkers, and we're planning for a future that ensures residents are not just cared for but spoiled."

When reflecting on the strengths of the Operating Board and Finance Committee, Larry emphasizes their continuous improvement. He notes that the board has evolved significantly, with thoughtful selection of members through interviews and conversations. Similarly, the committee has become a hybrid team, blending expertise in business, psychology, and people management to make informed, balanced decisions.

Larry Powell has experienced much and looks forward to more. "I like this job, but I don't call it a job," he shares. His journey is marked by hard work, dedication, and a deep commitment to improving the lives of others—values that perfectly align with BRC's mission.

A Vacation Like No Other:

The Story Behind an Overnight Trip to Smith Mountain Lake

At BRC, life is about creating experiences that honor personhood, well-being, and adventure—even for residents needing higher levels of care. This year, thanks to the generosity of donors and the innovation grant process, BRC team members made history by organizing an overnight trip to Smith Mountain Lake. This groundbreaking event brought residents and team members together for a unique experience filled with joy, relaxation, and connection.

The trip was the realization of a long-held dream for Assisted Living Life Enrichment Specialist, Karyn Posey, who wanted to create an opportunity for residents to reconnect with the world beyond BRC. Inspired by her love of travel and her grandmother's challenges with aging, Karyn sought to make travel accessible and meaningful for nursing residents. "It feels unfair that residents feel like they don't

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A VACATION LIKE NO OTHER

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have the option to travel anymore,” she explains. “This was about giving them an experience they thought might no longer be possible.”

Planning such a trip required careful coordination, from ensuring medical needs were met to selecting a location that offered adventure, tranquility, and accessibility. The team went above and beyond, with Clinical Coordinator Lauren Reeves, the nurse on the trip, meticulously organizing medication

records and emergency plans. Team members with boating licenses volunteered to drive a pontoon boat, ensuring residents could enjoy the water both days of the trip safely. Kayla Meuiner, Household Coordinator, also supported the trip, reflecting on the effort involved: “The prep work was more challenging than the trip itself, but it was worth every moment.”

The trip was filled with unforgettable experiences. Residents and team members sang along to early 90s country hits while cruising the lake, their voices blending with the waves of the water. Bill Hevener joked that his favorite part was “getting on the boat” and his least favorite

was “getting off.” Earle Fike described the lake as “an amazingly beautiful place,” adding that he enjoyed the view, the wind, and the peacefulness of the trip. Evenings were spent around a campfire with s’mores, while mornings began with quiet conversations in the kitchen over coffee. Some residents even cast their fishing lines from the dock, relishing in the serene moments by the water.

For Karyn, the trip was about more than just a getaway; it was an innovative

approach to enhancing well-being and connection. “We showed that residents in higher levels of care can still experience the joys of travel,” she says. “It’s about giving them the freedom to relax and feel at home, even in a new setting.”

The impact of the trip extended far beyond the lake. Families expressed heartfelt gratitude, and residents who initially hesitated to participate now eagerly anticipate the next adventure.

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A VACATION LIKE NO OTHER

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“One resident keeps saying, ‘I never thought I’d get to do this,’” Lauren shares. “Residents are still people who deeply value memories and experiences. Since starting at BRC, I’ve always said it’s just different—living life with residents isn’t something you typically experience at a long-term care facility. For me, it’s about being part of something bigger.”

None of this would have been possible without the generosity of donors. Karyn emphasizes how their support brought the dream to life. “From renting the house and boat to ensuring every need was met, your contributions created moments that are truly priceless,” she says. Jeff Lambert, BRC’s Vice President of Health Services, echoed this sentiment, praising the innovation grant program for enabling such transformative experiences: “To have donor support and a donor base that is

excited to fund programming and help us truly live alongside our residents is phenomenal. For our teammates to have the opportunity to apply for grants and go through that process is such a valuable learning experience.”

As the team reflects on the trip’s success, Karyn has her thinking cap on for the next adventure. She notes that while Smith Mountain Lake was a perfect location, the team is open to exploring other recommendations that offer similar opportunities.



The trip to Smith Mountain Lake was more than just an outing—it was a meaningful experience that celebrated life, community, and the endless potential of dreaming big. As Jeff put it, “It takes a village to make something like this happen, and seeing people work together so selflessly for our residents is a beautiful thing. I don’t think I could pick a single [best] moment; the entire moment itself is something beautiful to reflect on.” The memories made on this trip will undoubtedly inspire future endeavors and continue to enrich the lives of BRC residents and team members alike.



Halloween Festivities

BRC’s campus buzzed with Halloween excitement this fall, featuring a door decorating contest, spirit week, and the Harvest Festival. Serenity House took first place for decorations, and residents joyfully handed out candy to local trick-or-treaters, making it a Halloween to remember!



Charity Pool Tournament

Village pool players hosted an exciting Charity Pool Tournament, bringing together seasoned players and newly trained ‘Pool School’ competitors to battle it out for a good cause. Staunton Montessori School, along with the BRC Foundation’s Forever Family Endowment and WorkWell fund benefited from a total of \$750 in donations distributed among the causes.

Grand Illumination:

A Tradition of Light and Joy

As night fell on BRC throughout the month of December, a soft glow radiated across campus. Window by window, flickering candles came to life, creating a beacon of warmth and togetherness that embodied the spirit of the season.

Since its inception in 2015 during BRC's 50th anniversary celebrations, the Grand Illumination has been a cherished annual event, uniting residents and team members across all levels of living in a vibrant celebration of the holiday season. Initially envisioned as a December event that would touch the lives of every BRC resident, this tradition has blossomed into a multifaceted experience filled with light, music, and community spirit.

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GRAND ILLUMINATION

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A Magical Beginning

The first Grand Illumination set the tone for years to come. Enough candles were delivered to every village household to illuminate their windows, creating a breathtaking view as the community lit up just before the tree lighting ceremony. “It is a magical sight to see at night; a special peace covers the entire campus,”

shares former BRC team member Jan Flora, who first suggested Grand Illumination after experiencing a similar tradition in Williamsburg, VA.

Held in the Maple Terrace atrium, residents and team members gathered to sing carols with the Village Choir and enjoy music from resident pianists. The warm reception ensured that the tradition would continue.

Evolving Festivities

Over the years, Grand Illumination has grown in scope. In 2018, the event moved to the Oasis, where a larger tree and decorations allowed more residents to participate, including those in Assisted Living and Nursing households. The addition of performances by the Village Line Dancers, local choirs, and appearances by Santa and Mrs. Claus made the event even more festive. “It [Grand Illumination] enhances the feeling of family,” shares Sandy Counts, who has led the planning committee for the event in recent years.

2020 brought its own unique challenges with the pandemic, prompting the



committee to innovate with a socially distanced parade and live-streamed tree lighting, ensuring every resident could safely join the celebration. Cookies and hot chocolate delivered to homes added a sweet touch to the reimaged event.

Santa’s Elves: Working Behind the Scenes

Each year, the Grand Illumination committee ensures that every resident feels included in the festivities. With representatives from all levels of living, the planning process focuses on creating experiences for everyone—from gingerbread decorating for AL and Nursing residents to parade routes that wind by every household.

The committee is made up of seven team members and one resident, but Sandy would love to see the addition of one more resident to the team. This massive effort requires significant volunteer support.

Nearly 30 residents participated in this year’s “candle blitz,” preparing 2,500 candles with 5,000 batteries for distribution. 20 resident street representatives then delivered and collected the candles. The committee also relies on the invaluable support of the BRC grounds team to bring the event to life—whether it’s setting

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GRAND ILLUMINATION

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up decorations, assisting with candle delivery, or braving the cold to assemble the Grand Illumination tree at the Oasis, their dedication to lighting up the village is always appreciated.

Memorable Moments

For committee members and participants alike, the Grand Illumination creates lasting memories. One highlight for long-time committee member Tammy Jordan includes a performance by the Shenandoah Valley Children's Choir during the 2022 tree lighting; for many residents though, it is the progressive parade leading to the Oasis.

This year, the event was moved indoors to the Houff Community Center due to cold weather. It seamlessly transitioned into an Open House and Tour of Trees, featuring appetizers, beautifully decorated trees, and time for socializing. As Grand Illumination continues to grow, the commitment to bringing joy and togetherness to BRC

remains steadfast. With every candle lit and every song sung, this cherished tradition brightens the lives and hearts of residents and team members alike.



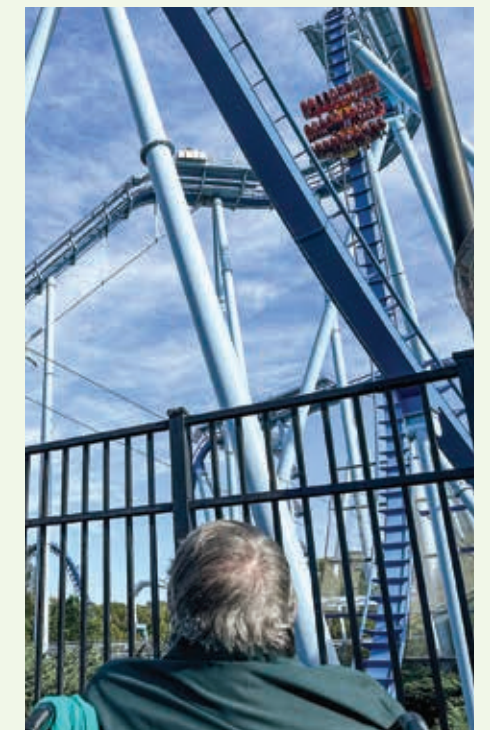
Leadership Academy

BRC's commitment to the continued development of its team is central to sustaining the culture it has proudly built over the past decade. In response, Annie Frazier, Manager of Organizational Design, Culture, and Training, recently established the first of many BRC Leadership Academy cohorts after hearing a need to empower leaders with the confidence and resources necessary to lead and serve effectively. Participants have praised the academy's practical, applicable content and its alignment with BRC's mission. Under the guidance of Don Taylor from Blue Ridge Community College, team members have developed tools for effective communication, motivation, and conflict resolution. Clinical Coordinator Ethel Kimmell highlights the importance of vulnerability in leadership as a key takeaway from the series. Similarly, Lu Trout, also a Clinical Coordinator, credits the academy with aiding her transition into leadership and strengthening team collaboration. Looking ahead, BRC plans to expand workshops to include more leaders and trainers, further advancing its culture of resident-centered care and team empowerment.



Thrill-Filled Adventure at Busch Gardens

Assisted Living residents took a trip to Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, embracing all the thrills and living their best lives on exhilarating roller coaster rides!



A Magical Holiday Tour of Christmas Trees



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1 Warm Woodland Christmas in the Atrium: This tree, which lit up the Grand Illumination, brings the outdoors in with earthy tones and natural accents.

2 Gingerbread Lane in the Living Room: A delightful tree full of edible-inspired décor, reminiscent of a cozy gingerbread house.

3 The Christmas Story outside Custer Dining Room: A tree that tells the timeless tale of Christmas through beautiful ornaments and symbols.

4 Whimsical Nutcracker in Custer Dining Room: A playful and festive tree full of nutcracker figures, adding charm to the dining area.



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5 Winter Wonderland in the Mack Room: A frosty and serene tree adorned with snowflakes and soft white lights.

6 Frosty the Snowman at the back entrance of Mack Rooms/Maple Terrace: Always a crowd favorite, this tree brings the magic of winter to life.

7 Merry & Musclebound in the Fitness Center: Featuring a fun, fitness-inspired theme topped with upside down elf feet for a bit of whimsy.

8 Timeless Elegance in the Smith Room: A beautifully classic tree, elegant and bright, capturing the true spirit of the season.

9 Festive & Fun in the Blue Ridge Room: A cheerful and vibrant tree, perfect for spreading holiday joy.

10 The Meadow in the Shenandoah Room: A tree filled with delicate butterflies, birds, and feathers, bringing a peaceful vibe to the space.

11 It's a Beanie Baby Christmas in Maple Grove Salon: This charming tree is adorned with donated Beanie Babies, which will be gifted to nursing residents after the holidays.

12 The Annual Book Tree in May Meadows Library: Lit and topped with *The Wonder of Christmas*, this tree celebrates both the joy of reading and the spirit of the season.

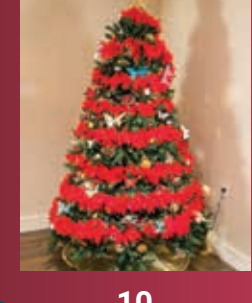
13 Traditional Christmas outside Marketing & Sales: A tree that embraces the classic holiday colors and decor, creating a timeless Christmas look.

The Cardinal Tree at the fireplace in the Junction near Cardinal Court in Assisted Living added a warm, festive touch as visitors entered.

Each tree brought its own special charm to BRC, spreading holiday cheer throughout!



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Honor Flight:

Top of Virginia—A Day of Tribute and Gratitude

In 2006, as the World War II Memorial was being built in Washington, D.C., a new tradition was born: Honor Flight. The organization is designed to give veterans the opportunity to visit the memorials that stand in their honor, and quickly grew into a nationwide network. But for one Virginia woman, the story of Honor Flight took on a personal meaning.

It all began when Dianne Klopp first heard about Honor Flight, living just an hour from Dulles Airport. At the time, her children were young, and she felt it was important to teach them about patriotism and respect for veterans. Dianne loaded her kids into her minivan and drove to the airport to greet a flight of World War II veterans returning from their visit to the memorial.

The experience left a lasting impact. She was deeply moved by the veterans' emotions and quickly decided to volunteer. For years, she helped as a guardian, ensuring the veterans were safe and well-cared-for as they made their journey through D.C.

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HONOR FLIGHT [continued]

But one day, standing in the terminal waiting for another flight to arrive, an idea sparked. She thought, “It’s great that we are doing this for the veterans flying in from across the country; but why aren’t we doing this for the veterans right in the Shenandoah Valley? These veterans were missing out on the same experience, but they, too, deserved a day of honor.”

In 2016, she founded Honor Flight Top of Virginia, an initiative that would bring veterans from the Shenandoah Valley to D.C. to visit the memorials built in their honor. Since then, 21 trips have been completed, sending veterans to see the memorials of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, along with the iconic Changing of the Guard at Arlington National Cemetery.

Honor Flight Top of Virginia focuses on veterans who served in Vietnam or earlier, including those who served in Korea or World War II. Any veteran who served prior to May 15, 1975, qualifies, regardless of

whether they served in wartime or peace. In many cases, veterans have never seen the memorials dedicated to their service, and as time passes, they may not have the chance to do so. The organization strives to ensure that these men and women are given the opportunity while they are still able to make the journey.

Each veteran is paired with a guardian for the day—a volunteer who ensures the veteran’s safety, helps with mobility if needed, and makes sure they have everything they need. Guardians are often family members—children, grandchildren—but sometimes, they are volunteers from the community, including ROTC cadets from George Mason University. The role of the guardian is vital, ensuring that veterans can enjoy the day to the fullest without worrying about logistics.

This September, seven BRC residents set out on their own journey with Honor Flight Top of Virginia Mission # 21. Eugene Counts, Paul Graham, Tom Hall, Rob Kloetzer, Ron Pierce, Carter Ritchie, and Tom Womble were accompanied by team members Jeff Lambert

and Jeff Ritchie, who served as guardians. Eugene, the oldest Korean War veteran on the trip, had the extraordinary honor of laying the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Reflecting on the experience, he shares, “To me, it was the greatest honor of even being in the service.” Eugene described the day as “momentous,” from visiting memorials like the Korean War Memorial and World War II Memorial to the heartfelt welcome home. He added, “I was proud to have been honored and appreciated, more than I ever expected.” Having his daughter by his side as his guardian made the experience even more meaningful.

Rhonda Collins, Life Enrichment Specialist for the Village, has had the honor of serving as a guardian and has supported Honor Flight for years. She begins the day by sending veterans off on their journey with breakfast at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds and is there to welcome them home in the evening. She describes Honor Flight as a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” for both veterans and their guardians.

The impact of Honor Flight on the veterans who participate is profound. Many of the Vietnam veterans have shared emotional stories of how they were treated when they returned home from war—stories of being spit on, called names, or even

attacked. These veterans were not given the respect they deserved upon returning from service, but Honor Flight strives to show them gratitude and remind them that their sacrifices have not been forgotten. Rob Kloetzer reflects on Mission #21 with heartfelt simplicity: “September 28, 2024, was a day I will always remember.” He adds, “It was a true welcome home—52 years after returning to a country with divided opinions over our involvement in the Vietnam War.”

For many, the trip is a deeply moving experience. One Vietnam veteran, after returning from a past Honor Flight, approached Dianne as she was cleaning up an empty room. “I couldn’t tell you this in front of everyone,” he said, “but I just wanted you to know what an impact this day had on me. Now that I’ve been honored, I can

[Continued on next page]





HONOR FLIGHT [continued]

finally die in peace.” His words left a lasting impression on Dianne, becoming one of her most poignant memories.

This powerful sentiment drives the volunteers that keep Honor Flight going. Honor Flight Top of Virginia is run entirely by volunteers, and the organizers do everything they can to ensure that no veteran is left behind. The trip is all-inclusive: veterans are provided with breakfast, lunch, and dinner, an Honor Flight shirt to serve as their uniform for the day, and special surprises along the way.

Dianne dedicates her time to Honor Flight Top of Virginia events year-round, but her work goes beyond simply organizing trips. For her, it’s about giving veterans the dignity and honor they deserve—recognizing their sacrifices and ensuring they know that their service matters; it’s about creating memories, both for the veterans and their families; and as she reflects on this journey, Dianne knows one thing for sure: “It’s worth every bit of the hard work. We are here to let them know we have not forgotten.”

The next Honor Flight will depart from Harrisonburg on September 27, 2025, and veterans from all over the region are encouraged to sign up. There are no waiting lists, and each veteran who registers is guaranteed a spot. BRC veterans can sign up at www.honorflight-tov.org/forms or by calling (540) 692-9197.



BRC turns 60 in 2025

We’re excited to unveil our special 60th-anniversary logo, which celebrates six decades of fostering **energy for life** at BRC! Watch for it throughout the year as we celebrate this milestone together, honoring 60 years of community, purpose, and vitality while embracing the bright future ahead!



BRIDGEWATER
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
OF **ENERGY FOR LIFE**

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- Help to ensure that residents who outlive their financial resources are never asked to leave their homes.
- Purchase needed equipment and vehicles.
- Assist in the development of spiritual life programs and activities.
- Support resident programs in our nursing households like day trips to the beach.

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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**.



Bridgewater residents and community members gathered to enjoy the tradition of the annual Christmas parade.

The *Bridge* is made possible by the work of the following team members, contractors, and contributors.

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The *Bridge* committee would love your feedback! Email your thoughts on this edition to communicate@brcliving.org.

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