



Kay Bingham enjoys a big scoop of ice cream at an event celebrating our 2020 Best of the Valley Awards. We swept the listings, winning in every single senior living category!

#### FROM THE PRESIDENT



Welcome to 2021! I think it will be a long time before any of us begin to feel nostalgic for 2020.

It was a challenging year for all of us, especially in senior living communities like ours. But as I reflect on what transpired, I'm still amazed by the dedication and diligence from our entire community. Team members stepped up in a big way—innovating to solve novel challenges and often making personal sacrifices to help keep our community safe. Likewise, our residents and their families accepted some of the hard realities imposed by the virus with grace and understanding and became partners in our efforts to keep COVID-19 off our campus.

Now, we're looking forward. We aren't out of the woods yet of course, but I have a renewed sense of optimism for what's to come. I hope that in the coming year, the pages of The Bridge will once again be filled with stories and photos of group gatherings and activities. I hope we'll be able to once again welcome family members to visit their loved ones—without plexiglass barriers between them. I hope that volunteers once again brighten our hallways. And I hope that we'll not just go "back to normal," whatever normal was. I hope that we'll move **forward together** somewhere new and better.

Because if 2020 taught us anything, it's that we are more deeply connected and dependent on each other than perhaps we ever realized. So now, as we look forward to vaccine availability and a potential end to the pandemic, I hope we don't forget it.

If we can remember the lessons of 2020, I'm confident that the future we build here at BRC together in 2021 will be bright. I look forward to seeing all that we accomplish together this year.

Rodney D. Alderfer

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President | Bridgewater Retirement Community

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## Resident Corner

By Ellen Layman

#### Confession: I love books. I love to read.

It seems natural then that I would volunteer to "work" in May Meadows Library, surrounded by wonderful books and other book-lovers. I lament that I will never have time to read all the books I want to read. I have bookshelves, more bookshelves and more bookshelves loaded down and spilling over with books.

Among my most treasured:

- Markings by Dag Hammarskjold A gift on my 22nd birthday
- Taken On Trust by Terry Waite Written in his head while in solitary confinement in a Beirut, Lebanon, prison for almost four years
- Walking With The Wind by John Lewis The late Congressman's commitment to getting into "good trouble"
- Fireflies by Rabindranath Tagore A lovely little collection of his brief and beautiful poems

But several times a year I flip through another favorite - a well-used, almost falling apart paperback that I

bought for 15 cents back in the 1950s. Sing a Tune was the official songbook of Camp Bethel, a Church of the Brethren summer camp in Botetourt County, Va.

What good memories! We loved singing "Kookaburra sits on an old gum tree" and "My hat it has three corners" and "Every time I feel the spirit." Many songs in that book were sung in rounds - clusters of singers starting at different times and ending at different times, but beautiful harmony when we were all singing.

Looking into a new year holds such promise. Whether we are sharing tips on good books or maybe soon joining for a hymn sing, we cherish the harmony of a connected community.

Happy New Year!

BRC Residents: Would you like to have your original writing featured in the next edition of The Bridge? Email communicate@brcliving.org to share your ideas!

By Jeremy Douylliez



fter months of anticipation, BRC's Anewest dining venue, The Junction, opened in September. Featuring a coffee nook, pizza oven, deli, grill, and action station, the new venue offers an exciting menu and an attractive contemporary dining room. Situated directly between the Houff Community Center and our Assisted Living Connector, the Junction is the new go-to campus destination for a quick bite.

#### At the Intersection of Mindful and Delicious

In designing the menu for the Junction, the dining team focused on finding a balance between fast, efficient service and healthy, nutritious meals. It's part of a commitment by BRC and our dining partner Sodexo to a mindful approach that focuses on transparency of ingredients, delicious food, and satisfying portions.

"The idea is to provide residents with a quick and fun destination for healthy and wholesome meals," says executive chef Adrian Taylor. "We built the menu to do just that, while also offering other resident favorites."

While the build-your-own salad bar hasn't opened due to COVID prevention





measures, the team prepares fresh graband-go salads daily that have been a big hit. Beyond salads, residents and team members looking for a healthier bite can enjoy a freshly prepared wrap from the deli, smoothie from the nook, or grilled entrée from the grill. Plus, from Pistachio Encrusted Chicken and Rice to Twisted Turkey Wraps and more, the Action Station is BRC's new destination for a creative, healthy, and delicious daily special.



Of course, opening an indoor dining venue in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic created some challenges for the dining team. "We never could have imagined that the Junction, designed to bring our community together, would have to open under these circumstances," noted BRC President Rodney Alderfer. "But with the help of our infection prevention specialists, we were able to open safely."

To help keep everyone safe and mitigate the risk of spreading the virus, tables have been spaced greater than six feet apart and residents are encouraged to dine only with those in their immediate bubble.

[Continued on next page]

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#### BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



# Deb Greubel

### Finding Joy in People's Stories

By Karen Doss Bowman

During nearly 22 years as a family nurse practitioner and associate professor specializing in internal medicine and geriatrics, Deborah "Deb" Greubel, DNP, has experienced the joy of hearing her older patients' stories and catching a glimpse of their past lives. In a fast-paced world where the healthcare industry tends to focus on patient volume rather than the quality of doctor-patient interactions, Deb believes this population's rich histories may be overlooked.

As one of the newest members of the Bridgewater Retirement Community Foundation Board, Deb is looking forward to continuing her work as an advocate for aging adults.

"Older adults have great stories," says Deb, whose intriguing patients over the years included the greatgranddaughter of abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe. "It's important for healthcare providers to see beyond who that person is now, and to step back to see who that person was in the past. You never know what kind of historical stories you're going to hear. It's about preserving the integrity of the individual and digging deeper to discover people at a different level."

Deb, the vice president and dean of the Murphy Deming College of Health Sciences at Mary Baldwin University (MBU), brings her own storied history to this post. Prior to joining the administration at MBU, she was director of the School of Nursing at The University of Tulsa (TU). Deb also served as an associate professor and faculty member at the University of Alabama School of Medicine, the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center College of Medicine, the Kramer School of Nursing, and The University of Tulsa School of Nursing. She also was an administrator for a six-hospital healthcare system. In addition to geriatrics and internal medicine, she has clinical expertise in palliative and hospice care.

A graduate of the University of Tulsa, Deb received her master's degree and nurse practitioner credentials from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. She earned her doctorate from Oklahoma City University and completed an American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) fellowship at the Wharton School of Business in 2016.

A Captain in the United States Navy, Deb earned a certificate in International Strategy and Policy from the Navy War College. During her 20 years in the Naval Reserves, Deb served in multiple international leadership roles, planning and executing more than 25 international humanitarian/disaster relief training exercises. A veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, she has received numerous awards, including the Global War on Terrorism Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal, the Navy Achievement Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Army Achievement

When she's not working, Deb enjoys retreating in the Waynesboro home she shares with three dogs: a Jack Russell terrier, a Great Dane, and an English bulldog. The Great Dane is trained as a therapy dog, and she hopes to let him visit BRC residents once the pandemic is under control.

Deb's 87-year-old mother lives in an assisted living facility, and she understands the impact that Covid-19 lockdowns have on older adults who are separated from family and friends. She's been impressed with BRC's determination to keep residents safe and healthy under extraordinary circumstances.

"The BRC team works diligently and hard to face this challenge," Deb says. "I'm pleased to be part of this community's efforts to continue providing quality care and preserving the dignity and respect its residents."



Residents and team members donated enough food to fill 15 Blessing Boxes for families in need this Thanksgiving. The families received multiple boxes of non-perishable food, a full bag of fresh produce, and a large turkey

#### THE JUNCTION [continued]

Hand sanitizing stations are located at each entrance and throughout the Junction and bottles of hand sanitizer are available on every table. Tables are sanitized between each use and frequently touched surfaces like countertops, payment terminals, and condiment holders are frequently cleaned.

The Junction is currently open only for residents and team members, but family members visiting residents can order takeout. The entire menu (including the action station special) is available for takeout for residents who prefer to eat at home.

#### **More to Come**

Following the renovation and menu overhaul of the Custer Room in 2019 and the closure of Stevens Café in 2020, the Junction opening is one more step on our journey to a fully reimagined dining experience. Now, the team plans to continue expanding the menu at the Junction but has also set its sights on the opening of a new café, Gardenside Diner, adjacent to the renovated meditation garden.



#### Concord House Opens Soon

Since opening its doors in 2009, Gardner House has set the standard for memory care. Now, we're set to expand our capacity to serve residents experiencing dementia or Alzheimer's with the opening of Concord House. Designed to maximize quality of life for older adults with mild to moderate cognitive impairment, our memory support households provide an activity-based program in a comforting home-like environment. Plus, Concord House will feature several double occupancy suites for married couples.

#### Meditation Garden and Café

Progress continues in the rehabilitation of the meditation garden, and work has now started on its adjacent café. Both are slated to open later this year.

#### **Houff Community Center**

The Houff Community Center renovations are moving right along. The Shenandoah, Blue Ridge, and Smith Rooms have reopened across the hall from our new fitness center. Work in the atrium continues and is slated to be complete early this year.

#### Near the Finish Line

After over two years of hard work, we are thrilled to see our major construction projects reach the finish line. It's been a transformative time for our community, with improvements to community spaces that impact all levels of living.

#### TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



## Jeannette Suter Brings Experience and Passion to BRC

By Jeremy Douylliez

When Jeannette Suter was a college student at James Madison University, she and her grandfather stayed connected by exchanging letters back and forth. She started to notice some changes. "His handwriting was atrocious to begin with," she remembers, "But during that time, I noticed that his letters were becoming harder and harder to decipher." She expressed some initial concern to her mother who had been a long-distance caregiver for him for several years. But the real eye opener came when he mailed her a blank piece of paper. "I was completely taken aback by that," she recalls. The dementia diagnosis that followed helped to spark a passion in Jeannette for working with older adults that has never abated.

After college, Jeannette worked in admissions for the skilled nursing center at Harrisonburg Heath and Rehab, helping residents make the transition from the hospital to nursing care. Then, after obtaining her Master's in Public Administration, she became the executive director of Generations Crossing. While there, she managed the daily operations of the Adult Day Care Center and helped facilitate a major capital campaign to build a new building, which they still operate from today.

Over the course of her career, she has also served as the President for AMBRcare Geriatric Care Management and as the Marketing Director for Home Instead Senior Care.

Last year, she joined our senior team as Vice President for Independent and Assisted Living. It's a big job. She oversees all functions and operations for independent and assisted living—including wellness, dining, resident services, activities, facilities management, and environmental services. As a member of the Senior Team, she'll play a critical role in guiding our organization as we strive to be the best that we can be for our residents and greater community. She's spent a lot of her time since coming on familiarizing herself with the job and trying to get to know residents.

"I'm still in learning mode," she says. "The joy of learning (in this job and in life) is that you continue to add new pieces to the puzzle."

Because of COVID-19 precautions, she introduced herself to the community through a series of small meet and greets, each with a limited number of residents. "I think that actually worked to my advantage," she says. "Of course, it took a lot more time. But in the end, they were so much more effective than if we had done one massive reception. I actually had a chance to put names and faces together and start building connections and relationships."

Jeannette lives in Harrisonburg with her husband Brant (a high school sweetheart) and their 10-yearold daughter Meredith. She loves her dog, a good dad joke, and a hot cup of coffee. In her downtime, she enjoys shopping and spending as much time as possible with her family.

With her broad range of experience and the passion she carries for working with older adults, Jeannette is an exciting addition to the BRC team.

## Beyond the Call:

These Team Members Carried the "Fill the Cup" Banner

In late 2019, we launched a new team member program to celebrate our culture. We call it "Fill the Cup" and it reflects how our team members strive every day to make positive impacts in the lives of our residents. Team members nominate each other for Fill the Cup Awards which are presented regularly.

Every now and then, a nomination comes through for a team member who has truly gone beyond the call of duty. So now, after completing a year with the program fully implemented, we thought it would be a good time to share a few highlights. The dedication these team members showed to residents reflects the best in us.

When we talked to them, we heard a similar refrain. Most were surprised to learn that they'd been nominated, and said something along the lines of, "I didn't think I'd done anything extra, I just thought it was part of my job."

#### **Danielle Bover**

Nominated November 2019

As a nightshift team member, Danielle took the initiative on the eve of Thanksgiving to complete all of the household laundry for the following shift. In return, this allowed the following shift to slow down and spend time intimately celebrating Thanksgiving with the residents. Her initiative and thoughtfulness impacted all who celebrated Thanksgiving in the household that day!

#### **Caroline Stafford**

Nominated November 2019

When she learned that a resident needed help finding a secret Santa gift for a child at her church, Caroline braved Black Friday crowds to make sure the resident had the perfect gift in time. "Caroline always jumps in to brighten our residents' lives," her nominator said.

#### **Laura Powell**

Nominated December 2019

When a music-loving resident in a nursing household began to decline, Laura arrived with her guitar to sing and play hymns with the resident and their family. Her gift of music provided them with comfort and peace during a time of immense need.

#### **Candy Biller**

Nominated March 2020

Candy's name is a frequent on Fill the Cup award lists, and she exemplifies the mindset of a servant's heart. A resident's granddaughter was grateful for her frequent communication during quarantine that helped her stay connected to her grandmother. Colleagues have nominated her for willingness to step up and help with work—even coming in several times on off days to assist with rounds.

#### **Jason Anderson**

Nominated May 2020

"Jason is always so helpful and willing to be in the trenches whenever needed," his nominator shared. His fellow team members know he constantly looks for ways to enhance the lives of everyone



**Retirement Community** 

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### Being "The Best" means a lot to us!

We've won lots of awards over the years, but garnering the 2020 Best of the Valley Awards in all four

categories means something special to us. That's because it represents the opinion of those who know us best...our community.

We are driven by our vision to enhance and energize healthy living for our 550+ residents, our 400+ team members, and our entire community.

Our top priority is, quite simply, to do everything we can to support the best possible quality of life for everyone on our 55-acre campus and throughout the region.

around him. He was nominated for finding a better sleeping option for a resident who was feeling restless in their room. Jason showed a mix of creativity and a servant's heart by rolling up his sleeves to be a part of the solution.

#### **Zoyla Torres-Cruz**

Nominated May 2020

Zoyla is constantly looking for ways to make small adjustments that lead to larger, positive lifestyle changes. When she noticed that a resident was having more trouble walking than usual, she worked out a technique that allowed the resident to get where they needed to go with just one team member assisting. "I am so thankful for her intuitive and observant nature which helps streamline and smooth the rough spots," her nominator shared.

#### **Kathy Sommers**

Nominated June 2020

Kathy was nominated for the many ways she works to keep residents stimulated and engaged. Everything from baking cookies and planting flowers to leading devotionals. "She makes each person feel so special," shared her nominator. "Seeing her in action warms my heart!"

#### **Carla Griffin**

Nominated September 2020

Carla went above and beyond to help residents increase their stamina by adding walks and NuStep sessions in between their fitness appointments. This allowed the fitness team to accomplish more with the residents during their sessions, and helped the residents reach their fitness goals faster.

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## Pulling Together

## Team Members Rise to the Occasion During Recent COVID Outbreak

By Karen Doss Bowman

When the coronavirus pandemic swept through the nation this spring, Bridgewater Retirement Community (BRC) was fortunate to avoid an outbreak for many months. But as COVID-19 rates surged in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County community this fall, the campus was not invulnerable to its impact as a small cluster of residents and team members were infected.

After two Unity Household team members tested positive for the virus in October, the household was immediately quarantined. Ultimately, 11 residents (including one from an adjacent household) and one additional team member contracted the virus.

Team members from areas throughout BRC—from nursing and administration to maintenance and dining services—rallied to support the ill and those providing direct care.

"From the moment of those first positive tests, it became all hands on deck," says Jeff Lambert vice president of Healthcare. "I'm really proud of how team members responded and stepped in to support each other and our residents."

#### Outbreak

BRC's stringent safety and prevention protocols—such as closing the campus to visitors and regular screening of team members—have been a key



Regular testing of front-line team members helped BRC detect and respond to the outbreak quickly.



factor in preventing the spread of infection among residents and team members. And the community's innovative household nursing model allows for better containment of disease.

The affected residents in Unity Household were moved to a designated isolation suite separated by durable plastic sheeting. Only team members assigned direct caregiving duties to these residents were allowed in the secluded space.

"None of the team members who were working in the COVID area got sick, despite working closely with infected people and facing additional stress that can leave them susceptible to getting sick," says Barbara Frye, RN, BSN, director of nursing. "It gave us a sense of satisfaction to know that we had in place strong protocols and guidelines that our team members were following."

## Personal Protective Equipment Works

While personal protective equipment (PPE) is known to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it isn't comfortable to wear, especially for hours on end. Nursing team members—many volunteering to work 12-hour shifts to reduce the number of people going in and out of the isolation area—wore hooded Tyvek suits, N95 facemasks plus an additional facemask (to help preserve the N95s), goggles and gloves, and isolation gowns. Each outer-layer gown was designated for use with a specific resident.

"It was hot and uncomfortable," says Cindy Morris, RN, quality improvement coordinator. "But no one complained, and many teammates were willing to serve above their usual roles."

"Personal protective equipment is huge," Lambert adds. "When folks hear negative stories about large outbreaks in nursing homes, they need to understand that many of these organizations are short staffed, and their workers were not wearing proper equipment. We are proud to have been able to provide our team members with proper equipment and put in place procedures to mitigate spread."

Fortunately, no residents were hospitalized, and basic primary care measures—such as promoting hydration, boosting nutrition, and encouraging mobility—resulted in good outcomes. One COVID-positive resident passed away, but that death was in part attributable to factors beyond the infection.

Nursing team members also did a lot of one-on-one visiting with residents, helping them make phone calls or send pictures to their family members.

"Our residents were already feeling isolated with our entire community being closed off since March, and this situation added to the anxiety," says Cindy DeLoach, LPN, Unity House clinical coordinator. "Our team really had to step up to provide emotional support for those who were sick, as well as for the residents who were worried about getting the virus."

Lambert is proud of the hard work, compassion and collaboration shown by team members across the organization. BRC rewarded their efforts with a bonus in June and an additional bonus during the holiday season. It was important to show gratitude for team members' willingness to pitch in to keep residents safe and healthy.

"This is a new experience for everyone, so it often felt like we were learning on the fly," Lambert says. "We strive to make the best decisions possible, and we do that by putting our residents first. If you do that, then the rest takes care of itself."

#### HONOR ROLL OF DONORS

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By choosing to become a monthly donor, your contributions:

outlive their financial resources are never asked to leave their homes. Purchase needed equipment and

Help to ensure that residents who

- vehicles. Assist in the development of spiritual life programs and activities.
- Support resident programs in our nursing households like day trips to the beach.

Consider becoming a BRC Energizer today. Your generosity makes a difference.

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Yolanda E. Gerard Karen Gerard

† Deceased

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.

### The Hard Work of Gratitude

By Carrie Budd

So much has been given to me; I have not time to ponder over what I have been denied."

- Helen Keller

Many of you may not appreciate the title of my article for this Bridge, but I am sure everyone has had just a

moment or two of frustration with 2020. What will we all say about 2020 in five years? Ten years? What will we tell our children or grandchildren who are too young right now to understand how difficult this year has been for everyone?

I am not talking about the political divisions we have all had to deal with even though this has been painful and upsetting. I am talking about our realization that our world has changed and so have we. Change usually happens more slowly. We realize our ways of doing things could be more efficient or that we need to do different things all together. The COVID pandemic, however, pushed us all to change overnight how we do things as simple as shop for groceries.

Our world has shifted and like other major life events our perspective and view of ourselves in the world has had to shift as well. What are we to do with so much uncertainty—especially if we are one of those families who has lost someone?

I have found focusing on gratitude to be the way through the ups and downs of the last 10 months. I am very grateful for my team members and that I have a job to go to each day that helps improve the lives of others. I am grateful for the hard work and

expertise of our infection prevention and nursing team who have created safety protocols to keep our residents and team members healthy. I am grateful for our dining team who has had to adapt so many times to finding ways to deliver healthy, delicious food to each of our residents. I feel gratitude for my and my family's health during this public health crisis and that they are still all working or in school. Everyone at BRC is very grateful for the tremendous support of our donors, our families and our community.

However, gratitude is not always easy. Sometimes it is work. Although I am happy that my family is safe, I am not grateful that I cannot visit or spend time with my grandson. I understand that the pandemic will not last forever, but I am not grateful that I cannot eat out or travel whenever I want. A lot of people believe that gratitude should be effortless and straightforward, but of course it is not. It is, however, important that we focus as Helen Keller does in the quote at the beginning of this article on what we are given and not what we are denied. As we start 2021 and say goodbye to the tumultuous year that was 2020, let's be grateful for today and all that is to come. Let's appreciate all that we have and be grateful we are here to enjoy it.

Everyone at BRC thanks you for your loving support and wishes you a happy, healthy New Year!

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In late December, residents and direct care team members in nursing households were able to receive their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

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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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