

THE *Bridge*

SUMMER 2026





Above: Sally & Michael Chumbley pose following her portrait unveiling. With donor support, team member Amanda Shrader hosted a special Women's History Month portrait experience honoring nine women from across our community.

On the Cover: The Rounds and Burkholders share a moment at BRC Fest while gearing up for the Founders Day Community Bike Ride.

From the President

As I read through this issue of *The Bridge*, I'm reminded how many of these stories share a common theme: people showing up for one another. Whether through volunteering, movement, creativity, gardening, service, or simply sharing a meal together, these pages reflect what makes BRC such a special community.

This season, we celebrated Founders Day by focusing on connection—working hard and playing hard together. Residents, team members, families, donors, and volunteers packed meals, built ramps, rode bikes, gathered under tents, laughed through bingo games, and shared pit chicken around picnic tables. While the activities themselves were meaningful, what stood out most was the spirit behind them: a culture rooted in compassion, generosity, and purpose.

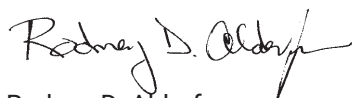
You'll read stories of residents and team members bringing their passions to life in ways that enrich our community. From the BRC Jesters finding humor in everyday moments, to yoga classes helping residents build confidence and connection through movement, to the growing impact of our Good Roots garden initiative. These stories remind us that well-being looks different for everyone. Often, it's found in the simple moments we share together.

I'm also grateful for the many individuals highlighted throughout this issue who quietly and consistently make BRC stronger. Residents, team members, and volunteers continue to shape this community through their ideas, involvement, and encouragement. Their willingness to support one another and embrace new ideas is what keeps BRC active and engaging.

One of my favorite pieces in this issue is "All Roads Lead Home." The stories shared by residents are a reminder that there is no single path to community. Some journeys to BRC began decades ago; others started with a conversation on an airplane or a simple drive through town. Yet each story reflects the same hope: finding a place of connection and belonging.

As we continue moving through our 61st year, I remain deeply grateful for the people who make this community what it is today. Thank you for the ways you continue to show up for one another and help create a place where residents and team members can truly thrive.

With gratitude,



Rodney D. Alderfer
President | Bridgewater Retirement Community



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Where Wellness Takes Root

Thanks to donor support, work is underway in the new Sanctuary Garden (between Lantz Chapel and Harmony House), transforming the area into a serene outdoor experience focused on restoration and connection with nature.

Meanwhile, the Wellness Garden continues to expand the Horticultural Therapy experience led by Carrie Budd, including new native plantings, perennials, and two raised garden beds designed for hands-on resident engagement.



Living Our Values

In May, we recognized five team members with Tilt the Cup Awards for exemplifying our values of compassion, innovation, and stewardship in meaningful ways.

Congratulations to Logan Strawderman, Jared Lunn, Kevin Nelson, Rachel Kirtley, Cindy Morris, and Odesa Elezi (pictured) on this well-deserved recognition!



Ride On

Our bike program recently added two recumbent trikes and three new bikes, including e-bikes and a cruiser-style bike, to its fleet through generous donor support. Orientations and introductory rides helped residents and team members build confidence and encouraged inclusivity for all experience levels. With community rides already taking place across campus and beyond, our biking program is well underway.



A Texas-Sized Welcome

We recently welcomed Crystal Brown to the Marketing team as the new Marketing Counselor for Independent Living. Originally from Texas, Crystal brings experience in real estate, along with a strong passion for relationship-building and community engagement. She and her husband, along with their two children, are excited to now call the Shenandoah Valley home.

Until Next Season...

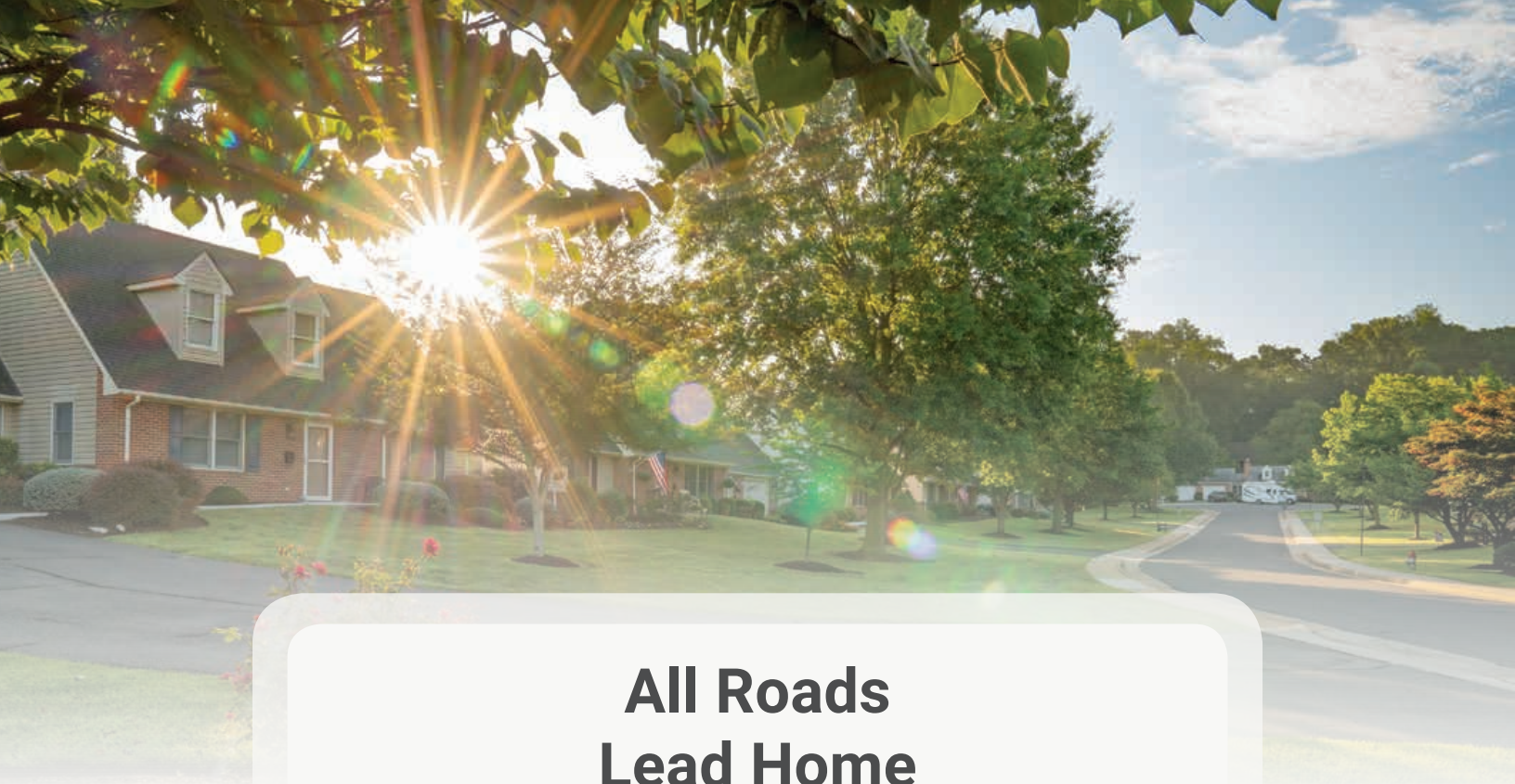
"Another unforgettable wiffle ball season is in the books! From walk-off home runs and fierce competition to cheering crowds, snacks, and lively commentary, this year's games brought residents and team members together all season long. Congratulations to this year's undefeated champions, Mow Money, Mow Problems—the proud owners of the coveted Woodwerks Cup. And stay tuned, there may just be an all-star game in our future..."

Reporting for BRC SportsNetwork,
Commissioner Donovan



Now Playing

Our nursing household residents received a major upgrade this spring, with all televisions replaced by larger smart TVs and service transitioned to Retirement Home TV—creating a more tailored television experience. The updated channel lineup now includes an extensive movie package while also bringing Turner Classic Movies back to the lineup, a resident-favorite we lost a few years ago! A special shoutout goes to our IT and Support Services teams for the extensive planning, research, and coordination that made the transition possible.



All Roads Lead Home

There's no single path that leads someone to our community—each journey is a little different, shaped by timing, family, faith, and sometimes even a bit of chance. We asked residents to share how they found us, and their stories are as meaningful as the community they now call home:

“Ginnie & Bill Reinhold

It's been about 7½ years since we moved in, and we couldn't be happier! We've seen a number of changes just in the time we've been here, and it gets better and more attractive all the time—with delightful team members who take care of so many of our needs; leadership who listen to our preferences and make every effort to accommodate us; and the security of knowing that as we continue to age and may need different levels of care, it is all available here among our friends and people who know us.



“ Edwin Johnson

Our story starts in 1967. Dona and I were sent here with another couple in late summer of 1967. We were on our way to Nigeria, but because of issues there, we were not able to enter the country. I was doing alternative service through Brethren Volunteer Service and had to report for duty, so they sent us here until we could move on to Nigeria.

We were here about a month. I did maintenance, and Dona worked in nursing. We stayed in a duplex near the heating plant—a small square building that is still there. We enjoyed our time here and always kept BRC in the back of our minds.

Over the years, we were in the area several times, as Jim and Mary (my sister) Miller moved to Bridgewater. More recently, our son and family settled in Staunton.

In the summer of 2021, we moved here from Nebraska. The layout of the village homes and other features attracted us. Since moving here, we have felt at home from day one. The team has always been helpful and understanding. We are glad for the continuing care available, and the food and dining are excellent. We enjoy our neighbors, and it has been a great move for us. ”



“ Judy Phillippi

My first introduction to BRC happened in the 1960s, when my grandparents, Reverend Russell and Florence Showalter, retired and moved into independent living in the Courts. About 25 years later, my parents, Vernon and Miriam Summy, became residents, and my sister, Linda, began working in dining services. Not long after, my husband, Dick Phillippi, began working in maintenance and later became Maintenance Supervisor.

With so much history at BRC, it just seemed inevitable that my sister Donna and I would also become residents. We now live in separate apartments across from each other in The Courts! ”





“ Sherill Hostetter

Darrel began verbalizing that he was struggling with upkeep and maintenance and that he wanted to move to a retirement community. I was not in agreement with the timing as I loved the beauty of our backyard and I enjoyed hosting guests in our 4-bedroom house.

We realize not everyone can be accepted into a retirement community with the promise of continuous care, if one runs out of personal finances. We do not take our move to BRC for granted. It is a privilege.

We have never doubted our move to BRC. And four months after moving in, Darrel was diagnosed with Parkinson's. We appreciate that BRC has worked hard to create a positive team culture among residents and team. And the fitness classes offered are so valuable.

We also appreciate the stance of the dining team leaders in “recognizing that this is our home, and that they want us to be able to eat healthy foods in Custer Dining without fear of having negative physical reactions because of our disease struggles.” We are very grateful to be here!



“ Marguerite Cale

Some BRC journey's began at 30,000 feet.

“I was on a plane ride home from visiting my brother when I ended up sitting next to Marguerite [Cale],” team member Andrew Fillers recalls. “She didn't meet strangers, and neither did I, so we talked the whole way—from Charlotte to Weyers Cave.” Somewhere along the flight, the conversation turned to senior living.

“We talked the whole way,” Marguerite adds. “Almost at Shenandoah [airport], I asked what kind of work he does. He said, ‘I work at BRC.’ I had my name on Sunnyside and VMRC, and he said, ‘Why don't you have lunch with me one day?’” She did, and that visit made all the difference.

“I came, had lunch, looked around, and decided to put my name on the list.” And now, just a few years later, Marguerite calls BRC home.



“

Julie Leitner

We moved into the Courts in 2016 and never looked back; I am very well cared for and love my home here. Thanks to all for my care.

”



“

Saraona Minnich

Here I am with NO regrets. Best decision I ever made.

”



“

Sheri Riedl

I visited BRC first, and everything I saw after that just didn't give me the same vibe—and the biggest plus was that the whole community was flat and had sidewalks everywhere.

”

“

Mary Porter

Neil is a graduate of Bridgewater College, so he was already familiar with the town. After we got married, we continued to make trips to Bridgewater. We noticed this sweet little community of houses, which became our favorite place to ride [bikes]. It made us think about our own retirement, still about 10 years away—could this be a place for us?

We are planners and were seriously considering BRC. We had looked at other retirement communities, both online and in-person, but none compared to BRC's beautiful campus and amenities. We love the Shenandoah Valley and the small-town feel of Bridgewater.

The same home became available three times—the third time, one year before [our] retirement. We knew it was a sign—it was meant to be! We quickly sold our house in Frederick, Maryland and every weekend we drove from Frederick to Bridgewater because we couldn't wait to enjoy our new home!

Funny thing is, Neil was not even legally old enough to live at BRC—his older wife got him in! We've lived here almost five years, and every day we realize how blessed we are to call BRC home!

”



VOLUNTEER
Spotlight

The Power of a Few Hours



It's often the quiet, consistent acts of compassion that leave the biggest impact at BRC—and

for residents in Gardner House, Wednesdays with Belinda are something special.

A dedicated volunteer with a natural ability to connect with others, Belinda Phillips brings more than just crafts to the table. Each week, she creates a space filled with laughter, creativity, music, and moments where residents can express themselves, share stories, and enjoy being together.



with Belinda Phillips

Q: How did you first get involved with volunteering?

A: “I have always volunteered. I started when I lived in Maryland in the late '80s. I was working a full-time job and still found something to volunteer for—I just had the desire, the need, the fulfillment. I really enjoy giving back, and I especially enjoy working with older adults.”



When I had my preschool, we would go on field trips to Generations Crossing, and I even had my daughter volunteer from elementary school through high school. After I retired from preschool, it gave me the opportunity to focus more on volunteering. A friend mentioned BRC and I started here about six years ago.”

Q: Why Gardner House? What keeps you coming back?

A: “I love the camaraderie. We all have such a good time—eating lunch together, dancing, and doing crafts. The team is so supportive of everything I do; they’re unreal!

The residents keep me coming back week after week. They do my heart good. When I

“
She believes in us.
”

– Sandy

wake up and realize it’s Wednesday, it’s like, ‘Yes, this is fun. This is why I do it.’ It just fills my day.”

Q: What do your weekly crafts look like?

A: “I choose a project that’s challenging, but not difficult, so they can enjoy it. Crafting should not feel like a chore to these ladies.

We do seasonal projects—fun things. At Christmas, I try to make things residents can give as gifts, and we wrap them together. Soon we’re doing clay pot mushrooms for their garden. It’s just about making it fun.

They know when they see me come in on Wednesday we’ll be dancing, crafting, and having a blast! One [resident] will ask, ‘What music are we going to listen to today?’ They love it.”

Q: How much goes into preparing for each Wednesday?

A: “You don’t want to know,” Belinda laughs. “I plan about two months at a time. Once I figure out a project, I gather supplies and prepare everything ahead—cutting, packaging, making it simple so they can focus on creating.

I’d say I spend about an hour and a half on each project, sometimes more. It’s a lot, but it’s worth it.”

Q: What are some moments that have stuck with you?

A: “I just love chatting with the residents and hearing their stories. Sometimes it’s the

[Continued on next page]



THE POWER OF A FEW HOURS [continued]

simplest moment: sitting quietly and holding someone's hand, that's what they need.

Not too long ago, I played a song Judy (resident) requested, and she got a little emotional. I just went over, put my hand on her shoulder, and she held my hand. No words necessary—just being there, together.

I also love the little things—talking about recipes, sharing lunches, hearing about their lives. Not all of them remember my

“
It's the highlight of
my week!
— Sandra
”

name, but they know my face and what we do together. And that means everything.”

Q: After taking time away during the pandemic, how did it feel to return to Gardner House?

A: “When I came back, I felt a bit uneasy at first, being away for so long. But nothing

“
It's fun and she lets
us be creative.

– Judy

had really changed, we just got back into our Wednesday routine.

Some of the faces had changed, but it still felt the same. And once we got back into that routine, there was a sense of familiarity again.”

Q: What might people not realize about the impact of volunteering?

A: “A lot of people don’t realize how much time goes into preparing everything, so it flows smoothly. But beyond that, it’s the love you feel—for the residents and the team.

When I walk in, it feels like family. Everyone’s talking, laughing, joining in—it’s just a special place to be.”

Q: What would you say to someone considering volunteering?

A: “I would tell them to come spend a few hours with me—and they’ll be hooked.”

Week after week, it’s clear that Belinda’s impact goes far beyond the projects she plans or the time she gives—it’s found in the relationships she builds and the joy she brings into Gardner House.

And while she’s quick to credit the residents for what she gets out of it, she’s equally grateful for the team who makes it all possible. “I couldn’t do this without the support of the Gardner House team—Erica, Desaree, and Lisa help so much, and Shauna is always so kind, making sure I have everything I need.”



At its heart, Belinda’s story is a reminder that community is built in small moments—and that even a few hours each week can leave a lasting impact.



BOARD MEMBER

Spotlight

Beyond the Numbers: Janessa Baker's Time with the BRC Foundation

When Janessa Baker first joined the BRC Foundation Board in 2020, she was looking for something more—an opportunity to use her skills in a way that reached beyond spreadsheets and day-to-day accounting work. What she found was a deeper connection to purpose, people, and community.

Originally from Houston, Texas, Janessa moved to the Shenandoah Valley as a high school student and later graduated from James Madison University with a degree in Accounting and a minor in Computer Information Systems. After spending 18 years in public accounting, she recently transitioned to a new role as Corporate Accounting Manager at Eddie Edwards Signs in Mount Crawford, Virginia. But alongside her professional career, her time with the BRC Foundation has offered a different kind of impact.

“BRC Foundation’s mission is to support and sustain care for residents while enhancing quality of life, which aligned with what I was looking for in 2020: finding a meaningful way to give back in a different way,” she shares.

Over the past several years, Janessa has seen firsthand how that mission comes to life. Professionally, her role allowed her to think beyond numbers—considering long-term sustainability and how decisions affect the lives of residents. Personally, the experience brought unexpected moments of connection, including reconnecting

with former colleagues and discovering familiar faces within the BRC community.

One of the most defining moments of her time on the board came early on, as her term coincided with the launch of the LiveWell Campaign during the height of the pandemic. Even amid global uncertainty, the campaign successfully reached its funding goals. “I was truly amazed,” Janessa says. “Despite the challenges of that time, people were still willing to give so generously. It showed me how deeply committed people are to caring for others.”

That spirit of generosity is at the heart of what makes the Foundation’s work so meaningful. Beyond supporting programs and amenities that enrich daily life, such as wellness opportunities and engagement initiatives, the Foundation plays a vital role in ensuring residents can continue to receive care—even if they outlive their financial resources. “It brings peace of mind to residents and their families,” Janessa explains. “The Foundation provides a level of dignity and security that is truly unique.”

Through her service, Janessa gained a deeper appreciation for what makes an organization like BRC strong. “I’ve learned that strong organizations are built on more than just effective operations,” she says. “They are grounded in a clear mission and the people who are committed to it.”



That mission, she notes, provides a steady foundation but must remain adaptable over time. As needs change, so too does the way the mission is carried out—helping the organization stay relevant, sustainable, and focused on those it serves. “The strategic planning BRC does every few years helps play a key role in helping ensure residents’ needs remain the priority while positioning BRC for continued success,” Janessa adds.

As she prepares to roll off the board, Janessa looks ahead with optimism. She hopes the Foundation continues to build on its momentum—supporting innovation, enhancing quality of life, and strengthening connections within both the BRC and local communities. “BRC has already made meaningful enhancements like adding a walking trail, garden area, farmer’s

market, and revitalizing outdoor spaces to create an environment that feels like home,” she says. “I hope that momentum continues, further enriching the resident experience.”

Her advice to others considering similar involvement is simple: say yes. “It is a meaningful way to give back and to be part of something that truly impacts people’s lives. It is worth it to get involved in an aspect of retirement life that we will all experience at some point,” she explains. “It also gives you a deeper understanding of what quality care and community can look like. It brings a valuable perspective that stays with you long after your service.”

For Janessa, her time with the BRC Foundation has been more than a volunteer role—it’s been a reminder of the power of purpose and the lasting impact of investing in people.

Residents of Bridgewater Retirement Community enjoy a peaceful evening by the campfire on an overnight trip to Smith Mountain Lake, a popular Virginia destination for recreation and camping

Rodney Alderfer:

Embodying energy for life at Bridgewater Retirement Community

This article by Julie King was originally published in the Journal on Active Aging (Volume 25, Issue 1), the flagship publication of the International Council on Active Aging, www.icaa.cc. The article appears here with permission. Copyright 2026 International Council on Active Aging. All rights reserved.

Through his leadership, this ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award winner has fostered a culture in which older adults lead thriving and active lives as part of a compassionate community in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

by Julie King, MS

This article is part of ongoing coverage of the winners of the ICAA NuStep Best in Wellness Awards. A joint endeavor of the International Council on Active Aging® and NuStep, LLC, the awards program highlights senior living communities, wellness executives and

wellness directors that have won the ICAA NuStep Beacon and Pinnacle Awards.

Bridgewater Retirement Community's Rodney Alderfer admits he didn't choose a professional path in senior living—it chose him. With a bachelor's degree in accounting, the BRC president spent more than a decade crunching numbers and navigating spreadsheets at local companies before joining the life plan community in 1998 as controller. At the time, the move was “simply to advance his accounting career,” he reveals.

But Alderfer quickly saw potential beyond profit and loss statements. “I fell in love with the people and culture here, and I began exploring areas beyond accounting,” he says. That included completing his Administrator-In-Training program at BRC, becoming a licensed nursing home administrator, and then taking the role of vice president of health services in 2005.

“I found myself drawn to the strong sense of community, and I experienced opportunities to build meaningful relationships with residents, families and team members in a way I never could in my previous positions,” he reflects. The environment at the Bridgewater, Virginia, community nurtured his personal priorities of long-term relationships, strong connections and purpose.

Named BRC president in 2008, Alderfer completed his MBA with a concentration in health service administration at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 2010. Today he oversees 600 residents and 450 team members on BRC's 93-acre life plan campus, located in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley.

In 2024, Alderfer's leadership earned him an ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award as one of the top five wellness executives in North America's senior



living industry. BRC also won both ICAA NuStep Beacon and Pinnacle Awards in 2023 and 2024. The Beacon Award names 25 of the continent's top senior living communities that are industry leaders in creating vibrant wellness environments. Of those 25 recipients, the top five communities receive the Pinnacle Award for their “Best in Wellness” achievements.

The International Council on Active Aging® (ICAA) and NuStep, LLC, a Michigan-based developer of inclusive fitness equipment, created their joint awards program in 2019 to recognize industry leaders that embrace multidimensional wellness as “a core value that shapes culture, sparks innovation and enhances quality of life.” The program has expanded in the intervening years to include wellness executives and wellness directors.

Noting Alderfer's Pinnacle Award recognition, ICAA founder and CEO Colin Milner comments that the BRC leader “has been steadfastly committed to encouraging older adults to thrive in a continually evolving wellness culture and community over his tenure.” Milner adds that Alderfer's “consistent and influential leadership—and his passion for connection—continue to make a meaningful impact on BRC's residents, staff and local area.”

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RODNEY ALDERFER: EMBODYING ENERGY FOR LIFE AT BRIDGEWATER RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

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‘A transformational shift’

Over 60 years, BRC has evolved from a small nursing home into the robust life plan community it is today. Welcoming independent living residents within years of its 1965 opening, BRC structured its operations in 1983 to offer independent living, assisted living and nursing. Its first Memory Support Household, Gardner House, opened in 2009, followed by its second, Concord House, in 2021. In the same year BRC also physically connected residents in assisted living, memory support and nursing to the heart of campus.

The 2010 launch of a household model for nursing was a turning point for BRC, Alderfer believes. Designed to promote autonomy and choice for residents, this approach includes private and shared bedrooms and bathrooms, shared living spaces, and a variety of common areas, including outdoor space. Six unique households have their own culture and traditions, and each is home to approximately 20 residents. Team leaders typically work only in one household for continuity of care.

“One of the most significant highlights of my career has been our transition to the household model in nursing,” Alderfer says. “Moving from a traditional, institutional model to a more holistic, energized approach was a transformational shift. It changed the way we think about supporting residents—moving from simply ‘taking care of people’ to helping them live their best life.”

What began in nursing has extended across the entire campus and become central to BRC’s overall philosophy of well-being. “Although people don’t always associate well-being with nursing households, that’s truly where it started for us,” Alderfer states. “Seeing how that shift has shaped our culture and continues to influence every area of BRC is something I’m incredibly proud of.”



The change also solidified BRC’s mission to “promote an engaging lifestyle within its compassionate community” and its vision to “enhance and energize healthy living.”

From wellness to well-being

BRC defines wellness as “the dynamic process of enhancement and growth, aimed at achieving one’s highest quality of life” for ever-changing, individual journeys. But Alderfer now prefers the term well-being.

“My understanding of wellness has expanded significantly over the years,” he explains. “The biggest shift has been moving from focusing exclusively on ‘wellness’—which often brings to mind only physical health—to embracing ‘well-being’ in all dimensions of life. I’ve grown to deeply appreciate this holistic approach.”

When BRC made well-being its top priority, the community wanted its efforts to be visible, sustainable and meaningful. So, in 2022, the BRC Foundation launched the LiveWell campaign, with a goal to raise USD\$2.5 million of raising funds to support initiatives for residents, team members and the broader community. It significantly surpassed expectations by raising USD\$5 million.

This money supports many funds, including the Energized Life Fund, which provides innovative on-campus programming to enhance well-being; the Work Well Fund, which offers professional development scholarships, training opportunities,



and health and well-being programs; and the Community Outreach Fund, which expands access to healthy aging opportunities across the region, and more.¹

Additionally, funds raised by the LiveWell campaign fuel innovation grants. These grants allow team members to pitch ideas to fund projects that improve the lives of residents or enhance the experience of working at BRC. More than 20 grants have been awarded to date.

Among them:

- adopting Tovertafel dementia technology
- purchasing a WhisperGLIDE wheelchair swing
- hosting an on-campus farmer's market
- participating in backpack food programs for local children
- pursuing intergenerational partnerships

Alderfer explained in BRC's 2024 Impact & Well-Being Report that these and other initiatives "exemplify our belief that no matter where someone lives at BRC, they should have access to meaningful experiences that enhance their well-being."²

One major well-being initiative made possible by land and money donations from residents was developing the Crist Farm Walking Trails, which opened in October 2023. Spanning 20 acres, the trails feature 1.2 miles of ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act]-accessible walkways, overlooks, a wildflower meadow, a labyrinth and more.

Resident-led committees on well-being, education and outreach, as well as natural habitat and plantings, helped shape and guide this project. "The joy these trails have brought to residents, team members and the wider community has been truly remarkable," Alderfer shares.

Furthermore, residents in assisted living, memory support and nursing took two overnight trips to Smith Mountain Lake, a recreational area located in the Blue Ridge Mountains region, thanks to the LiveWell campaign. "Adventure knows no age, and meaningful experiences are always possible," Alderfer notes. "Watching the joy, connection and memories unfold—not only for the residents experiencing a lake boat ride and s'mores by the campfire, but also for the families who are so appreciative of the way we live our culture beyond our campus—has been incredibly rewarding."

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RODNEY ALDERFER: EMBODYING ENERGY FOR LIFE AT BRIDGEWATER RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

[continued]

In the spirit of living their culture, 54 residents, team members and board members celebrated BRC's 60th anniversary in May 2025 by volunteering for 24 service projects across campus and in the local area. At that time, Alderfer also introduced the "60 in 60" initiative, challenging residents to complete 60 acts of service during BRC's 60th year to honor the founders' goal to support each other in the community.

Strategic restructuring

In November 2023, BRC formalized its senior leadership's commitment to well-being by establishing a dedicated team that combines fitness, life enrichment, spiritual life, volunteer services, and technology education. This well-being team has resulted in stronger engagement and greater participation, plus a more connected campus culture.

"Restructuring our leadership to add a Vice President of Well-Being at the senior level demonstrates our commitment to being the best choice for active aging and to practicing a 'can-do' philosophy," Alderfer explains. "It provides focused opportunities for enhancing residents' daily lives

and offers vital vocational experiences where they can support one another."

One early priority for the well-being team was to identify areas of strength and opportunities. To guide that endeavor, BRC participated in an ICAA Wellness Audit in 2024. It has since earmarked a dedicated section of its strategic plan to address outcomes from the audit.

Some specific initiatives have included:

- launching an on-site horticulture therapy program
- beginning the phased development of a community garden and dining production farm
- increasing local food sourcing in BRC's dining program
- hosting community conversations to establish an organization-wide definition of well-being

"We recognize that well-being impacts all aspects of our organization," Alderfer says, explaining that after the audit, BRC strove to truly determine how much of its budget was dedicated to wellness. The community, he adds, has continued to "ensure that funding supports all aspects of well-being growth at BRC."

Innovation and evolution

With a core value of innovation, BRC and Alderfer continue to explore new ways to nurture a culture that prioritizes all dimensions of well-being. "We are committed to feedback, staying informed about industry trends, collaborating with others and adapting to the evolving landscape of well-being," Alderfer says.

Part of that commitment was transitioning from paper-based engagement and communication tools for independent living residents to the Wellzesta technology platform in 2018. Calling this change a "notable challenge," Alderfer reports that it has been a valuable tool to harness the power of technology to promote well-being opportunities, strengthen engagement, track participation and gather feedback.

"For BRC, Wellzesta facilitates two-way communication and customization of well-being goals while offering curated resources to help achieve these goals," Alderfer says. The platform has a greater than 90% engagement rate among 350+ users, who use it to register for events, check menus, read articles, watch videos and more.

Beyond technology upgrades and more traditional collaborations, BRC also established a partnership in 2024 with Cannability Consulting, a subsidiary of Westminster-Canterbury of Chesapeake Bay, a Virginia Beach life plan community. This partnership provides a guided, individualized process to safely introduce residents to the hemp-derived CBD products as options to manage chronic pain, improve sleep and reduce anxiety.

"We will continue expanding opportunities that empower our residents and team members to pursue their best lives, rather than simply following programs or activities," Alderfer comments. "Our goal is to be a strong support system for each person's individual well-being journey."

Reflections and future focus

Looking ahead, BRC is developing programs that invite residents to engage with life in new ways, such as Adventure Club experiences, expanded outdoor and fitness opportunities, and innovative initiatives like e-bike programming. Alderfer says the community also is increasing its focus on sustainability, farming partnerships, and gardens as pathways to education, nutrition, connection and purpose.

"Longer-term goals include increasing our commitment to mental health support for residents and team members," he continues, "and eventually offering individualized well-being coaching to help people define and pursue their own goals."

As for Alderfer's inspiration over so many years? "I'm motivated every day by the impact we're making for our residents and team members, and I'm grateful and excited to be part of the transformation happening within our community," he says. "Seeing the progress we've made—and knowing how much more is still possible—energizes me."



Julie King, MS, has been a certified group exercise instructor and personal trainer for more than 25 years. She holds multiple certifications and a master's degree in science (kinesiology). Over her career, King has led virtually every class format—including indoor cycling, mat pilates, yoga, kickboxing, boot camp and aquatics—at commercial health clubs, corporate fitness centers, wellness centers, schools and online. She also has served as a fitness director, fitness/wellness coordinator, health club manager and a contributing editor for Club Business International magazine. King has been published in Club Industry, Club Solutions, Campus Recreation, National Fitness Trade Journal, Recreation Management and Fitness Management. She is also a longtime regular contributor to the Journal on Active Aging®. King can be reached at julie.king1@comcast.net

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Putting Down Good Roots

The Good Roots community garden is more than a place to grow vegetables. It's a space where relationships take root; stories are shared; and well-being comes to life in meaningful, tangible ways.

With the addition of Farm Manager Price Crenshaw to our team, that vision has grown into something even more expansive: a blend of community gardening, production farming, education, and connection. "I think what I really love about BRC is that invitation to live and do life with one another," Price shares. "That's really the heart of my farming: building community and learning from one another."

For Price, a young farmer passionate about sustainable agriculture, the opportunity to work alongside residents was something she couldn't pass up. "For me, to have the

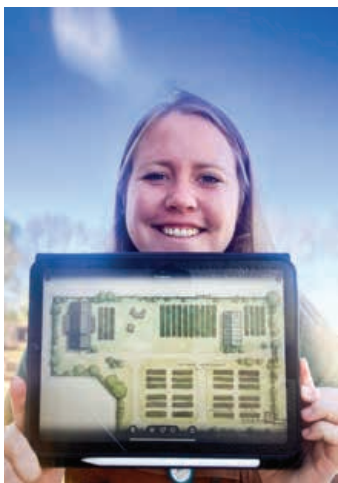
opportunity to work with folks that are more experienced, retired farmers and gardeners, and be able to share space together and grow together. It was really exciting," she says.

A Vision Taking Shape

While the garden may feel new in its current form, its roots run deep. Vice President of Well-Being Laura Spicer has witnessed its evolution from the very beginning. "There had always been an informal resident garden space [in the Village]," she explains. "Then we partnered with Bridgewater College students who helped install a greenhouse and raised beds. That was really our first step."

[Continued on next page]





PUTTING DOWN GOOD ROOTS [continued]

From there, the idea continued to grow, literally and conceptually. “We started asking, what would it look like to expand this into something more?” Laura says. “Something that includes both a community garden and a production farm.” That question led to research, site visits, and eventually a larger vision... one that blends resident engagement with food production. “The reality is, we go through about 240 pounds of lettuce a week,” Price notes. “We had to think strategically about what makes sense to grow and what makes sense to source locally.” Instead of trying to grow it all, Price started by focusing on crops that

“ I grew up on a small farm and have always had a garden, so I was pleased to find out that BRC was working on one when we moved here last May.”

— Fred Grunder

are both practical and impactful: tomatoes, peppers, squash, and herbs. Items that can be used consistently in dining while still offering variety and visibility.

“So, you might go to the salad bar and recognize, ‘Oh, these are the cherry tomatoes from the garden,’” Price says. “That connection is really important.”

From Garden to Table

That connection comes to life most clearly in our community’s dining operations.

For Executive Chef Ben Miller, incorporating local ingredients isn’t just a trend—it’s



a philosophy. “This is something near and dear to my heart, to have ingredients grown right here in our backyard,” he shares. “For my team to be able to incorporate them into dishes just speaks volumes to what our dining program is trying to achieve.”

That vision is reflected in the creation of our Good Roots brand: a commitment to sourcing local, high-quality ingredients, whether grown on campus or through trusted community partners. “The partnership between Price and dining is very instrumental in the everyday process,” Chef Ben says. “The exciting part is that she understands the vision, our purpose, and the ‘why’ behind what we are trying to do.”

One recent standout example of the Good Roots initiative is our very-own BRC Lettuce Blend, developed in collaboration with Radical Roots Farm in Keezletown, Virginia. “The story behind the BRC Lettuce Blend is very unique,” Chef Ben explains. “We wanted something that would enhance not only variety, but flavor profile, and things came to life very quickly.”

Now used in restaurants across our campus, the blend represents both innovation and collaboration.

A Shared Experience

While the production side is important, the heart of the Good Roots garden lies in the experience it creates.

“I grew up on a small farm and have always had a garden, so I was pleased to



find out that BRC was working on one when we moved here last May,” resident Fred Grunder shares. “The expansion of the garden to provide fresh produce for residents will add to the benefits of living here.”

That sense of familiarity and purpose is something Price sees every day. “We all have our stories and experiences when it comes to growing food and eating food,” she says. “Being able to share that and just move our bodies together, it feels powerful.”

The garden has also created opportunities for team members. “I always wished to have a flower bed,” Haggi Molalenge, who works in our memory support households, shares. “This offers the opportunity to grow vegetables and it’s convenient. When I see things growing, it’s very, very nice... I’m very motivated and happy to be a part of it.”

Even those without a gardening background are finding their place. “We have a resident who is 90 years old who just wants to come mow,” Price says. “Being able to give people access to land to do those things they love—it matters.”

[Continued on next page]



A Holistic Approach to Well-Being

Beyond food and activity, the Good Roots garden reflects something deeper about life here. “It truly represents our holistic vision of well-being,” Laura explains. “The physical component of working in the garden, the environmental aspect of being outside, the social connections—it really touches every dimension.”

That same philosophy extends into other programming across campus, including donor-supported summer farmer’s

markets. Beginning with the first market in June, we will introduce a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) partnership with Friendly Neighbor Gardens from Linville, Virginia, offering weekly produce boxes to residents and team members—strengthening the connection between local food and daily life.

“It’s about the relationship around food and connecting with residents who have wisdom to share with a young guy like me, early in my career,” Stefan Hess of Friendly Neighbor Gardens shares. “One



Price Crenshaw

About Price:

- Originally from Charleston, South Carolina
- Graduate of Clemson University with a degree in Elementary Education
- Developed a passion for sustainable agriculture after seeing students rely on school meals as a primary food source
- Turned that passion into a mission—learning to farm and helping others bridge gaps in local food systems
- Has helped us build partnerships with local growers, including Radical Roots Farm and Friendly Neighbor Gardens (the list keeps growing!)
- Creator of the *Bubble Bus*, a mobile bubble experience designed to spark joy and bring people together at community events and festivals

of the greatest joys is seeing the vegetables go out.” Price adds, “I get a large box weekly, and it’s the highlight of my week—going to pick it up.”



Looking Ahead

As the Good Roots garden continues to expand, so does its role within the community. From educational workshops and intergenerational visits to

“The garden truly represents our holistic vision of well-being”

— Laura Spicer

future plans for shared meals in the garden itself, the space is becoming something far greater than a traditional garden.

“We’re really trying to create a space where people can gather, learn, and experience this together,” Price says. And in doing so, we are cultivating



Spend a morning at the Farmer’s Market—

featuring local vendors, fresh produce, and a welcoming community atmosphere.

Every fourth Thursday

June–October

8:30–11:00 a.m.

The BRC Oasis

something that extends well beyond what’s planted in the soil.

A Foundation for Every Body

How meeting residents where they are through movement is shaping well-being and connection

For the past three years, Dana Neff has become a familiar and welcome presence in our fitness studio—leading yoga, Pilates, and wellness-focused classes that residents not only attend regularly but genuinely look forward to week-after-week. Her journey into yoga, however, didn't begin here.

"I've been a Pilates instructor for 20-some years—I kind of lose count," Dana says with a smile. "And then about 10 years ago, I started running and just had this moment where I thought, 'I'm going to do this. I'm going to get my certification.'"

[Continued on next page]







originally opened in 2019. Like many small businesses, it faced early challenges during the pandemic, but Dana and her daughter adapted—offering virtual classes and eventually reopening in a new space in Weyers Cave, Virginia. Today, the studio offers a wide range of classes, from

A FOUNDATION FOR EVERY BODY [continued]

She completed much of her training online and later continued hands-on work in Northern Virginia through her certification program, Holy Yoga: a faith-based approach that combines traditional physical yoga practices with meditation and worship. What started as a way to deepen flexibility and complement her Pilates background quickly grew into something more. “I just wanted to incorporate more stretching and flexibility,” she explains. “Pilates is more core-based, and yoga brought in something different.”

About three years ago, a connection to Back on Track Massage (our therapy partner on campus) brought Dana to BRC and Vice President of Well-Being Laura Spicer says the fit felt natural from the beginning. “When we made the initial connection with Dana to add a vital level of expertise to our group fitness classes, we knew she would fit in with our community through her outgoing personality and love of teaching wellness,” Laura shares. “Watching her create lasting relationships with residents and team members has only solidified that initial feeling.”

At the same time, Dana was building her own business, Rockcave Fitness, which she

yoga and Pilates to strength training and specialty formats.

But here, the focus is a little different. “What I love most is the residents,” Dana says. “They are motivated, they are determined, and they want to be here. That’s what keeps me coming back.”

That motivation is something residents feel, too. “Sam and I always look forward to the Pilates and yoga classes Dana leads,” shares resident Bev Moore. “She knows her students and their capabilities. Her good humor and encouragement keep us moving ahead without getting discouraged, and we leave class feeling stretched and relaxed.”

Dana teaches several different formats of yoga, including chair yoga, vinyasa flow, and restorative practices like Yoga Nidra. Each class is carefully adapted to meet residents where they are—something she’s learned to do both intentionally and in the moment.

“With chair yoga, we’re not getting up and down on the floor—we’re using the chair for support, for balance,” she explains. “And with other classes, I always offer options. Not everyone is going to take a pose the same way, and that’s okay.”

That awareness goes beyond instruction—it’s about knowing the people in the room.

“Sometimes I’ll plan something and then think, ‘No, I’m not going to do that today,’” she says. “Because I know someone will try it, and I want to make sure it’s safe.”

Her approach is rooted in inclusion.

“Everyone is welcome,” Dana says. “As long as you’re listening to your body, you can do it.” And for many residents, that message has made a meaningful difference. “I love hearing them say, ‘I couldn’t do this before,’ or seeing them reach a little further than they used to,” she shares. “That’s the cool part.”

Her impact also extends beyond physical activity. “What makes Dana a valuable part of the BRC community is how passionate she is about health, fitness, yoga, and most importantly our residents,” Fitness Coordinator Donovan Schmude shares. “That passion and genuine care is clear when she is leading her classes. Residents always exit her classes with a smile!”

Laura adds that Dana’s approach to group fitness intentionally supports both the mind and body. “She is always encouraging those in her classes to get the most out of their personal wellness while also creating opportunities to try new and creative things,” she says. “When you have a connection with the instructor and



genuinely enjoy going to class, it makes the experience that much more meaningful.”

That connection is something Dana values deeply. “It’s the relationships,” she says. “They motivate me. They welcome me. I love seeing them, talking with them—it goes beyond just the class.” Those relationships often continue outside the fitness studio, too—whether it’s sharing wellness tips, recommending stretches, or simply checking in. “We just connect,” she says. “It all ties into overall well-being.”

Looking ahead, Dana is even considering bringing back one of her more energetic offerings—a dance-based class called Groove. “It was just fun,” she says. “Good movement, good energy.”

But no matter the format, her goal remains the same: helping residents feel capable, supported, and empowered. And judging by the demand for her classes, often filling up quickly or reaching waitlists, it’s clear she’s doing just that.



Founders Day in Photos





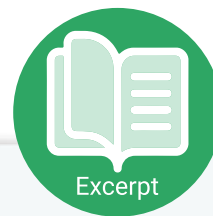


Read Between the Laugh Lines

At BRC, we encourage residents to bring their passions—and with the support of a welcoming and encouraging leadership team, resident Philecta Staton has done just that. The idea for the BRC Jesters didn't begin with a stage; it began with her creative spark.

“Well, as strange as it sounds,” Philecta says, “I saw a comedian on TV who started a group performing short, funny, true stories—no names, just real-life humor. And people loved it.” For Philecta, a writer at heart, the concept immediately resonated. Instead of long scripts and memorized lines, this format relied on something simpler: people, stories, and laughter—an approachable model, especially in a retirement community.





Act 2 – Two men who are friends get together accompanied by a third man who is new to the retirement community. The two friends have concerns about young people in their families and not always understanding what they say.

***CAST:** Jack McAvoy, Merv Wunderlich, Bill Reinhold (seating left to right)

“I thought, in retirement, long scripts can be hard,” she explains. “But if we pulled away from that and did something similar, maybe it could work.” With encouragement from resident Ralph MacPhail, Life Enrichment Specialist Rhonda Collins, and BRC leaders Jeannette Suter and Laura Spicer, the idea quickly gained momentum. But one question remained: what role would Philecta play?

“I told them [Jeannette and Laura], ‘I’m very comfortable following, but I can also lead,’” she says. “I had said that to Jeanette in the past, and she pulled out a piece of paper and read my statement to me,” Philecta laughs. “And then I knew—they were going to look to me to do this.” And just like that, the BRC Jesters had their leader.

[Continued on next page]



READ BETWEEN THE LAUGH LINES

[continued]

As the group took shape, so did its structure. Today, the Jesters include ten actors, along with additional support behind the scenes. Performances are intentionally designed to be engaging but concise. “These are all retired people,” Philecta says. “I didn’t want anything to go too long—I wanted to keep it under an hour. It’s always better to leave people wanting more than wondering when it’s going to end.”

Each show follows a central theme, broken into three independent acts. “I like having one overall title,” she explains, “but then three different acts that are completely separate. That way, each one can stand on its own.”

Beneath the humor, each script carries a deeper message—often centered on relationships and communication. “In the first performance, all of the characters disagreed,” she says, “but they remained friends. That’s the quiet point I’m trying to get across.”

“Listening is such an important part of communication,” she adds. “Not just getting your own point across.” Still, the heart of the Jesters remains simple. “I think people just need to laugh,” Philecta says. “In the world we live in today, there isn’t always a lot to laugh about.”

Ralph saw that balance right away. “She has a gift for humor and dialogue. I was a little bit concerned because I had no idea what I was getting into, but I read the

script and realized this woman is gifted.” Philecta adds that the scripts truly come alive in performance, “It’s just words on a page until the actors jump in with their imagination.” She points to actors Merv Wunderlich and Susie Warren as examples. “These two in particular—they really get into the part and make it their own.”

For Susie, preparation goes beyond reading lines. She studies performers like Carol Burnett and focuses on facial expressions. “Oh, she’s the master of facial expressions!” Philecta jokes, while Ralph adds, “She’s like a sponge!” Susie also finds the group especially meaningful. “The collegial atmosphere here is something—there’s a warmth to it I really enjoy,” she says.

Behind the scenes, Philecta’s attention to detail is constant. Scripts are enlarged for readability, actors may take on multiple roles, and rehearsals are carefully organized. She also avoids politics, religion, and identifiable references. “If you use terminology like that, people are going to start thinking, ‘Who are they talking about? Who is that?’”

Susie notes that performing for, and alongside, an audience of similar age brings unique considerations, including vision, sound, and response time. “It’s been interesting to see the different reactions,” she says. “There are things you can tell hit one audience more than another.”

At its core, the Jesters are about joy. “I was hooked from the beginning,” Merv says. “These are meant to be funny. I believe there’s not enough humor, especially for seniors. It can be easy to focus on appointments, loss, or what we’re going



to eat—but when I heard we were going to do something quick-hitting to get people laughing, I was in.”

For Susie, joining the group became a creative leap. “In a retirement community, it’s important to keep your creativity going,” she shares. She encourages others to do the same. “I was a little reluctant at first, and then I thought, ‘What, they’re not going to like me?’ or ‘I’m going to make a fool of myself?’”

Looking ahead, the group hopes to expand its impact—even exploring partnerships that support resident well-being. “I think it would be another benefit to say, ‘how do we enrich lives in the community?’” Susie shares. “You need to maintain deep breathing and good posture... that would be beneficial for anyone in this age group.”

But perhaps most importantly, the Jesters reflect something deeper about life at



BRC Jesters Members:

- Sonya Eller
- Janie Endres
- Bill Faw
- Anna Mae Harmon
- Ellen Layman
- Dave Lineweaver
- Ralph MacPhail,
Directing Consultant
- Jack McAvoy
- Bill Reinhold
- Philecta Clarke Staton
Create & Playwright
- Susie Warren
- Merv Wunderlich
- Glenna Wampler

BRC. “This project reinforces my bias about BRC,” Susie says. “You have an idea, a receptive administration, collaboration—and beautiful things are born from that.” There’s been other evidence of that happening” Merv adds, “Our trishaw bike [program] and bicycle club started that way—openness.”

Like many resident-driven passions at BRC, what started as a simple spark has grown into something the entire community can enjoy. As the group exits the stage, they leave audiences with a simple message: “Others are welcome—this is not an exclusive group.” And stay tuned for the BRC Jesters’ “fall tour”!

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

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Writers | Ashlie Heatwole

Art and Design | Dustin Blyer

Photography | Dustin Blyer, Ashlie Heatwole, Sera Petras, CLARKOPS, Ruth Colville, Price Crenshaw, Annie Frazier, Sherill Hostetter, Ed Johnson, Julie Leitner, Saraona Minnich, Dana Neff, Belinda Phillips, Mary Porter, Lauren Reeves, Joe Ritchie, Laura Spicer, and Jeannette Suter

Special thanks to | Janessa Baker, Marguerite Cale, Ruth Colville, Price Crenshaw, Andrew Fillers, Fred Grunder, Darrel & Sherill Hostetter, Ed & Dona Johnson, Julie Leitner, Ralph MacPhail, Ben Miller, Saraona Minnich, Haggi Molalenge, Bev Moore, Dana Neff, Judy Phillippi, Belinda Phillips, Neil & Mary Porter, Sheri Riedl, Bill & Ginnie Reinhold, Donovan Schmude, Laura Spicer, Philecta Clarke Staton, Susie Warren, Merv Wunderlich, and the International Council on Active Aging

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