

The Bridge

FALL 2026



Above: Fresh from the garden! Vegetables and flowers create a colorful snapshot of the Good Roots Garden in full summer bloom.

On the Cover: Digging into a big harvest! Farm Manager Price Crenshaw and residents Rose Wells and Tim Hulings (pictured left to right) get started on what became an impressive 383-pound potato haul from the Good Roots Garden.

From the President

Some of the best ideas at BRC begin with a simple question: *What if*? What if residents who once loved camping could experience it again? What if blank walls could become a showcase for original Virginia art? What if a team member could bring a piece of a beloved Harrisonburg restaurant and the passion behind it into his work here?

Throughout this issue of *The Bridge*, you'll find different stories that share a common thread: each began because someone listened, recognized an opportunity, and found a way to make it happen. That spirit is an important part of what makes BRC a community. Residents share what they've loved and what they'd still like to experience, while team members bring their own talents and interests to work.

You see it in Sheila Bowman's desire to give assisted living residents another chance to go camping, with the work and worry removed so they could simply enjoy the experience. You see it in the committee that traveled across Virginia in search of artwork for the Mack Conference Rooms, choosing pieces that might feel familiar, stir a memory, or spark a conversation. And you see it in Logan Strawderman, whose return to BRC has given him a new way to share his love of food, music, and relationships.

Some of these opportunities have been made possible through generous donor support, giving us the freedom to explore creative ideas and consider how successful ones might continue to enrich life at BRC. But asking "What if?" isn't limited to the experiences we create today. It's also an important question as we consider BRC's future.

In his Board Spotlight, Dr. John Downey reflects on the importance of thinking ahead while preserving the sense of closeness that makes BRC feel like home. That perspective is especially relevant as we continue our strategic planning process—considering the needs of current and future residents, listening to those who call BRC home, and thinking about how our community can continue to thrive while holding tightly to the values and relationships that have shaped us.

There will always be buildings to maintain, programs to develop, meals to serve, and plans to make. But ultimately, all of those things exist in service to people—and to help them continue living their lives filled with choice, purpose, connection, and possibility.

To our residents, team members, families, donors, volunteers, and friends, thank you for the many ways you contribute to this community. Your ideas, generosity, talents, and involvement help make so much of what happens here possible.

I hope the stories in these pages offer a glimpse not only of what is happening at BRC, but of the people behind it all. Because sometimes, the next great experience, opportunity, or chapter for our community begins with someone willing to ask, *"What if?"*

Rodney D. Alderfer
President | Bridgewater Retirement Community



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NEWS IN BRIEF



Good Roots Garden Is Growing

The Good Roots Garden, an initiative fully funded by donor support, produced more than 2,400 pounds of fresh, no-spray produce this season. As summer crops wind down, fall favorites—including several varieties of winter squash, carrots, and beets—are beginning to take their place, keeping fresh ingredients headed from the garden to kitchens and plates across campus.



A Favorite Summer Tradition

More than 80 residents and team members gathered for our annual Heatwole River Picnic, enjoying locally grown corn, peaceful river views, and time together on a beautiful summer day.



Welcome, Lexi!

We're pleased to welcome Lexi Funkhouser to the Dining Team as our new Food Operations Manager. A JMU alum with experience in both local and corporate restaurants, Lexi will provide leadership and operational support across catering, Custer Dining, and The Junction while helping create a positive dining experience for all.

Investing Behind the Scenes

Some of the most important improvements happen behind the scenes. We're in the process of replacing old steam boilers with new, energy-efficient hot water boilers—an infrastructure investment designed to improve efficiency and reliability that will support our community for years to come.



Great Ideas, Year Three

We're continuing to bring creative ideas to life across our campus as we kick off year three of our donor-supported Innovation Grant program. This year, seven successful ideas from previous years will continue alongside five brand-new initiatives—and we can't wait to share their progress in the coming year.



Christmas in July Raises $12,945

Our first Christmas in July campaign raised $12,945 through donations to the Resident Gift Fund and purchases at Cottage Gifts. Thanks to our generous community, every resident in Assisted Living, Memory Support, and Nursing Households will receive a personalized gift this Christmas.

Serving Up Something Special

Every month, a familiar flavor returns to Gardenside—but for Logan, it's about much more than sandwiches.

If you haven't visited Gardenside Diner in a while, lunchtime is worth the trip. Conversations fill the room, regulars greet one another by name, and the daily special is often as much a topic of discussion as the weather. As 11 AM approaches, the diner begins to hum with the lunch rush. Orders are called out, sandwiches make their way across the room, and before long, someone inevitably asks, "Is today the Lola's special?"

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For residents and team members, it's become something to look forward to each month. For a few familiar faces from Harrisonburg, it's a chance to reconnect with the flavors they remember from Lola's Delicatessen. And for Dining Operations Manager Logan Strawderman, it's an opportunity to keep his favorite chapter alive—one sandwich at a time.

"It is nostalgic to make these sandwiches," Logan says. "It's weird jumping back a year to when the deli was open, eating some of these sandwiches. Being able to provide something else that's fun for me—but something that people miss."

Long before residents were lining up for monthly Gardenside specials, Logan was



> **"I love that he is willing to get 'beyond the badge...'"**
> – Anne O'Donohue

building a name for himself in downtown Harrisonburg.

After graduating from Bridgewater College with a degree in classical guitar, he found his way into the culinary world almost by accident. His first stop was North River Grill in Bridgewater just before joining BRC in 2008 as a cook in Maple Terrace. A few years later, a food truck gave him his first taste of entrepreneurship before that dream grew into Lola's Delicatessen—a beloved downtown sandwich shop he expected would be his forever career.

Even through the uncertainty of the pandemic, Lola's adapted. Logan and his business partner transformed the front entrance into a walk-up service window so customers could continue enjoying their favorite sandwiches safely. Business remained strong, but rising food costs and overhead eventually forced a difficult decision to close in 2025.



"We had a lot of pride in serving the entire community," Logan reflects. "We were getting to the point where we couldn't serve everyone we wanted to serve." Closing the restaurant was emotional—but not for the reason many might expect. "The weird part," he says, "was [losing] the relationships."

There was Jim, who drove from Long Island whenever he visited his daughter at James Madison University and insisted no one made pastrami like Lola's. There was Reggie from Weyers Cave, who moved to Richmond but still stopped by for an oversized corned beef sandwich

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SERVING UP SOMETHING SPECIAL [continued]

whenever he was in town visiting his grandchildren. Lawyers stopped in several times each week between meetings. Families, construction workers, students, and artists all shared the same tables. Then, almost overnight, those familiar faces disappeared. “It was a hard end to relationships,” Logan says.

After closing the deli, Logan took a well-earned break. He traveled to Hawaii, toured with his metal band *Vara Alta*, tackled projects around the house, and spent time with his family. But before long, he began reaching out to former colleagues to see what might come next. That phone call led him back to BRC. Today, a year into his return, Logan has discovered something he didn’t fully appreciate during his first chapter here. “In 2008, it was a job,” he says. “Now I feel like I’m part of something.”

His role as Dining Operations Manager certainly involves food, but much of his day



revolves around people. Residents share favorite recipes, offer feedback on meals, and stop to chat. Team members lean on him to help solve challenges, strengthen communication, and keep dining running smoothly across campus.

“My passion is relationships,” Logan says. “Relationships between myself and residents and team but also fostering cross-departmental relationships... it all plays nicely together, and we can serve a better product—both tangible and experience-wise.” That same philosophy has found its way back into Gardenside.

Once each month, Logan partners with Gardenside Grille Cook Buffy Mitchell to feature one of Lola’s signature sandwiches. Favorites like the Rancher, Chicken Wing Cheesesteak, and Reuben have quickly developed loyal followings, while old Lola’s customers occasionally wander through the doors after spotting the special on social media.

Resident Donna Cyzik has tried nearly every special and appreciates having something different to look forward to. “They are good. They really are, and they’re different,” she says. “It’s nice to have something different.” She’s noticed their popularity, too—and has just one challenge with some of Logan’s creations: “They’re usually so big for me!”

For team member Anne O’Donohue, the specials offer something beyond the food.





"I think what I appreciate most about the Lola's specials being a part of Gardenside is it gives all of us a chance to get to know Logan better—his passions, his story and his creativity," she says. "I love that he is willing to get 'beyond the badge' and share such an intriguing piece of his personal journey with us."

Anne has also seen the specials create connections beyond BRC. "The Lola's specials bring people together even more than Gardenside already does by bringing in community members that loved Lola's and can now enjoy some of the favorites while also getting to know BRC a little along the way!"



Residents, meanwhile, are just as interested in the story behind the sandwiches as the sandwiches themselves. "They'll get the sandwich every time because they're interested in what I used to do," Logan says. "It's still cool to be able to offer that culinary side of myself to the residents." Some residents have declared his Reuben "the best" Reuben they've ever had. Logan laughs, "I know... I know we had the best Reuben."

Food isn't the only passion Logan has brought to our campus. Not long after returning to BRC, a scheduled musician was unexpectedly unable to perform in assisted living. Knowing Logan is a guitarist, Anne O'Donohue stopped by Gardenside:

> **Anne:** "Do you have any guitars here?"
>
> **Logan:** "I do..."
>
> **Anne:** "I'll take over POS if you want to go play."

Within minutes, he had traded the Gardenside point-of-sale system for two guitars and spent the next 35 minutes performing for residents—an unexpected moment that later earned him a Tilt the Cup award nomination.

Whether he's preparing a favorite sandwich, listening to resident feedback, or filling in for an impromptu concert, Logan has found that BRC encourages something he values deeply: bringing your whole self to work.

Innovative Grant

SPOTLIGHT

Made possible through donor support to the BRC Foundation, Innovation Grants help turn creative ideas from residents and team members into reality.

Camping... But Make It Glam



The day didn't begin with medications or meal schedules. It began with the smell of sausage gravy, campers slowly waking up, and conversations about who is ready for the heated pool.

At Shenandoah Valley Campground, rabbits dart between campsites while coffee brews. By evening, cards are spread across the picnic table, the campfire crackles, and no one seems quite ready for bed.

For a few summer days, a group of assisted living residents traded the familiar rhythms of BRC for something some of them never expected to experience again: camping. Well... "glamping," according to resident Nan Powell. "That means you're not in a tent," she smiles. "It's more *glamorous*."

"I started thinking about what some of these folks did with their families years ago," Sheila Bowman, Director of Assisted Living, says. "A number of people had told me they spent a lot of time camping and seeing the country that way. I just thought it would be neat to bring that opportunity back for them." Through donor support, that idea soon becomes reality.

"I wanted them to step away from life here at BRC for a little while—to do something they maybe never thought they'd get to do again," she shares. "With the right support, they could go out, enjoy nature, and not have to worry about the cooking, the planning, or all the work that camping used to involve. Just trying to help them *live* life."

Sheila's vision came to life at the camp ground, where two side-by-side RVs became home base for the group. Behind the scenes, the trip required weeks of planning—from grocery lists and medication schedules to multiple visits to the campground to measure beds, check





accessibility, and ensure every detail was ready. Maintenance team members pitched in by cutting firewood, transporting equipment, setting up canopies, and helping both before and after the trip, making it a true team effort.

Once everyone arrived, however, the planning faded into the background. For residents, all that preparation meant they could simply enjoy the experience. “It was nice for us,” Bernice Ruff says. “There’s a lot of hustle and bustle going on here [at BRC]. Except for these girls, they hustled and bustled the whole time,” nodding toward Sheila and the team members who kept everything running smoothly behind the scenes.

Days unfolded naturally. Residents swam in the pool, made the most of

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CAMPING... BUT MAKE IT GLAM [continued]

their time in the hot tub, rode around the campground in a golf cart, and played Yahtzee and card games well past bedtime. "Boy, I was tired and ready for bed," Nurse Wanda Rexrode laughs. "Karyn [Posey] asked if anyone wanted to play games, and they all said, 'Yeah!' They were energized and ready to go."

One evening, the campsite filled with music as team member Matt Palmieri brought his family to join the group, guitar in hand. "What happens at the campground, stays at the campground..." he jokes before sharing, "I feel blessed to be able to take my family and that they [team & residents] let me share that talent with them." CNA Jill Rhodes agrees, adding, "That was a nice experience."

There were plenty of unexpected moments, too. One resident fashioned her own-made swimsuit from a thrifted pair of pants and a top from the ReRun Shoppe. Another proved so buoyant in the hot tub that her feet keep floating to the surface, prompting plenty of laughter as team members helped keep her comfortably seated. Katya Sites reflects on that moment with a smile, adding, "It's just a simple thing, but it was really nice watching you all relax in the hot tub."

The campground's unofficial mascots—a family of tiny rabbits—quickly become favorites, as they happily accepted blueberries straight from Sheila's hand. And just as everyone was packing up to head home, a rain-soaked awning unexpectedly emptied its contents onto one very understanding Corinne Gaines (resident), who jokes that she received her "second baptism."









The laughter made for wonderful memories, but it isn't what stayed with everyone most. For residents, the trip offered something increasingly rare: uninterrupted time together. "The companionship was great," Nancy Thomas says. "I've only been here about a year, so I haven't gotten to know everybody yet."

For team members, the experience offers something equally meaningful. One evening, Nan naturally slipped into the role of interviewer, asking everyone around the table where they grew up, what they did for work, and how life brought them to BRC. Stories flowed, and Life Enrichment Specialist Karyn Posey says that moment is her favorite part of the trip. Sheila nods in agreement. "Yes, I would have never guessed that Nancy grew up on a dairy farm."

Back home, the campground stories began to spread. Residents who weren't able to attend are asking about the hot tub, and whispers of next year's adventure—including the possibility of staying in yurts—are generating excitement. If these campers have anything to say about it, the answer is easy: this small but mighty group of ladies is already looking forward to next time.





What "The Boroughs" Gets Right (and Very Wrong) About Senior Living

By Jeremy Douylliez

Netflix's new hit *The Boroughs*, a supernatural mystery from the team behind *Stranger Things*, drops a group of retirees into a picturesque desert community and lets them battle an otherworldly force that's trying to steal the one thing none of us has enough of: time. It's a fun, spooky, and surprisingly heartfelt binge. It also paints a picture of senior living that's worth unpacking, because the show gets some things exactly right and a few things badly wrong.

Here's our scorecard.

✅ Right: A vibrant community worth moving into

The Boroughs (the place, not the show) is gorgeous. There are attractive homes, manicured streets, neighbors with stories, and something to do at every turn. On that, the show nails it. A great senior living community isn't a waiting room. It's a neighborhood. At BRC, that means beautiful homes, interesting people next door, and a calendar full enough that "I'm bored" stops being part of the vocabulary.



✗ Wrong: Memory Support as a mental ward

Here's where the show veers into fiction. Its "care" spaces feel cold and clinical, and residents get treated like patients to be managed rather than people to be known. Real memory support looks nothing like that. At BRC, it's warm, homelike, and built entirely around dignity—supporting each person's abilities, honoring their history, and meeting them where they are.

✓ Right: The residents are the heroes

This is the part the show gets most right, and it's the part we love best. You might assume a retirement community is where people go to sit in rocking chairs and run out the clock. The Boroughs knows better. Its heroes are sharp, funny, brave, and fully in charge of their own story. So are ours. BRC's residents are living engaged, interesting, full lives. And honestly? If a paranormal mystery ever broke out on campus, I'd put my money on them to solve it.

✗ Wrong: The team is not harvesting your life force

Hopefully this goes without saying, but: the staff at a real senior living community are not luring residents in so a monster can quietly drain the life out of them in exchange for eternal youth. The unnervingly upbeat corporate handlers in the show make for great TV but terrible representation. The team at BRC is here for the opposite reason—to support residents, remove obstacles, and help each person live the best version of their life as they define it.

The verdict

The Boroughs is a great watch, and underneath the monsters it's really asking a beautiful question: what will you do with the time you have left? That's a question we think about a lot, too (minus the supernatural conspiracy). The difference is, at BRC, the answer is about living well, not surviving a horror plot.

Innovative Grant

SPOTLIGHT

Made possible through donor support to the BRC Foundation, Innovation Grants help turn creative ideas from residents and team members into reality.

Art with Heart

The journey to transform the Mack Room didn't start with paintings—it started with a simple idea and a committee willing to chase it. What they collected along the way was more than artwork; it was a story that now hangs on the walls of our Mack Room.

The Search Begins

A small committee of team members and village residents made the nearly two-hour drive to artist Nancy Stark's Roanoke home with a mission: to find artwork worthy of a growing collection. Dozens of original paintings lined the walls of her living room and spilled into an adjoining room, thoughtfully arranged like a private gallery. The collection traced years of Stark's work, from earlier paintings to dramatic locomotives full of movement, light, and shadow.

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Rob poses with Allen Berkshire and *Trissel Farm* at BRC.

ART WITH HEART

[continued]

But one painting kept pulling everyone's attention away from the exhibition. Hanging quietly in the kitchen was a locomotive charging toward the viewer beneath a brilliant blue sky. It wasn't part of the artwork Nancy had offered for consideration, yet the group couldn't stop admiring it.

Eventually, they asked the question. Would she consider selling it? Stark stepped away to talk with her husband before returning with an answer. Her heart was still too attached to the painting to let it go. The committee understood.

Their months-long search to bring original Virginia artwork to a bare Mack Room was never simply about filling blank walls. It was about finding pieces with stories—art that felt familiar, sparked memories, and reflected the vibrant community residents call *home*.

When the Mack Room was renovated in 2020, the refreshed space was functional but largely bare. Aside from two clocks—a detail Jeannette Suter, Vice President of Independent Living, jokes about—the walls remained mostly empty.

Over time, residents began sharing an idea. "Some [residents] mentioned seeing local artwork displayed in hospitals and other community spaces," Jeannette says. "It seemed like there would be great ties to having local art represented in our community."

With an innovation grant made possible by generous donor support, Jeannette assembled a committee whose own creative talents helped shape the search. It included Director of Marketing & Sales Jeremy Douylliez, local art collector and enthusiast; resident Rob Kloetzer, a watercolor artist; and resident Chris Smith, a textile artist and collector with a rich background in the arts, including seven years on the board of the Staunton Augusta Art Center.

Together, they set out to create something far more meaningful than wall décor. “I remember early on feeling like I wanted it to reflect our culture at BRC,” says Jeremy. “I wanted it to feel vibrant. I know it sounds corny, ‘Energy for Life,’ but I wanted people to feel that in the space.”

Finding Their Eye

Before the committee purchased a single piece, they established guiding principles. The artwork would be original, not reproductions. It would showcase Virginia artists or depict scenes deeply connected to Virginia. Most importantly, it needed to resonate with the people who would spend time in the room every day. “One thing different between this project and the usual way of people buying artwork for their own home,” Chris explains. “We had to consider what would appeal to the residents here in the village.”





The committee poses with Mary Margaret Pipkin and *White Daffodils* at her house.

They also made another important decision. Instead of reviewing digital submissions virtually, they would find the artwork themselves. That choice sent them across Virginia—to watercolor exhibitions, galleries, artists’ studios, and private homes throughout the Shenandoah Valley, Roanoke, Staunton, Radford, and beyond. “We all have connections to artists in our community,” Jeremy says. “And if we just started pulling at those strings, we’re going to find some great stuff.”

The first purchase was *Industry* by Leigh Crumrine. It wasn’t the most expensive piece the committee would purchase, but it became a turning point for the rest. Standing together at an art show, the committee looked at one another, asking the same questions.

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Jeremy poses with Sarah Jones and *In the Sky BRC* at BRC.

ART WITH HEART
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Do we all love it? Is this the right piece? Should we actually buy it?

Making that first purchase gave the committee the confidence to trust their instincts. “It was a huge milestone,” Jeannette says. “That was a good step for us to take,” Chris adds. “Once we made that purchase, we knew we could do this.” From there, the search became both easier and more adventurous.

Sometimes a painting immediately captured everyone’s attention. Other times, lively discussions unfolded as each committee member shared what a particular piece stirred in them—a favorite flower, a familiar landscape, memories of growing up near the shore, or the simple recognition of a farm that looked remarkably like one just down the road from BRC.



For Rob, one painting in particular immediately felt like home. *Eastern Shore* by Chris Tuttle reminded him of Maryland’s Eastern Shore, where he grew up. “That says Eastern Shore to me,” he says. “If people can see something that’s familiar in their mind, then they’re going to like it.”

Not every decision came easily. Barbara Holt’s *March* challenged the committee more than any other piece. Its bold, abstract style felt like the collection’s biggest risk, yet everyone was fascinated by it. “It was probably our wildest swing,” Jeremy shares.



Jeremy and Chris look through pieces at Kevin Deck’s house.

The Reveal

The search also introduced the committee to artists whose passion matched their own. They visited homes where gallery walls filled living rooms. They commissioned original work and met artists eager to share the stories behind their work. Along the way, they even discovered work by internationally acclaimed watercolorists Nancy Stark and Z.L. Feng, whose paintings now hang in the Mack Room.

When the completed collection was unveiled on June 5, residents and guests wandered from painting to painting, many stopping to talk with the artists





The committee poses with Z.L. Feng and *Under the Tree*.

themselves. It was there that *March*, once considered the committee's biggest leap of faith, quickly proved its place. "I remember seeing more people standing in front of her painting than just about any other painting in the room," Chris recalls.

One resident pulled Jeannette aside with a simple observation, "This is why I chose BRC." Another asked how long the artwork would remain on display. When she explained that the paintings had been purchased for a permanent collection, Jeannette watched as surprise turned into appreciation. "There seems to be an appreciation for the investment," she says, "and commitment to wanting to showcase local artwork, so I appreciate that."

One of the collection's most talked-about pieces, *In the Sky BRC* by Sarah Jones, continues to invite viewers to pause a little longer. Jeremy recalls a moment with resident Janina Greene on the night of the unveiling that captured its impact best. Janina calls the piece her favorite and "a perfect way to summarize where we live." As she took it in that evening, she told Jeremy, "It's the *mountains*. It's the *wind*. It's the *water*. It's the *motion*. It's the *e*... motion."

Another favorite came from Stark's studio. While the committee left behind the blue locomotive that had initially stolen their hearts, they found another train painting that became part of the growing collection—a reminder that sometimes the perfect piece isn't the one you expected.

Just the Beginning

Today, the Mack Room feels noticeably different. Colorful landscapes, expressive abstracts, and scenes from across Virginia greet everyone who gathers in the space. The artwork has transformed what was once a functional meeting space into a place that reflects the beauty, creativity, and character of the region beyond its walls.

Recent lighting upgrades in the Mack Room now enhance the collection, and the committee has already begun planning the next phase of the project through an additional donor-supported innovation grant.

Though Jeannette has a favorite piece (hint: it's a flower), her greatest success wasn't any single piece—it was the journey. "I genuinely enjoyed the process," she says. "It helped me grow as a person and in art. I'm thrilled we got from an idea to this project coming to fruition. And the camaraderie with this committee of guys... I really enjoyed it."

Looking ahead, the committee is already thinking beyond the Mack Room. "It's the seeds to come," Jeannette shares. And perhaps that's exactly what the collection represents—not simply artwork on the walls, but the beginning of something that will continue growing for years to come, one thoughtfully chosen piece at a time.

BOARD MEMBER *Spotlight*

Dr. John Downey

President of Blue Ridge Community College and member of BRC's Operating Board

For 35 years, Dr. John Downey has been part of Blue Ridge Community College, serving as president since 2009 and investing in the Shenandoah Valley through education, leadership, and community partnerships.

Now, two years into his service on BRC's Operating Board, he's bringing that same passion for people and long-term thinking to a community he says feels "as close to home as possible." John recently sat down with us to share more about his journey, what first drew him to BRC, and what excites him most about serving on the Operating Board.

Q A

with Dr. John Downey

Q: Tell us a little about yourself and your career.

A: I grew up in upstate New York as one of 10 children, so I think I was socialized to be social. While attending Le Moyne College, I was privileged to be paired with an older woman who, because of a disability, was unable to leave her apartment. I would go there once a week, and as I got to know her, I realized just how much older adults and college students have to give one another. I was fortunate to have that kind of mentorship and support from a person, and I carried it with me my whole life.

I went to Boston College for my master's degree, and it worked out that my internship was at Bunker Hill Community College—that's how I fell in love with the community college mission.

I have three daughters, all adults doing their own thing, but what a great community [this is] to raise a family! And my wife's had tremendous opportunities as a local, licensed counselor here.

Q: How did you become familiar with BRC?

A: Rodney Alderfer served on the Blue Ridge Community College board, so getting to know him through his service on my board was wonderful. I began to learn what he does as BRC's leader, and he was kind enough to give me a tour. What struck me right away was the BRC philosophy: that this is home—a community, but it's also home, and we need to keep it as close to *home-like* as possible.

Rodney gave me an example: "Some people want to come down at 7 [AM] on a scheduled basis and eat breakfast, but some people want to sleep in until nine." BRC works really hard to ensure residents have a choice. As that simple act was explained to me, I thought, 'Wow, this is a community that really cares about its residents.' The residents themselves contribute to the environment, and you can feel that sense of community as you walk into BRC.



Q: What interested you in serving on BRC's Operating Board?

A: The sense of community. The mission. As I mentioned, my whole life I've been interested in relationship-building with people who are older than me. I have a good friend who's 94 now, and he's taught me so many things about leadership. He was the editor of the local newspaper for many years, so many of the experiences he talks about are similar to my experiences as BRCC president.

It reminds me that it's really in giving that you receive. I've received far more by being involved with older adults than I have ever given. That passion, when Rodney asked me to serve, made me think, 'This is a good match for me.'

Q: What lessons from higher education have carried over into your service on the board?

A: The financial aspects of running a large organization fascinate me. I've learned a lot over the years at BRCC about different funding sources, how they work together, and how one change in policy can influence [them]. I've watched in amazement as the financial people here talk about how the community is funded and how it thrives financially, and I'm just impressed!

As a board member, I've also been impressed by the amount of effort that goes into planning activities. I was particularly struck by the camping activity—to give that opportunity to people who remember camping and would just really love that opportunity one more time. And the thought that went into making sure residents would be safe; I thought that was impactful.

Q: We're in the midst of shaping our next strategic plan. What has that process been like for you as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee?

A: I really love strategic planning! It's so important to think about trends and how those trends impact a community. I think a lot of organizations suffer from the fact that they don't think ahead, and they don't anticipate what may be coming. I was taught you have to think about alternative futures—there are several different possibilities of alternative futures, and you need to think about what you would do in any case.

As a member of the Strategic Planning Committee, I'm impressed by the thought that goes into community building here—what kinds of recreational activities residents want, what opportunities there are to get out into the community, and how we can make those opportunities available to people who traditionally might not have been able to participate.

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BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT
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Thinking ahead about how the community will continue to thrive while further developing that sense of closeness you feel when you walk through the doors is a neat thing. Just as important is making sure residents' voices are heard throughout that process.

That's what I like about strategic planning—that aspect of thinking ahead and thinking about the trends that are coming. We were recently talking about how full BRC is. That's a great luxury to have, but it also means there's greater need in the community. How do you balance that need going into the future while making sure it will be sustained before you invest? It's just fascinating!

Q: What has impressed you most during your time on the Operating Board?

A: I don't think anything has surprised me as much as just reinforced that this is a passion of mine and something I want to be involved in. Rodney's leadership of this organization is so impactful, as well as the leadership I've seen of long-serving board members.

I was struck by some board members being here 25 or 30 years, giving very much of themselves to the board. As they've served, I think about the impact of decisions made 30 years ago that are still resonating today because somebody had the foresight to think ahead.

Another thing that strikes me is the quality of the leadership team, down to the person—whether you're talking about facilities, finance, activities, or grounds; everybody works well together. Often in organizations, silos are developed and territory is laid out. It doesn't feel that way here. People work together to say, 'How can we help these residents live a better life?' which is what my work as a college president does.

Q: If someone has never visited BRC before, what do you think would surprise them most about our community?

A: The talents of residents are magnified here. One resident is great at weaving, so I attended one of the [First Fridays] art shows and saw some of his work displayed. Then I went around and saw that other residents had other talents. There's also a theater group here just because a resident has a passion for theater. What a way to spend your life!

For John, it's the people who make BRC special. He's especially proud that many BRC team members got their start at BRCC—a reflection of the strong partnership between our two organizations. But it's also the relationships he's formed with older adults and the opportunity to learn from their experiences that continue to shape his perspective.

"Being an older adult is an important time to reflect on what you've done and understand the impact you still have," he says. In his own conversations with older adults, John has found tremendous value in hearing what life was like 20, 30, or 40 years ago—and in recognizing what generations can continue to learn from one another.

It's also why he believes preserving the stories of those who have shaped communities like BRC matters. "I think capturing those stories... should be celebrated," he says. "It teaches the next generation the importance of the legacy they're leaving."

As he looks toward BRC's future, John is inspired by the creativity, wisdom, and lifelong passions of its residents, as well as the community's commitment to helping those passions continue to grow. "There's something here for everybody," he says. "And if it doesn't exist, there's such a willingness to help residents achieve the dreams they want to achieve."



Giving with Purpose, and a Little Planning

By Annie Frazier

Each year, many retirees receive a reminder from their financial advisor or IRA custodian about taking their Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). For some, it feels like another item to check off the list. For others, it's an opportunity to turn a required withdrawal into something that reflects the causes and people they care about most.

If you are age 73 or older, an RMD is the amount the IRS requires you to withdraw each year from most tax-deferred retirement accounts, such as a traditional IRA. Because those withdrawals are generally considered taxable income, many people begin looking for thoughtful ways to manage them.

One option that is often overlooked is a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).

If you are age 70½ or older, you may be able to direct a gift from your IRA straight to a qualified charity through a QCD. For those who are also taking RMDs, a QCD can count toward satisfying all or part of that annual requirement while excluding the distributed amount from taxable income. The gift must be made directly from your IRA custodian to the charity in order to qualify.

While the rules may sound technical, the idea behind them is wonderfully simple: they provide a way to support the organizations and causes that matter most to you while making the most of your retirement assets.

For many people, charitable giving is about more than writing a check. It's about expressing gratitude, investing in future generations, and supporting organizations whose missions have become part of their own life story. A QCD can be one way to align your financial planning with those personal values.

Every person's financial situation is unique, so we always encourage you to consult your financial advisor or tax professional to determine what approach is right for you.

If you're interested in learning more about QCDs or other tax-smart giving opportunities that support the BRC Foundation, we'd be happy to have a conversation. Whether you choose to support BRC or another organization that is meaningful to you, understanding your options can help you make informed decisions that benefit both your charitable goals and your financial plans.

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May 1, 2026 – July 31, 2026

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Deidra K. Hill
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Funds donated to the BRC Foundation do a log more than support the basic operations of Bridgewater Retirement Community.

By choosing to become a monthly donor, your contributions:

- **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.**

Consider becoming a BRC Energizer by reaching out to the Foundation Team today. Every act of generosity makes an impact.



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Gina Becks
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Wendell Eller
Margaret Wurst
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Dinner of Champions

Jeannette Suter, Dwight Houff, Amy Minnick, and Anne O'Donohue attend the Dinner of Champions in Harrisonburg, a fundraising event benefiting the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.





Well-Being ThinkTank

Laura Spicer takes the panel at the 2026 Well-Being ThinkTank in Boise, Idaho this August, sharing her experience and expertise on well-being practices making a difference in senior living today.



Price Crenshaw takes the Bubble Bike for a spin through the village alongside residents and fellow team members on a community ride.

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Editor | Ashlie Heatwole

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We'd love your feedback! If you have thoughts on this edition of *The Bridge* or ideas for future stories and features, email **communicate@brcliving.org**.

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