

## Inaugural Butterfly Release at Wesley Village

On the afternoon of September 5th, residents, families, and staff from the entire campus gathered in the beautifully landscaped courtyard at Partridge-Tippett Nursing Facility on the Wesley Campus. The sunshine and weather could not have been more perfect for this occasion. All were eager to attend and witness something very special and unique in the beauty of the outdoors surrounded by nature at its most pure. Beautiful butterflies were about to be released by all the residents and staff.

The campus Chaplain, Nathan King, planned and organized the butterfly release event. Nathan had experience with butterfly release events through his past work with hospice patients and their families. Nathan stated, "It was very therapeutic and a way of coping with grief and the inevitable changes associated with loss." When asked about his hopes and intentions for this event new to Wesley Village, he stated, "It was in my heart that the community would connect all together here on the campus. I think of our tagline - Caring. Connecting. Community. This speaks so true to the work we all do here and why we are all here: to care for our residents and one another, to seek opportunities to connect with each other, and to belong to a community. So, this event I planned as an opportunity for all areas of the campus to come together and connect, and remember loved ones lost."

Top Photo: Judy K., Ann I. & Tita B.



Theresa B.



Left to Right: Kathy Harrington, Danielle Janeski, Eric Yashinski, Selina Zemantauski & Brian Palma





# A Bright Future Ahead



In the last issue, I discussed advocacy efforts in collaboration with 28 other senior living providers in the state of New York, all united by a cause to urge the Governor and Legislators to reform the NY Medicaid program, which remains drastically underfunded and places a major strain on long term care providers as well as negatively impacts seniors' access to care. Unfortunately, we did not get the increase that we had asked for, nor the reform necessary to improve the States' overall Medicaid reimbursement program. While there was a marginal increase, the reimbursement program remains significantly underfunded and as such, we will remain steadfast in our advocacy efforts to produce the change so desperately needed to support our seniors.

Despite this and many challenges our organization has endured, we have experienced successes. We are actively engaged in strategic planning to ensure that UMH will remain a fiscally strong organization to advance our mission for decades to come. I want to reflect and share a few success stories that I have had the pleasure of witnessing over the last several months on our campuses. We continue to focus on fostering employee engagement in alignment with our "Engaged People" Pillar of Excellence. This spring, we held employee service and recognition award ceremonies to acknowledge those employees who have reached various milestones. These milestones ranged from five to as many as forty years of service! It is truly remarkable that we have employees in our organization who have been serving our residents and carrying out our mission for 40 years! I was proud to honor 80 employees, 14 of whom were celebrating more than 30 years of dedicated service. This kind of longevity is a direct reflection of our success in fostering a culture whereby employees are fully engaged, they believe in our mission, and want to stay with our organization.

We also celebrated 50 years of service on the Hilltop Campus. Hilltop has been a major pillar in the community with a rich history and legacy of caring. I was honored to be a part of the event and address all who attended including residents, staff, board members and families to reflect on where we have been, the many accomplishments over the years, and the bright future ahead. I've been able to enjoy casual moments with residents and staff at various activities including employee appreciation picnics, cornhole tournaments, and other special events. On our Wesley Campus, we held a graduation ceremony for a Certified Nursing Assistant class. It was an honor to share in this significant day to welcome these individuals to their new careers to carry out such vital work in our organization. Most recently, I attended a music festival at Hilltop in memory of a former resident, Doris Brownlow whose family, so touched by the care she had received with us, generously donates to make this annual music festival possible. I am encouraged by all of these special occasions and stories that illustrate our mission in action and people caring for people. Thank you to our residents, staff and Board of Directors and leadership for their on-going loyalty to UMH and as we continue on this journey together, there is most certainly a bright future ahead.

In appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Picchini". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Brian Picchini, President & CEO



# Inaugural Butterfly Release at Wesley Village (Continued from front page)



Nathan King

While Nathan expressed this becoming an annual event, he also plans to create more opportunities for connectivity between residents and staff from all levels of care on campus. He explained that "the pandemic had us all isolated from one another as was needed to keep everyone safe. Throughout the pandemic, people lost loved ones, yet they were not able to fully mourn or process their grief since gatherings such as funerals were limited during the height of the pandemic. "Today, with the release of each butterfly, we will say a special prayer and speak to our loved ones passed as we release each butterfly. Today we are celebrating a new rhythm, and the significance of the life and cycle of a butterfly's life is that it changes over time. Beginning from an egg to a caterpillar to a cocoon and, later, to a beautiful butterfly. Much like a butterfly when in the shelter of its cocoon, we were masked and distanced from one another. But today, we can gather again and have started a new rhythm here."

Nathan opened the event with prayers and reflection on a butterfly's life and demonstrated how to release each butterfly. There were 100 butterflies individually secured in triangular paper envelopes to be unfolded and released. It was a very cathartic and memorable event for all who attended. There were smiles, laughter, and tears as each butterfly was carefully released to fly off in honor of their loved ones. Staff remarked how different each butterfly was in that some lingered in the palms of hands, while others immediately ascended off into the sky or quickly flew downward to the ground, fluttering across the grass or perching themselves onto the flowers or bushes throughout. It was marvelous to see so many butterflies in one area fluttering among those that gathered. Many took photos

and videos of themselves releasing their butterfly to share the moment with family members who could not be there. Two residents shared one butterfly and each said a prayer for their deceased spouses and took a moment of silence before releasing their butterfly. It was a remarkable event, and residents and staff alike enjoyed the afternoon, followed

by gathering to enjoy refreshments together, including over 100 cupcakes adorned with an edible butterfly. We are grateful to our Chaplain, Nathan, for bringing this special event to our campus.



Lois S.



Mary M.



# Celebrating 50 Years of Service: A Memorable Evening at Hilltop

It was a memorable evening as residents, staff, and members of the Board of Directors gathered to celebrate an extraordinary milestone. The Hilltop Campus has been serving the needs of seniors of the greater Binghamton community since 1974! The evening commenced with warm and heartfelt remarks by Brian Picchini, President & CEO, who set the tone for the celebrations. Rev. Lea Harding offered a thoughtful prayer, and Ron Patti, COO, followed with inspiring remarks and a champagne toast.

Live entertainment brought the celebration to life, creating an atmosphere of joy and togetherness. Guests enjoyed a selection of refreshments and appetizers prepared by our talented dietary team. The lobby and auditorium were transformed with elegant black and gold-themed décor, featuring an impressive balloon arch and a photo gallery that beautifully commemorated Hilltop's rich history. These thoughtful touches provided the perfect backdrop for reminiscing and celebrating the community's legacy.



Left to Right: Ron Patti, Kate McHugh, Paul Pado, Nicole Policare, Karen Acly, Kate Conant, Faye Clark, Denise Reilly, Jackie Otremba & Jennine Best-Baker

Brian Picchini remarked, "We have touched countless lives through five decades of existence, and I am confident that we will continue our mission of providing our residents with exceptional care and compassion. The Hilltop Campus has been an awesome supporter of the Greater Binghamton community, largely due to all of you who provide consistent care, compassion, and a real sense of community here each and every day. Make no mistake, none of this would be possible without our caring staff and beloved residents." Picchini closed with, "Our promise is that we continue to enhance the lives of our residents with independence, dignity, care, and compassion and that we solidify our commitment to this campus, this community, and our staff and residents for the next 50 years!"



Maryann E., Ron Patti, Geri W. & Louise L.

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this event unforgettable. Special thanks go to our activities and dietary teams for their exceptional work in creating a night that will be cherished by all who attended.



# Brooks Estates Resident Ron Bartnikowski Raises \$4,547 for St. Joseph's Center

The Wesley Village Campus was buzzing with excitement as Brooks Estates resident, Ron Bartnikowski hopped on his bike and pedaled for the cause again this year. Most people who live in NEPA are familiar with "Go, Joe!", an annual bike fundraising tour done by WNEP's Joe Snedeker to raise money for St. Joseph's Center. Last year, Brooks residents Ruth Major and Ron and Maurita Bartnikowski were chatting, and Ruth suggested that Ron do his own version of the "Go, Joe!" bike tour around the Wesley Village Campus. WNEP's Joe Snedeker's enthusiasm is nothing short of inspiring, and raising money to support St. Joseph's Center is a no-brainer. So, the Brooks residents' trio got to work planning and promoting the initiative.

Ron's wife, Maurita, shared their motivation: "We do this because we care about people and want to raise awareness for St. Joseph's Center and its mission." Ron, Maurita, and Ruth's dedication to making a difference is truly inspiring, and their impact was felt across the entire campus. This year, Ron's efforts—dubbed "Go, Ron!"—raised an impressive \$4,547 for the center.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the team of residents at Brooks Estates, whose collective efforts to spread the word and coordinate the event were instrumental in its success. We're incredibly proud of the funds raised and the sense of community fostered through this initiative.

Left to Right: Nancy P., Maurita B., Ron B., Hank W. & Sara W.



***Over the years, the team has raised \$8,129 for the Go, Joe initiative supporting St. Joseph's Center! An anonymous donor in Lackawanna county has matched the amount raised since the team started their fundraising efforts!***



# Brooks Estates Travelers Gear Up for Exciting Seasonal Adventures

The Brooks Estates Travelers are gearing up for another exciting season of bus trips, bringing residents of the Brooks community together with a variety of big and small adventures. This dedicated Committee, consisting of about a dozen members, organizes trips that offer Brooks Estates residents unique and enjoyable experiences at a fraction of the cost typically charged by public travel companies. The Committee's direct collaboration with entertainment venues and transportation providers allows them to secure special deals and craft exclusive experiences tailored to the interests of Brooks Estates residents.



Seated: Maurita B., Marion H., Marianne W., Standing: Maria E., Steve E., Jess B., Rick P., Barbara S., Jane O.

This past summer, the Committee was excited to welcome two new members, Nancy Bartle and Richard Powlus, who have already contributed fresh ideas and energy. The Travelers are currently planning several upcoming trips, including a much-anticipated outing to a Christmas show. It's sure to be a highlight of the holiday season. For more information, call Marion Heycock at 570-881-4943 or Joe Andrews at 570-466-5265.

## Closing Out Summer with a Splash: Seafood Boil Brings Flavor and Fun to Brooks Estates

Brooks Estates closed out the summer with a Seafood Boil. Residents came together to enjoy a delicious spread of shrimp, clams, corn on the cob, potatoes, sausage, and all the classic seafood boil fixings! The fresh flavors, laughter, and smiles made it a perfect afternoon to wrap up the season.



Emily N. & Jean W.



Charlie C., Sarah C., Mae K., Connie L. & Mary Jean M.



# Celebrating the Annual Doris Brownlow Music Festival at Hilltop Campus

Hilltop Campus proudly hosted the Annual Doris Brownlow Music Festival during National Assisted Living Week. This cherished event was made possible by the generosity of Doris Brownlow's family members, whose annual donation makes this event possible. Doris was a beloved former resident whose life was deeply intertwined with the arts, and we are proud to pay tribute to her through this beautiful event.

Doris had a passion for music, painting, sewing, and interior design, and she was an active volunteer during her time at Hilltop. From participating in campus activities to curating Movie Nights for her fellow residents, Doris left an indelible mark on our community. After her passing in April 2021, her family made a generous donation to the UMH Foundation that led to the creation of the Doris Brownlow Fall Fest in 2022, ensuring her legacy would live on.



Vera C. with Rowdy & Ruby



Brian Picchini & Rev. Lea Harding



Ashley Shea, Denise Reilly & Faye Clark





This year's festival was a vibrant celebration featuring live performances by Ain't Misbehavin, Rick Pedro, Forever Young, and James Apicella. Guests enjoyed an array of activities, including raffles, bake sale, cider and donuts, and a special visit from Rowdy and Ruby, the mascots of the Binghamton Rumble Ponies. It was an unforgettable day filled with music, laughter, and the spirit of community that Doris herself cherished so dearly.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Doris's family, the performers, volunteers, and guests who helped make this year's festival a resounding success. Through events like these, we continue to celebrate the rich lives and lasting contributions of our residents.



Chris Waters



## 2024 Annual Appeal

We are almost halfway to our goal of \$45,000 for the 2024 Annual Appeal! Your donations directly impact the lives of our residents, UMH staff, and our facilities. Whether it's providing comfort, connection, or joy, every contribution brings us closer to our mission of creating meaningful moments and providing excellent care in our community.

If you haven't yet, please consider making a donation today! Your generosity makes a world of difference. Visit [UnitedMethodistHomes.org/Annual-Appeal](https://UnitedMethodistHomes.org/Annual-Appeal) to read our 2024 Appeal Letter, or visit [UnitedMethodistHomes.org/umh-foundation](https://UnitedMethodistHomes.org/umh-foundation) to learn more about our mission.



Ruth Ann L. & Irene N.

# Employee Announcements

We are excited to share recent updates within our team, highlighting key promotions and new hires across various departments. Join us in congratulating our newly promoted team members and welcoming those who have recently joined our community!

Lee Gaynor has been promoted to Health Homes Supervisor.

Gina Weisberg has been promoted to Administrator at St. Louise Manor.

Christine Lockwood was hired as the HR Assistant at Elizabeth Church.

Brittany Gaynor was hired as the Director of Home and Community Based Services.

Rose Kanuk was hired as Controller at the Corporate Office.

Barb Payne was promoted to HR Manager at Hilltop Campus.

Morgan Balwierczak was hired as Senior Accountant at the Corporate Office.

Laura Bushinski was hired as the Activities Director for Anderson & Myers at Wesly Village.

## "Sweets, Treats, Gab & Grab" Brings Joy to Elizabeth Church Campus



At Elizabeth Church Campus, residents are treated to special visits from volunteers Beth and Debbie, who never fail to brighten the day with their warmth and generosity. Armed with a cart loaded with flowers, balloons, candy, snacks, puzzles, and other goodies, Beth and Debbie make their way through the campus, chatting with residents and spreading joy with every stop.

Their visits are affectionately known as "Sweets, Treats, Gab & Grab," and they truly live up to the name! The ladies' thoughtful gifts and cheerful spirits bring a smile to everyone they meet. Often joining the duo is Rosie, the adorable dog of Activity Director Kathy Micha, making the experience even more heartwarming.

The residents always look forward to these visits, as they bring more than just treats—they bring companionship, laughter, and a special sense of connection. It's a program that has become a sweet tradition at Elizabeth Church Campus.



Beth & Debbie with resident, Mary W.



# Brooks Estates Residents Enjoy a Taste of Italy

Residents at Brooks Estates recently gathered for a delightful Italian-themed lunch, bringing a little taste of Italy right to our community. The event featured a delicious spread our talented Dining Services staff prepared, offering authentic Italian flavors that everyone enjoyed.

Adding to the ambiance, local musician Jay Limoncelli serenaded the crowd with classic hits from Frank Sinatra, setting the perfect mood for the afternoon. The event began with a heartfelt prayer in Italian, led by resident Maria Englot, which added a special touch to the occasion. It was a wonderful day filled with great food, music, and community spirit!



Don W., Keith J. & Dorothy J.



Marilyn F. & the late Bill F.



Maria E., Jay Limoncelli & Steve E.



Marion H. & Maria E.

## New Support Group at Wesley Village

Are you caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia? Join our Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia Caregiver Support Group. We meet every second Thursday of the month at 3 PM at the Irene Raeder Community Center on the Wesley Village Campus, located at 410 Pollock Drive, Pittston, PA. Everyone is welcome - together, we can share experiences, offer encouragement, and navigate this journey. We hope to see you there!



Caregiver Support Group

Presented by:  
Alzheimer's Association  
Greater Pennsylvania

**Second Thursday of the Month**  
3 - 4 p.m.  
Irene Raeder Community Center  
Wesley Village Campus  
410 Pollock Drive  
Pittston, PA 18640

Janica Balken  
jbalken@alza.org

Visit [alz.org](http://alz.org) to learn more about caregiver programs and resources. To further extend your network of support, visit [ALZconnected.org](http://ALZconnected.org), our online community at [alzconnected.org](http://alzconnected.org).

800.272.3900 | [alz.org](http://alz.org)

### Build a support system with people who understand.

- Alzheimer's Association® support groups, conducted by trained facilitators, are a safe place for people living with dementia and their care partners to:
- Develop a support system
  - Exchange practical information on challenges and possible solutions
  - Talk through issues and ways of coping
  - Share feelings, needs and concerns
  - Learn about community resources

# UMH Promoting Health & Wellness

Welcome to "UMH Promoting Health & Wellness," a new section in our newsletter. Each story will focus on various topics, from nutrition and healthy eating to fall prevention, heart health, and more! **Become a guest writer for Connections! We are seeking volunteer contributors for this section. Do you have a topic of interest that could benefit the public in this area? Contact Betsy Vannatta or Abbie Evans at [bvannatta@umhwc.org](mailto:bvannatta@umhwc.org) or [abevans@umhwc.org](mailto:abevans@umhwc.org).**

## Aromatherapy and Cognition

By Megan Dean M.S., CCC-SLP

Most of us are aware of the strong ties between scent and memory, but we may need to be more knowledgeable of the reasoning and implications behind this tie. There is a direct "route," so to speak, between the olfactory (smell) system and the key structures involved in memory, namely, the hippocampus and the amygdala. Unlike other senses, smell isn't required to make any stops along the way through the brain to its desired location, which gives it direct access to our memory systems. The cell connections involved during the transfer of smell information are also considered "monosynaptic" (involving one single direct connection), which means they are bigger, faster, and better preserved.

But why is our smell system designed this way? The answer likely lies in our primal instinct for survival. It's a well-established fact that animals heavily rely on their sense of smell to identify and bond with their young. In human infancy, our sense of smell plays a crucial role in recognizing our parents and in identifying and locating a milk source, both of which are essential for survival. This primitive need for smell is a driving force behind its power and durability, making it a fascinating area of study.

There is potential to use this powerful system to our advantage in cognitive shaping. Numerous studies have shown confirmation between scents and brain activation. In a recent clinical study, researchers at the University of California, Irvine, explored an aromatherapy regimen given for six months in older adults. The scents used included rose, orange, eucalyptus, lemon, peppermint, rosemary, and lavender. They concluded that there was an overwhelming increase in scores on verbal memory recall. Another study by Chamine and Oken (2016) found working memory performance to be significantly improved after lavender inhalation compared to placebo groups.

Aromatherapy has been used as a complementary treatment for a wide range of inflammatory and infectious ailments. It has proven effective in pain management, sleep management, mental health management, joint management, and cancer symptom management. The use of aromatherapy as a complementary treatment for dementia is gaining attention due to the strong ties between scent and memory. While more research is needed, the potential of aromatherapy in shaping the future of dementia care is promising and inspiring.





# Hilltop Campus Welcomes the Broome County Humane Society for a Heartwarming Event

In August, the Hilltop Campus celebrated "The Dog Days of Summer with a memorable visit from The Broome County Humane Society. Employees at the Hilltop Campus collected donations to send home with our friends from the Broome County Humane Society. The day was a huge success, with lots of slobbery kisses from the pets of the Humane Society, who captured everyone's hearts. While playing with the animals, residents and staff sipped on refreshing Pink Poodle Mocktails while enjoying live music performed by Harmony Lane. It's hard to leave this event and not want to adopt one of these cuddly cuties!



Nancy H.



Jessica Perlin



Faye Clark, Kate McHugh and Kate Conant with volunteers from the Broome County Humane Society



Ruth Ann L. & Tony C.



# A Summer of Love at Hilltop: Celebrating Weddings Past and Present

This summer, the Hilltop Campus was filled with love and nostalgia as we hosted our cherished Wedding Display, a heartwarming tribute to the weddings of our residents and staff. This event has become a beloved annual tradition and features an array of wedding dresses, accessories, and photographs that tell the stories of countless joyful unions.

This year's collection was particularly special, as it expanded to include historical pieces dating back to 1905 and 1908, along with a beautifully handcrafted wedding dress from China. These additions provided a unique glimpse into the diverse and rich histories of our community members, connecting us to different cultures and eras.

As you walked through the lobby doors, the atmosphere was reminiscent of a charming wedding boutique, with each piece on display radiating the love and memories of those who wore them. The first evening of the exhibit was celebrated in true wedding fashion, with a delightful "wedding" reception for our residents. The event was complete with live music and a delicious cake, making it a memorable occasion for all.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this beautiful display and celebration. The Wedding Display at Hilltop continues to be a treasured program, bringing our community closer together as we celebrate the love stories that have shaped our lives.



Julianna D., Phyllis B., Jim T., & Phyllis C.



Ruth Ann L., Tony C., Russell S., Helen E. & Carol A.





# Tunkhannock Campus Hosts Annual Grandparent's Day and Family Fun Festival

The Tunkhannock Campus was lively and joyful during this year's Grandparent's Day and Family Fun Festival! Families gathered on the campus lawn to enjoy various fun activities, making it a memorable day for residents and visitors alike.

The festival featured an exciting array of attractions, including a bounce house, bird feeder craft station, face painting booth, raffle baskets, and goods from local artisans. A bake sale offered delicious homemade treats, adding to the festive spirit.

No one went hungry, with plenty of tasty options like hotdogs and popcorn. A special treat this year was Mannings Ice Cream, generously brought by our friends from Mayflower Florist and Farm Market, adding a sweet touch to the event. The day was filled with laughter, creativity, and community spirit—a perfect way to celebrate the special bond between grandparents and their families.



## A Joyful Picnic at The Highlands

The Highlands hosted a delightful summer picnic for residents, bringing the community together for a day filled with laughter and delicious food. The event provided the perfect opportunity for residents to enjoy each other's company, along with some mouthwatering dishes prepared by our talented Dietary Staff, who made sure there was something for everyone to enjoy. From classic picnic favorites to fresh seasonal treats, the spread was a highlight of the day.



Rosalie R. & Nick R.



Maxine W. & Mary H.

## Celebrating Victoria Morabito's Retirement

Victoria Morabito, Senior Administrator at Elizabeth Church Campus, was recently honored at a board meeting in recognition of her retirement from United Methodist Homes. Since joining us in 2007, Vicky has been a pillar of strength and leadership, demonstrating unwavering dedication, wisdom, and hard work. We are deeply grateful for her many contributions and wish her all the best as she embarks on this new chapter of her life.



***Connections is designed for easier readability. Contact Abbie Evans at [abevans@umhwc.org](mailto:abevans@umhwc.org)***

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