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Mission Statement:
A community of faith, called by God, to serve the needs and to enhance the lives of our elders, their families and the broader community.

Scott R. Stevenson,
President & CEO

Rev. Daniel T. Moser II
Chair, Phoebe Ministries
Governing Board

Peter McConnell,
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Fitness, Wellness, Artistry, Faith—
These and so many other things are integral to life at Phoebe communities. Learn more in this issue about our residents and the ways they continue to engage with life at Phoebe.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

As we enter a new year, I am reminded again of the importance of reflecting on the past and looking mindfully toward the future. We certainly have much to be proud of, and much to work towards. Across the organization we continue to build and strengthen our programming. You’ll read in this issue about the continued success of the wellness program at Phoebe Berks, and the exciting expansion of Neurocognitive Engagement Therapy at Phoebe Wyncote, bringing Phoebe’s award-winning therapy model to a whole new population in the Philadelphia region. You’ll learn how Phoebe Pharmacy is making it easier for short term rehabilitation patients to transition home, and how Pathstones by Phoebe offers empowering choices for elder adults. In addition, we are proud to host the work of two talented and respected professionals who write, respectively, about homesickness and sexuality in long term care communities: issues we choose to embrace as a forward-thinking leader in senior care.

In this issue, as at all times, we celebrate and honor the contributions of dedicated employees to our residents’ lives, and the profound connections still made by our residents in memory support neighborhoods. These are the people who make Phoebe what it is: a multifaceted, diverse, celebratory environment. Our people are thinkers and doers who want to make our communities and the world around them a better place to live. Their stories continue to move and inspire me even in the face of “big picture” concerns that rise up every day.

While we thank God and celebrate our achievements, we do not take our success for granted. Every day we look toward the future and our position in the changing landscape of health care. A new generation is entering our doors, and their needs are different from the generations that preceded them. Changes in funding have challenged our creativity and resilience. One outcome is our recent announcement of the repositioning of Phoebe Allentown to improve our care model and protect our skilled nursing service offering. Thanks to the hard work of every individual in our Phoebe family, and the continued support of people like you, we build a future that is truly brighter for our residents and our community. Rest assured our efforts will always be in service to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and in hopes of bringing honor to him!

I wish you and yours peace and prosperity in this new year.

In Christ,

Scott R. Stevenson
President & CEO

On the Cover: Loretta “Lovey” Gable holds a prayer cross, one of the therapeutic handcrafts she and other memory support residents work on at Phoebe Allentown.
Here are some conversations that just stick in your head. You don’t consciously choose them; they just get in and are ready to be replayed in response to a trigger you don’t choose. Psychologists call these latent memories.

Here is one variety that I have heard again and again during my 30 years working in long term care settings. The words are slightly different each time, but the dialogue comes down to something like the following scenario:

Worker (to recently arrived elder who is softly weeping): Why are you so sad?

Elder: I don’t like it here. It’s not home. I miss my home.

Worker: But this is your home now.

Elder: It’s not the same. You know that.

Worker: You have new friends, a nice room with your family pictures and your favorite chair — it’s just like home. People get used to it, and besides, we need to take care of you so living at home wasn’t a good idea. It’s better here for you.

Elder: I don’t see how it’s the same. I really miss my house and old friends and my cat.

Worker: You’re just a little homesick, that’s all. I’ll look in on you tomorrow and see how you are doing.

The worker, perhaps an admissions coordinator, social worker, nurse, or other staff member, may even think: “She is really resistant to placement. I wonder if she is in denial about her need to be here. Maybe I should talk to someone about a mental health consult.” As a former consulting psychologist, I was asked to help with many such concerns over my career, though my approach was to see it from the elder’s perspective and not deny her reality — it was not the home she had left and she needed some assistance working through this significant loss. But a recent visit to a bookstore started me looking at such events through a different lens.

As I scanned the shelves that day, my eye was drawn to a book by historian Susan J. Matt titled “Homesickness: An American History” (2011). I had recently been doing a good bit of writing and lecturing about home and other spaces as psychosexual environments, so maybe I was primed to respond to the word home. But homesickness struck a chord, not just because I remember experiencing it as a 7-year-old going to summer camp, but I think because I had a moment of insight which led me to think that maybe this was what I had seen in people in nursing homes who experienced adjustment difficulties after entering. Maybe children in summer camp experience what elders in nursing homes do, but the kids will go back home; elders likely will not.

At around the same time I read an article by pediatrician and medical writer Dr. Perri Klass (2012) on homesickness, in which she reported that the American Academy of Pediatrics characterizes homesickness, seen in college freshmen as well as in younger children, as marked by preoccupying and recurring thoughts focused on one’s house, loved ones, home cooking, and returning home. But adults get homesick too, Klass wrote. Her case in point was Odysseus, whose homesickness is described in the “Odyssey.” Reading Matt’s book I learned that he wasn’t the only one. For example, in colonial era America, those not too few adventitious pilgrims who got very homesick were sent back on the next ship before they succumbed with the good wishes of their fellow pioneers. During the Civil War, homesickness was treated as a serious emotional malady, akin to a grievous physical wound that warranted a return home before it resulted in the soldier’s death.

With the opening of the American western frontier and the era of rugged individualism, writes Matt, homesickness came to be viewed as a weakness and was seen as a failure to be tough enough to overcome the challenges of frontier life. In the early and mid-20th century, its meaning continued to be even more deeply rooted in a narrative of failure, and homesick people were seen as having failed to transfer their loyalty from home and the warmth of childhood to the organization that employed and relocated them. Homesickness came to be seen as a sign of immaturity and ultimately, “the private feeling became transformed to a socially recognized problem and a disease” (Matt 10).

Migration, and the failure to withstand its pressures, chiefly dislocation from all that was familiar, went from acceptable and a call to sympathy to being stigmatic. It is interesting to note that the late social psychologist and authority on institutions, Dr. Seymour Sarason, described himself and his fellow residents of a long term care community (also uprooted from their homes, he writes) as migrants.

With this background, I began to consider whether people like the elder in the scenario this essay opened with might be feeling homesick, and whether we were misinterpreting responses to being uprooted and now living in an institutional environment like hers as signs of weakness — a failure to be tough enough to deal with the facts of their lives. And if this were the case, maybe history can teach us a better response to those who experience it. Though we may not be able to send all the homesick home, as our colonial and Civil War-era forebears did, we can look to restore those aspects of home that mean familiarity (feeling like one is part of a family) and value it in elder members.

Like Odysseus, the homesickness of our elders may be the “straining for no more than a glimpse of the hearth-smoke drifting up” from their own land (Klass). If we don’t have a literal hearth, our understanding of their homesickness and restoring what home really means can provide a figurative one.


Judah L. Ronch, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor of the Practice
The Erickson School at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County

HOMESICKNESS

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Focus on the Caregiver

A Dedicated Team Member

Wendy Gelsebach has a rare gift: as a caregiver, she connects on a deep, genuine level with others, particularly with Phoebe’s memory care residents. These residents have lost their memories, their sense of self, and their sense of a place in the world. For them, Gelsebach is a rock—constant and dependable, reminding residents that they are cared for and valued. She takes the time to get to know them and see what they respond to, unafraid to try out different approaches until she makes a connection. She does not waver even in the face of the frustration and aggression sometimes brought on by residents with dementia.

Elisha Leavy, Licensed Clinical Social Worker for the Center for Excellence in Dementia Care, works closely with Gelsebach. "Wendy is one of the finest team members I have. I have the privilege to work with over my years in health care," says Leavy. "I have never known her to react personally or with fear when faced with challenging behaviors from a resident. Aggressive behaviors never seem to affect her unconditional positive regard towards those under her care. This dedication to our most vulnerable residents is more than being good at what she does. Wendy’s genuine kindness and true compassion shine through in every interaction."

Gelsebach herself emphasizes the importance of teamwork and collaboration with her colleagues in the Cottage, the specialized memory support neighborhood at Phoebe Richland. “I always tell people we’re like a well-oiled machine,” says Gelsebach. “Each individual contributes so much to the well being of all of our residents. I can’t do it without my whole team.”

“I frequently get comments from staff saying how great it would be if we could clone Wendy,” says Tracy Roman, Executive Director of Phoebe Richland. “She truly has a special gift for interacting with and caring for residents with memory support needs.” Gelsebach’s outstanding service represents what we at Phoebe strive for in all of our communities: care with compassion, conviction, and an unwavering commitment to the best.

To read more about the people who make Phoebe great, visit phoebe.org/messenger.

ASK THE EXPERT

Caregiver Burnout

Melissa Oley
Director of Admissions, Phoebe Berks

Taking care of a loved one can be one of the most rewarding jobs in a person’s life as well as one of the most stressful. The task of looking after your own well-being can be difficult if you feel that your whole life revolves around caring for someone else. You lose the idea of making yourself a priority and this can lead to caregiver burnout.

Recognizing symptoms of caregiver burnout is the first step to being an effective caregiver. Common signs and symptoms include:

- less energy and chronic exhaustion, even after resting
- neglect of personal responsibilities, such as hygiene and doctor’s appointments
- trouble relaxing
- feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- feeling that your life revolves around caregiving with little or no satisfaction
- increased impatience and irritability
- increased reliance on alcohol or medications including sleeping aids

As a caregiver, be aware of the signs and take action. Embrace your caregiving choice and focus on the positive reasons that you made it. Focus on the things you can control and celebrate small victories. Remind yourself that your efforts matter. Sometimes the solution can be as simple as reaching out to a friend or support network to get the appreciation you need to keep going.

To avoid caregiver burnout make sure you take time to connect face-to-face with the person you are caring for, and try some of the following remedies:

- take a walk, or exercise
- spend a few minutes on recreational reading each day
- stay connected to the people who support you
- get the sleep you need to feel your best
- join a caregiver support group
- ask for help from others even if you feel you don’t need it

It’s important that you understand your patient’s condition, whether it’s a loved one or someone in a place where you work. The more you know, the more effective you will be as a caregiver. While the reward of caring for a fellow human being is well worth the trials and challenges, you won’t appreciate it unless you can also take care of yourself.

The Greatest Generation

A Lifetime of Service

In the autumn of 1946, World War II had by and large come to an end—Germany and Japan had capitulated, Britain had begun demobilization, and American soldiers were returning home, guarding and escorting prisoners of war, or liberating the concentration and labor camps overseas. For the generation born in the late 1920s, those men still under the age of enlistment, it may have seemed the war would pass them by. Not Rudolph Langston. On October 5, 1946, just a few months out of high school and a month shy of 18, Langston caught a bus to downtown Philadelphia with a couple of friends and enlisted more or less on a whim, running to see his mother shortly after so she could sign the form.

Langston was raised in the Hunting Park section of Philadelphia, but he spent a week every summer on the Pamunkey Indian Reservation in King William, Virginia, where he’s related to just about everyone. Training took him through Fort Meade, Fort Knox, and Camp Stoneman, California, where he disembarked for Japan. “They don’t tell you where you’re going,” he recalls. Langston knew only that he was one of 5,000 soldiers on the ship, and probably the only Native American.

“In Japan, we didn’t get out too often,” he says. Langston served as a field lineman, climbing poles and running electrical wires for exercises on base. His troop was largely confined to the fort; there was little interaction with the local population and, as he remembers, no resistance or animosity. What he describes instead is an underlying current of tension: “You weren’t there because you wanted to be there, and they didn’t want you. But nobody took any action against us.” His 18-month service, including only two stateside, passed without incident.

With his military service complete, Langston turned his attention to building a life for himself and his family. Over the next forty years, he distinguished himself as a devoted public servant: first as a plainclothes detective with the Philadelphia Police Department, then as a narcotics agent for the Asiac-Pacifc Campaign medal; and the Occupation of Japan medal. Beside these are his badges representing the insignia of the 8th Field Artillery Regiment and the shoulder insignia of the 25th Infantry, nicknamed “Tropic Lightning” for their famously rapid movements during campaigns. LEFT: Langston, c. 2003, in deputy sheriff’s uniform, New Kent County, Virginia. RIGHT: Langston (fourth from the left) pictured with Tony Romano, Phillip Boyd, Captain Jim Kean, and John McAllister.

Even then Langston wasn’t idle—“People asked me to come work for them, I didn’t go looking!” he says. He worked as a security officer and then as a deputy sheriff for New Kent County in Virginia until 2011. By that time, he and his wife Jean had moved onto the reservation, hiring out work on the ten-acre farm he’d received from his mother. They built a house there—the best on the reservation, says Langston, right on the Pamunkey River—and stayed for twenty years until it became necessary for Jean to move closer to her family. She moved into Phoebe Richland Health Care Center in 2016, and Langston moved into the Meadow Glen Personal Care Community at Phoebe Richland the same year. Like so many others he looks back on his service to his country and his community humbly and matter-of-factly, just a part of life—but it is no less remarkable for that, nor unduly lauded for this soldier and patriot who did not hesitate to serve his country as soon as he was able.
The Power of Choice

Pathstones by Phoebe empowers older adults to age at home, with the people they love.

Pathstones by Phoebe members Nancy and David Shelly bought their home more than 40 years ago, before their three children were even preschoolers. At that time, their Bethlehem home was in “appalling condition,” according to Nancy, but was close to the public library and within walking distance of public schools that their children would eventually attend. Over the years, as time and money permitted, they were able to restore their home to the living treasure it is today.

The Shellys didn’t aspire to live in a place where everyone was just like them. They still don’t. When they moved to their home, they were the youngest people on the block. Now they enjoy inviting the new, younger neighbors over for dinner. “We don’t want to leave here to live in an age-restricted community,” says Nancy. “My husband and I still feel we have something worthwhile to offer to our neighborhood and our city.”

So it is not surprising that Pathstones by Phoebe caught their attention. “Pathstones will permit us to continue to live in a home we love, in a community we love, and to ask for assistance without worrying that our needs will make our daughter’s life too difficult. It will allow us to conduct our lives as we wish for as long as we are able.”

Nancy knows firsthand the importance of planning and the choices we face as we age. After suffering a stroke, Nancy’s mother lived with them for over two years before moving through a succession of assisted and nursing care placements. Nancy says it was a very difficult time for everyone. When Nancy and David met with the Pathstones team, they thought about what choices they might have to make over the next years in their own lives. They felt that meeting with a wellness coordinator at regular intervals would provide a level of comfort by assuring they were addressing important aspects of their health and cognitive function. “The wellness coordinator’s periodic evaluations constitute a kind of oversight and guidance not necessarily available from physicians or the family we love,” comments Nancy.

If as time passes and the walk to the library or the crowd around their dining room table becomes less manageable, Pathstones will follow Nancy and David to a new residence. The choice will be one they are empowered to make because they planned for it.

NET hits the ground running at Phoebe Wyncote

Starting this past October, Phoebe Wyncote began offering nationally award-winning Neurocognitive Engagement Therapy (NET). NET was developed especially for individuals with Alzheimer’s disease or other cognitive deficits. Pioneered exclusively by Phoebe, NET utilizes specific techniques administered by trained staff to get patients back home and engaged in their communities.

Jennifer Howanitz, MPT, Regional Director of NET Program Development, says, “NET is the perfect program for someone who has struggled in the past with short term rehab. The program’s goal is to support the participant experiencing cognitive loss through interactive, engaging activities to make successful therapy more achievable.”

“We are thrilled to offer this therapy to community members who may be experiencing some memory loss, are in need of short term rehab, and have goals of returning home,” says Cynthia Townsend-McHerrin, Coordinator of NET at Phoebe Wyncote. Townsend-McHerrin has spent the last several months meeting with hospital personnel and doctors’ offices to get the word out about NET. “There is a great option out there—people in the community just need to know about it!” she says.

NET was piloted at Phoebe Allentown and plans include expansion to other locations in the future. To learn more about NET, visit phoebe.org/NET.

Ready, Set, Go

To learn more about Pathstones by Phoebe, and the choices it can offer you, call 610-794-6700 or visit pathstonesbyphoebe.org.
Sexuality

IN LONG TERM CARE

Sexuality is a topic that is both fascinating and frightening, whether in long term care or in the community at large. Though an intimate part of our lives, it is often misunderstood or undervalued: sexuality is not just about our sexual orientation (to whom we are attracted) or our physical behaviors—it is the multifactorial, dynamic, often shifting concoction of our bodies and psyches. It includes our gender identity and expression, our orientation, our need for intimacy and connection, our body image, and yes, our sexual habits as well. Sexuality is as much a part of a person as their personality, their spirituality, their autonomy, or their self-perception. As such, it does not disappear with age; whether or not one chooses to engage in physical intimacy with others, we never lose the need for connection, for caring, or for being seen as ourselves.

Phoebe has always been committed to providing quality services to older adults and their families—through direct caregiving, rehabilitation, and providing a home for people at all levels of need. We focus on being leaders in the field of health care and advocate for resident rights at all possible fronts. We recognize that, while it is often an uncomfortable and even taboo subject, sexuality is an integral part of our lives that does not end as we age or enter long term care. As a leader in resident rights and best practices, Phoebe recently developed the Sexual Expression and Supporting Resident Rights policy. The policy outlines how even in the face of cognitive impairment, we recognize that every person still holds the right to give and express affection, love, pleasure, and enjoyment, and to experience intimacy that meets their personal needs, in appropriate ways.

Sexuality is not something that diminishes as we age, though we are rarely given healthy, inclusive, positive examples of it as a normal part of aging. Little thought is given to the diverse composition of what a person’s sexuality truly is. When it comes to older adults, its complexity is often reduced even further. In our society we often see the “erasing” of sexuality in certain groups—one of them being older adults. While it is often uncomfortable for many people to think about older adult sexuality, consider this question: at what age do you think you will be ready to give up sex? For most of us, there is no answer. It is such an important part of ourselves, that even if we can no longer functionally engage in intercourse, we still have the need for intimacy, connection, vulnerability, and honest self-expression.

When considering long term care in any respect, often the most productive question we can ask ourselves is, “How would I want to be treated?” It can be easier for many of us to make choices for others based on our own knowledge, experiences, and biases. Often, education and experience give the illusion that we “know better”—in reality, the answer is both simpler and more complex: each person should have a say in how they are treated. Male, female, transgender, gay, straight, bisexual, asexual, feminine, masculine, gender neutral… the labels we use to describe ourselves are all part of who we are, regardless of our age or what we choose to do—or not do—with our bodies. And at any age, we deserve to be treated with dignity and given the consideration of our needs.

In long term care, there is often a challenge of balancing individual rights with the rights of the whole. Safety considerations, personal preferences, and rights of independence and choice versus stewardship and protective oversight are all very real factors that need to be considered as we look to support an individual’s right to healthy sexual expression. Supporting healthy sexual expression does not mean there are no boundaries. It does not give anyone free license to behave as they wish—rather, it is an intentional, structured way of creating a culture that fosters individual rights and preferences, while honoring the social contracts of the communities we develop. This is true not only in long term care, but in our communities across the board. Just as each person has the right to express themselves through their sexuality in appropriate ways, others have the right not to be exposed to unwanted experiences. It is the charge of the facility to find the balance for residents and to educate staff in developing a community of acceptance and mutual respect, a dynamic process that varies in each community. Phoebe’s policy on sexual expression outlines this specifically, stating our commitment to fostering an environment that supports resident rights and providing education and consultation services for staff as they encounter complex situations.

With all of the complexity of supporting healthy sexuality within long term care, we are left with urgent questions—what does this mean for our residents, and for us as caregivers and partners in the community? For our residents, consentual, mutually desired interactions and relationships should be reasonably supported, even if others do not engage in those practices themselves. For many people, this simply means spending quality time with a spouse or long-time partner. For some, it may mean creating new connections. For others, it may mean finding acceptance for LGBT relationships. At Phoebe, we cultivate a culture of openness, respect, and dignity, welcoming staff and residents of different backgrounds and preferences and working with them to nurture an environment that makes these developments possible. Sexuality is integral to us as humans. At Phoebe, we view sexuality as a human right, one that deserves to be supported and protected just as much as religious/spiritual beliefs, the right to have access to quality health care, the right to be with family and loved ones, and the right to thrive. We are committed to educating staff across all settings, and offer the services of mental health clinicians through the Center for Excellence in Dementia Care who can provide support on sensitive subjects like sexuality. We empower our residents to be who they are and to express themselves, we empower their families and our staff to support them, we empower our community, and maybe in so doing help to make a world that is freer to confront and embrace the needs of every individual, at any time of life.

Elisha Elliott Leavy, LCSW, M.Ed., Phoebe Center for Excellence in Dementia Care
Focus on Wellness | PHOEBE BERKS

Focus on Wellness

PHOEBE BERKS

STRONGER than ever

Our years ago this April, Star High, then director of nursing, conceived of an initiative that would encompass life and well-being in every dimension for the residents of Phoebe Berks. It was called the wellness program, and came to life rooted in principles of holistic health maintenance, covering everything from diet to brain fitness, exercise, and spirituality. Four years in, the wellness program has truly become part of the culture of Phoebe Berks, inseparable from the rich vitality of the community.

High has overseen the program since its inception, stepping up as Wellness Director in 2012. She is now executive director for Phoebe Berks, responsible for operations and initiatives in every area of life there, but the wellness program is still her darling, and one of her favorite subjects. “People are four years older and still with us and in better shape than they were four years ago,” she says. “They’ve even had to ramp up the fitness program because after two years the residents found it too easy, ‘which I find just phenomenal,’” says High.

The residents are more vocal about the program than anyone. Al and Mary Ann Schmeck moved to Phoebe Berks Village nearly five years ago. They were always an active couple. “We feel like this is a place where we were immediately found ourselves part of the culture.”

As of last year, Jean Gerhard is now director of the program. For the coming spring she is planning a health fair for the campus, bringing in vendors and demonstrators on fitness, podiatry, diabetic care, diet and nutrition, audiology, vision care, and other related fields.

Gerhard is also leading the program’s newest direction, a campaign they’re calling Get Rid of the Walker. While many residents cannot safely be separated from their walkers, High and Gerhard say there are some who can, and through a combination of therapy and fitness training they plan to empower these individuals to become less dependent on their walking aids.

Even after four years there is no talk of diminishing or phasing out any aspect of the wellness program. High says that by year two they had eliminated what wasn’t working, and now the culture is so ingrained and part of life at Phoebe Berks that it can only expand and improve. The only change is the direction of the fitness program—many residents became too fit for it. The whole concept had to be thrown out and looked at from a different perspective: how to truly challenge these individuals who take their fitness seriously. With that in mind a new fitness coordinator, Michelle Franks, was brought on in 2016; she comes up with new classes and approaches to fitness to keep residents interested and engaged.

The residents are more vocal about the program than anyone. Al and Mary Ann Schmeck moved to Phoebe Berks Village nearly five years ago. They were always an active couple. “We feel like this is a place where we were just able to continue activity without really traveling,” says Al. “Coming here gives you many opportunities to do the things that you enjoy.”

Gerry Breininger and his wife Anna moved into their cottage in 2014, after the wellness program was already in place. Gerry never did much fitness before coming to Phoebe; these days he’s in the fitness center usually six days a week, most often for an hour at a time. “I’ve lost weight, I’m stronger—it’s been very good,” he says. “For people looking to come here and have a better lifestyle, part of that is being stronger and any time you’re stronger you’re healthier and happier.”

Resident committees now collect feedback and report back to the program coordinators, so the program’s progress is resident-driven, like so much else at Phoebe communities. And new residents joining the community immediately find themselves part of the culture.

In coming months and years the conversation will be directed toward bringing the wellness program into personal care at the Village Commons, and into other Phoebe communities where it will be tailored and molded to fit the profile and the style of living at each place. As an expression of Phoebe’s focus on person-centered care, the wellness program must and can be shaped to bring out the best results in the population it serves. When it comes to living at Phoebe, retirement truly is the start of another chapter—one in which our residents are becoming healthier and stronger every day.

To learn more about life at Phoebe Berks, visit phoebe.org/berkswellness or call the marketing and sales office at 610-972-8171.
CELEBRATING
A SEASON
OF GIVING

At each Phoebe community, staff and residents come together to make Christmas special

Months before the holidays arrive, staff at Phoebe’s skilled nursing communities are already preparing to bring cheer to the residents who call Phoebe home. Historically known as “white gifts,” the tradition of providing gifts to residents during the holiday season was started early in Phoebe’s history. Congregations from the German Reformed churches (now the United Church of Christ) in the area that Phoebe served donated small gifts wrapped in white paper for the residents. Although many churches still donate, Phoebe’s growth over the years has made it necessary to provide gifts in other ways. At Phoebe Allentown, most gifts are still donated from community organizations and churches, although giving from these avenues has declined in recent years. “When we have exhausted our supply of outside resources we put residents’ wishes on our giving tree in the main lobby so staff, volunteers, and family members can select ornaments with the name of a particular item the resident has requested,” says Joan Wickel, Director of Community Life at Phoebe Allentown. “All the wish tags were taken in the first two days and we reloaded the tree!”

The giving tree is also instituted at Phoebe Wyncote and Phoebe Berks with great success. “Last year we had some staff and family members who selected very personalized gifts for residents,” says Kelly Wright, Administrator, Phoebe Wyncote. “The outcome was wonderful and everyone smiled when Santa and his helpers delivered the gifts.” The Phoebe Berks Health Care Center Auxiliary adds another special touch by making pillows for all of the skilled care residents. In addition, some families bring small gifts on Christmas Day and personally deliver them to residents.

“Our residents light up with every visit, caroler, card, gift, and act of kindness,” says Heather Cox, Phoebe Berks Volunteer Coordinator. Even small items make a big impact. “I will never forget the excitement of one resident who received a tin of Dieffenbach’s Old Fashioned Potato Chips, a longtime favorite in Berks County but hard to find until recently. She was speechless, but her smile said everything!”

Giving is appreciated at Phoebe any time of year. If you would like to make an impact on resident lives by supporting programming throughout the year, contact Institutional Advancement at 610-794-5132 or advancement@phoebe.org.

Supporting Memory & Spirit THROUGH ART

Phoebe’s innovative Spirit Alive program has inspired a special project for memory support residents. The project began when staff learned that a resident enjoyed making things and another resident wanted to hold on to a cross in a Spirit Alive session. It was only natural that the staff connected the two desires and purchased small crosses made of a light-colored balsa wood, and gave them to residents in the Bridgeways and Legacy Place neighborhoods at Phoebe Allentown to sand and stain.

“A lot of our memory support residents were volunteers in their places of worship and that comes back to them when they participate in these types of projects,” says Pam Kleckner, Memory Support Coordinator at Phoebe Allentown. Kleckner, among others, was essential to the development of the project. “Our memory support residents love this activity,” says Elizabeth Russ, Dementia Chaplain at Phoebe. “While they sand and stain the crosses, they pray and talk about all the people who will also pray with the crosses when they receive them. The activity gives them a sense of accomplishment and joy that they are still able to give to others.”

Making prayer crosses is often done in conjunction with the singing of hymns or the reading and discussion of Bible stories. In a recent activity, after the group took turns reading the story about Joseph and his coat of many colors, Community Life Assistant Jason Najarian asked the group if any of them had ever been jealous like Joseph’s brothers were of his coat. Loretta, pictured above, who has dementia and lives in Legacy Place, thought for a moment and said insightfully, “Oh, I imagine so. Most people feel that way one time or another but maybe they don’t realize it’s jealousy.”

“This project brings out the best in the residents, the staff, and our volunteers,” remarks Kleckner. Their intention is to make a prayer cross for every resident who participates in Spirit Alive sessions across the organization—with 12 active groups in four communities the task is no small feat. The craft is such a popular activity that when the target is reached, they may begin donating to area churches. “You never know where you might find a cross made by one of our residents,” says Kleckner. “They just love to give back.”
In a quiet corner of the Phoebe Berks Village community center, passersby might notice the wide wooden rack spread with a snowy white quilt, and once or twice a week, a small group of diligent quilters stitching their careful lines into the material. These are the Berks quilters, four ladies who live in the Village and a gentleman who comes to work early once a week and adds his hand to their slow but steady progress.

About once every three months a new quilt rolls into the rack. The group has done all kinds and they’re experts on the subject: appliqués, patchworks, and preprinted designs that have to be hand-bare, covered in carefully measured stitches, intended for warmth and love and common devotion. The work each is completed, a labor of ornament, have brought together a common cause, their distances vanish, and a community takes to form a hand bell choir, recruiting members and tracking down bells to use in practice and performances. It is now a tradition for the Choraleers to perform each year during the Grand Illumination Ceremony when the Christmas tree is lit in the chapel. Music at Phoebe Berks owes a great deal to Masenheimer’s vision and direction. In honor of the Phoebe Berks 25th anniversary in September 2016, Masenheimer composed and conducted commemorative songs with lyrics contributed by residents Ellie Oberly and the Rev. Fred Blumer.

While enjoying musical performances there is another important figure that helps to bring events to life. Kimberling serves as the master of ceremonies at many special events. After deciding at a young age that he did not have the voice for sports announcing, Kimberling pursued a successful career directing and making sports films. Moving to Phoebe Berks in 2005 gave Kimberling another opportunity to pursue his youthful dream. He puts time and effort into his role, researching the songs and artists for each performance. When not acting as master of ceremonies, Kimberling is actively involved in all aspects of campus life, including the Residents Council and the Sports and Recreation Task Force.

Masenheimer and Kimberling have taken full advantage of life at Phoebe Berks; like their peers and neighbors, they are not content to sit by in retirement and reflect on time past. They pursue their passions and put themselves to new challenges in the service of others, while helping to bring light and love to the Berks community.

To learn more about life and opportunity at Phoebe Berks, visit phoebe.org/berks.
Phoebe Pharmacy makes the transition to home easier than ever

After a successful pilot at Moravian Hall Square, a Life Plan Community in Nazareth, Phoebe Pharmacy is rolling out a new program to make transitions to home easier for residents after short term rehabilitation. Along with providing educational materials and counseling patients on the right way to take their medications, the pharmacy supplies patients with a one-time 30-day supply of medications. And because Phoebe Pharmacy is staffed 24/7, patients can speak to a Phoebe pharmacist at any time. The process is seamless for patients, eliminating the need for them to make a stop at the drugstore on the way home.

While convenient for the discharging patient, the larger goal is to decrease readmissions to the facility or the hospital and improve the post-rehabilitation experience. Pharmacy billers work with patients’ Medicare-D plans, and ensure that patients aren’t billed for medications that they already have at home. Coordinating with the insurance company, the pharmacy’s billing department makes it a priority to avoid rejected claims and additional cost to the patient. The pharmacy also works closely with Phoebe’s nursing staff, medication prescribers, and discharge planners to make sure the resident knows what medications are being sent home and how to take them properly.

“We want to ensure safe transitions from a post-acute setting to the home setting with the goal in mind of preventing re-hospitalization,” says Cindy Richart, Phoebe Pharmacy Executive Director. “There needs to be that smooth transition back to home. It’s all part of the continuum and we’re working on the part of it that gets people home securely and smoothly.”

The program represents Phoebe’s commitment to providing the best care possible at all times, even when it means someone is leaving one of our communities. It fosters the extension of care to the resident in his or her own home, and opens the door for direct contact back to Phoebe. In this way, and thanks to the hard work of Pharmacy staff alongside the direct care team, each patient continues to be part of Phoebe after leaving us, bringing home the mission and the history of the organization in a new and impactful way.

Visit Phoebe Pharmacy online at phoebe pharmacy.org. To learn more about pharmacy discharge, call 610-794-5380.

How Your IRA Can Benefit Phoebe

An IRA rollover gift is a tax-exempt distribution made directly from your IRA to Phoebe or another qualified charity of your choice. Qualifying individuals can make charitable gifts using pre-tax IRA assets rather than taking distribution, paying income tax, and using after-tax assets to make a charitable gift.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

1. The IRA rollover allows donors 70½ or older to transfer up to $100,000 directly from their IRAs to charity each year.
2. An IRA rollover gift is a tax-exempt distribution. Qualifying individuals can make charitable gifts using pre-tax IRA assets rather than taking a distribution, paying income taxes, and using after-tax assets to make a charitable gift.
3. An IRA rollover gift can be used to meet all or part of an IRA-required minimum distribution.
4. The now-permanent IRA rollover gives qualifying individuals certainty, allowing them to better manage their income, taxes, and charitable giving.

To make an IRA charitable rollover gift, follow these important steps:

1. Simply advise your IRA plan administrator that you intend to make an IRA charitable rollover gift.
2. Ask them to send you the proper forms.
3. Your IRA plan administrator will need you to send these forms back to them so they can complete the transfer from your IRA to Phoebe.

The IRA charitable rollover is a great way for many seniors to make a gift tax-free to Phoebe directly from their IRA now and in the foreseeable future. IRA rollover gifts can be directed to Phoebe’s annual fund (to be used where it is needed most), a specific Phoebe campus, an existing fund, or a Phoebe-approved capital project.

To further discuss how your IRA rollover gift can support Phoebe, please contact Gina Bortz, Director of Institutional Advancement, at gbortz@phoebe.org or 610-794-5153.

In 2016, Phoebe received a gift of $1.1 million from the estate of Mary Jane Fisher, designated toward support of the Bridgeways memory support neighborhood and Allen Way neighborhood at Phoebe Allentown. Her gift recognizes the role outstanding staff plays in taking care of our residents and making Phoebe a place they are happy to call home. It’s not every day that Phoebe receives a gift of this magnitude, and we are deeply moved and honored by Ms. Fisher’s generosity.

To learn about the impact your estate gift can make at Phoebe, contact Institutional Advancement at 610-794-5132.
ALLENTOWN

New Year, New Look!

The paint has dried, the furniture is in place, and the residents in Trexler are smiling!

December wrapped up three years of renovations for the Trexler wing at Phoebe Allentown. Forming the western side of the health care center, the Trexler Wing now features a more open concept design as well as updated resident rooms, modernized spas, bathing and shower spaces, and new meeting rooms and common areas with modern furniture for residents and families.

Perhaps most exciting is the new open kitchenette, a more inviting space which gives the feeling of eating in a restaurant. Angela Lieberman, Speech Language Pathologist in the Trexler wing says, "It has been especially nice to see the residents out in the new dining area socializing. The central kitchen concept removes the institutional cafeteria feeling and replaces it with a more informal, social environment.”

Lieberman attests, “I have seen groups of men and women become very close during their short stays here. They come as strangers, become ‘lunch buddies’, and leave Phoebe as new friends. These folks exchange phone numbers and addresses, and build new relationships as a result of their rehab stays here. I think that’s something unique and special."

To learn more about short term rehabilitation at Phoebe, please visit phoebe.org/rehab.

BERKES

Village Gardens Nurse Makes an Impact

A communal gathering space in the Village Gardens personal care community at Phoebe Berks has been transformed thanks to the personal interest of an employee and the generous contribution of a local family business.

Catina Chandler (pictured below), a Phoebe employee for 17 years, noticed that the aquatic tank in the Village Gardens needed some attention and offered her help and supplies. “We had just converted our freshwater tank at home to a saltwater tank and had items that we could donate to Phoebe,” says Chandler.

Her interest in the tank inspired the family of a Village Gardens resident to take the project one step further. The family, which owns an advertising and PR firm in Berks County called the Anderson Group, offered to augment the tank with a line of glow-in-the-dark aquarium supplies from one of their clients.

“Through the years we have donated products to schools, the Autism Speaks organization, universities, clubs, and retirement communities across the country,” says Keith Heberling, Relationship Director at the Anderson Group.

A GloFish® tank provides the same interest and calming effect for those who have cognitive impairment as the well-known Snoezelen units; blue lights bring out the natural fluorescence of certain fish. The tanks are further enhanced by fluorescent plants and other objects, as well as filters and air pumps.

“There is quite a bit of research that clearly demonstrates that a tank like this stimulates the interest, conversation, and even the appetites of children with autism and people living with dementia,” Heberling adds.

The beautiful aquarium has now become a focal point of the communal space, inspiring conversations between residents in a more relaxed environment. “It is very soothing to turn the lights down and watch the movement of the fish,” adds Chandler.

Chandler provides the upkeep of the tank and the residents enjoy watching the process of removing and replacing the water. Some residents are designated to feed the fish, which has become an interesting daily activity in itself.

“GloFish® is perfect for people who have cognitive impairment and outfitting the aquarium at Phoebe Berks seemed to be a great use for the products,” Heberling says.
RICHLAND

Celebration of Life Illumination Ceremony

While the holidays are a time to spend with loved ones, it can also be a difficult time for anyone who has lost a loved one, and for those who are not near family. Phoebe Richland’s annual Celebration of Life Illumination Ceremony, held on December 5, was a unique way for the Phoebe Richland community to remember someone who has passed or to honor someone who is not nearby.

Lights were available for purchase prior to the event. Staff, residents, and family gathered in the Meadow Glen Personal Care Community to illuminate their lights collectively. This ceremony also serves as a fundraiser sponsored by the Phoebe Richland Auxiliary. All proceeds are used to enhance quality of life for residents.

WYNCTE

Day School Partnership Expands

It’s been nearly a year since Our Lady of Confidence Day School (OLC), a special education school of the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia, partnered with Phoebe Wyncote to start a work-readiness skills training program. As anticipated, the relationship has flourished, and four new students have been added to the program bringing the total number of students to six. Pablo, Taylor, Nick, and Justin joined two student veterans of the program, Theresa and Nasir, in October.

OLC’s job experience instructor, Julia Kurdziel, witnesses the students’ work-readiness skills advancing through the program, including everything from social and communication skills to job related self-concept skills. Examples include making and maintaining eye contact, clearly expressing work needs, working cooperatively with mentors and staff, and remaining at a task when distractions are present.

As for identifying each student’s area of focus, this was a collaborative effort between Kurdziel and Phoebe Wyncote’s Executive Director Kelly Wright. “Pablo informed me that he wanted to work with his hands. With my experience with him, especially through our Practical Assessment Exploration System, our pre-vocational assessment lab, I knew his strengths,” says Kurdziel. “It was then that I contacted Kelly about a mentor for him in the Maintenance department. As he states, ‘I really like being able to learn new things using my hands.’ The process was similar for the other students.”

Returning students Theresa and Nasir reassured the newcomers that they would love “working” at Phoebe Wyncote, and bonds between the students, staff, and residents formed in no time.

CAREER UPDATES

Gina Mervitowicz was appointed Director of Admissions for Phoebe Wyncote. Mervitowicz is responsible for managing the Admissions department by organizing the activities of the department and marketing the Phoebe Wyncote campus and services to local referral sources.

Previously Mervitowicz was the Admissions Director at Reliant Senior Care in Prospect Park, Pennsylvania. A resident of Philadelphia, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Corporate Communication from Penn State Abington.

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