History's Thread
Weaving generations together.
Why I Give

Stories From Our Donors

Building a Legacy

By Beverly Coller

My connection to Liberty Lutheran began more than thirty years ago when I was approached by a fellow member of my church to join the board of Artman. It was a distinct time in the community’s history, long before Liberty was even an idea.

Faced with uncertainty, we knew that we needed to head in a different direction to fulfill Artman’s legacy as a leading provider of compassionate care.

When we ultimately decided to change the leadership, we were lucky to find Luanne Fisher, now Liberty’s President and CEO, whose vision and expertise matched perfectly with what we were looking for. Given the situation we found ourselves in, we set our eyes upon the benevolent care program, which has since made an impact for so many individuals and families.

Over time I’ve maintained my connection with Artman and Liberty, not just having served on boards for our communities and services, but also having my mother as a resident at Artman.

I was very fortunate to have a great relationship with my mother. Even when I was an adult, we shared a house for many years. When she became older, my role as her daughter was joined with a new role as a caregiver.

Eventually, when she was 93, I came to the realization that she needed more than I could provide alone. I knew that Artman was the best place for her.

When I would visit, I could see that she was content and in a place that looked after her physical, mental, and social well being. Having seen that first-hand, I am even more fulfilled by knowing that Liberty exists and extends that standard of care to all its communities.

As a faith-based organization with Lutheran roots, Liberty Lutheran follows a call to be charitable. Benevolent care remains a key part of that.

Within the senior care industry, there is no requirement for benevolent care, which is what makes Liberty’s mission to carry a charitable message in our hearts so important.

For some older adults, aging comes with the unfortunate instance of outliving their resources. This causes uncertainty, anxiety, and fear. The prospect of having to leave their community because they can no longer make payments is a very real threat.

I give to Liberty Lutheran because I know that this does not apply within their communities. Residents enjoy the safety and security of knowing they can remain in their homes.

This is a legacy that my husband and I are proud to support as donors and as volunteers.

We have seen the impact that Liberty Lutheran makes as an organization, and how Liberty’s philosophy to fulfill a legacy of compassionate care and empowerment is lived out in the people who work within the organization.

I give to sustain that legacy, which is emboldened by a commitment to ensure that those facing uncertainties receive relief in the knowledge that they are cared for.
Relationships through the Ages

Our lives are more interwoven than many of us realize or think about on a day-to-day basis. It’s interesting to reflect on just how impactful the people around us have been on our individual journeys, and how we continue to make a difference for those around us.

Here at Liberty, we see how relationships blossom and how people across generations form bonds that represent the continuation of history’s thread.

Within this issue, we are delighted to highlight the impact that we all have on one another across generations. Our stories will share how residents, members, and visitors of all ages find inspiration and joy in community activities, how our ministries continue to make an impact for young people recovering from disaster, and how we provide comfort to people of all ages who may have lost a loved one.

Whether it’s spending time with young children from a local daycare, poetry readings with middle school students, informative lectures from nearby universities, virtual bowling with new friends from other communities, or navigating grief, our interactions and the relationships we form leave indelible impressions.

The faith and generosity you continue to place in our family of services creates opportunities for fulfilling stories, such as those you are about to read. They demonstrate how we are all one community, woven together in care and support for one another.

Your enthusiasm for Liberty Lutheran’s mission strengthens our ability to build affirming and empowering services and experiences.

As you continue through this issue, please know that the smiles and stories we present are only possible because of your continued dedication. Your relationship with Liberty is at the heart of everything we do to help the people we all serve on a daily basis.

Luanne B. Fisher, PhD
President and CEO, Liberty Lutheran
Artman was filled with energy and excitement on a sunny Friday morning in April. Residents met in the Atrium, the community’s central gathering place, to await the arrival of students from Twin Spring Farm, a preschool located in Ambler.

“I love that Artman is a community full of friends. There’s a positive spirit throughout the place,” shares Mary Marincola, an Artman resident. “I volunteered here for about 30 years before I moved in, almost five years ago. I love that there are wonderful activities.”

Previous visits from the students have included yoga exercise, assembling donations for an animal shelter, and putting together gift bags for patients at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Today, the students arrived at Artman for an Easter egg hunt and a visit from a VIP guest – the Easter Bunny.

“It’s wonderful to have the children visit,” Mary says. “They are so enthusiastic about the things we do together. We really enjoy when they come to see us here.”

Following the Easter egg hunt, students led residents in singing a classic springtime tune, *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*. “They make us feel really good. We talk about the activities we’re doing and get to know them,” Mary continues. “It’s a real special thing, to be able to talk to them and do things with one another, especially given the different times and experiences between our generations.”

For Kelly Clinefelter, educational director of Twin Spring Farm, visits to Artman have been a wonderful experience for the students. “Twin Spring Farm and Artman collaborated on this service project with the Kelly Ann Dolan Fund. It has been incredible to see the interaction between the residents and our 4, 5 and 6-year-old students,” says Kelly. “It has truly been a heartwarming experience. The residents and the staff have made us all feel so welcome. We look forward to every visit.”

According to Mary Cassidy, a community life leader at Artman, the visits have a therapeutic aspect for residents.

“Visits from children, even younger ones such as these students, can help bring older adults back to a time when they were younger and raising their own families,” Mary Cassidy notes. “We’ve seen a lot of behavioral and social benefits across our community, from personal care and memory care. It’s wonderful to see our residents light up when they see the kids come in through the hallway. That glow remains with them for days afterward.”

*Photos courtesy of Twin Spring Farm*
Give a child a gift and their eyes light up with excitement. For the children at Abington Hospital and their families, receiving a gift means so much more. Lifting spirits and giving hope, residents at Paul’s Run are putting together gift bags full of hand-made treats and toys for children at Abington Hospital Jefferson Health.

This project is part of an ongoing community service effort known throughout the Paul’s Run community as “Homer’s Heroes.” Named after Paul’s Run’s beloved companion dog, Homer, this group dedicates themselves to leading philanthropic efforts that bring hope to others. Only in their first year since being founded, Homer’s Heroes has certainly lived up to their name, and continues to be a rewarding way for residents to give back.

“All levels of care are involved with this project,” says Meghan McGillian, resident services coordinator at Paul’s Run. A true team effort from independent living, personal care, and skilled nursing, each neighborhood of the community works together in the making of these gift bags. “It’s a great way for everyone to get involved and give back to the community,” says Meghan.

While the bags are filled with optimism and motivation, they also include tangible items. In the bags you’ll find stuffed animals the residents sewed themselves, candy bars wrapped in hand-written notes of encouragement as well as greeting cards with special messages for each child.

Independent living resident at Paul’s Run and active member of Homer’s Heroes, Val Lopez, has enjoyed putting her sewing skills to good use. “I’ve sewn my whole life. My mother taught me how to sew, and I passed it on to my daughter,” says Val describing the many generations of sewing in her family. More than a hobby, sewing for Val was a previous profession as she and her husband owned and operated their own men’s fashion store.

Dedicating her tailoring talents to a more benevolent cause, Val along with other independent living residents have worked diligently in sewing these stuffed animals for the children at Abington Hospital. “I hope the gift bags bring the children happiness. The stuffed animals will be a friend for them to cuddle,” Val says stating that her motivation for this project stemmed not just from sewing, but bringing comfort to children who need it.

“Coming to the hospital is scary, and tangible items help the children recognize and understand that people are here who care about them,” says Diane Curran, manager of volunteer resources at Abington Hospital Jefferson Health. The Paul’s Run community looks forward to reminding the children that they will always be cared for.
In 2017, Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, leaving severe damage in its wake that forced thousands of people from their homes. Hundreds of these families found refuge in the Philadelphia area following the disaster, where the story of recovery took on a new narrative. They now face the new challenges of language barriers, distance from their familiar communities, and lack of so many resources that they counted on back home.

Not surprisingly, many of those hit the hardest by these challenges are children. To help in their time of need, the Lutheran Disaster Response team, a part of Lutheran Congregational Services, is once again hosting Camp Noah—a volunteer-led summer program providing education, community, and fun to the elementary-age children of displaced families.

"Camp Noah’s leaders thoughtfully consider how to recruit volunteers who will best relate to the campers. They reach out to local school districts for older students whose families have been evacuated. They best understand the hardships of being displaced from their homes, which allows them to connect with the children," says Julia Menzo, director of community outreach at Lutheran Congregational Services.

The children who attend Camp Noah are led through a week-long course, which includes three play-centered therapy sessions focused on building resiliency amidst hardship, including reinforcement of self-worth, an understanding of oneself as unique and special, and teaching that they are an important part of a diverse community. This is done through activities including skits, arts & crafts, small group time, and more. By providing one volunteer for every four attendees, each child can be given the personal attention they need to help reach these goals in confidence building.

Members of Paul’s Run and Artman communities have found their way to help with this fantastic cause as well. Last summer, residents contributed their resources and time by preparing meals, snacks, and even gifts for the children of 2018’s Camp Noah in Reading, PA. The residents of Paul’s Run even had the opportunity to deliver those gifts to students themselves on the final Friday of the event.

"Residents who prepared meals for the children attending Camp Noah spoke of how blessed they felt to be included in such an enriching inter-generational activity," comments Julie Stumpf, Director of Spiritual Care at Paul’s Run. "The opportunity allowed them to see that they always have gifts that can make a difference in the lives of others."

This year, New Creation Lutheran Church in Philadelphia will host Camp Noah from August 19th-23rd.

For those interested in contributing, please contact Julia Menzo at JMenzo@libertylutheran.org
shared interests have an inspiring capability to bring different communities together. On a warm April day when students from Delta Middle School met with residents at The Village, the power of poetry revealed similarities across generations that formed lasting connections and meaningful bonds.

Upon their first trip to The Village back in March, students in grades five through eight, and their teacher, David Rockower, visited residents to read and recite Where I'm From poems, which gave them background on the students' youth. “These poems tell our personal histories and identities. They share who we are and what makes us unique,” says David explaining the meaning behind their work.

Making the occasion a true poetic exchange, the students in return asked residents questions about their childhood and modeled new versions of the poems based on the residents’ experiences. Eighth grader, Riley Blake, met Village resident, Don Colby, and truly enjoyed the intergenerational dialogue.

“I don't get to talk with many people outside of my family who are Don's age,” Riley says. “It was really fun to hear his story. When he was a kid, everything was so different from the way it is now. He had to walk miles to school every day with all of his heavy books. I can't imagine doing that.” The differences between Riley and Don's youth are clear, but their similarities allowed them to form a unique connection.

“We both love gospel music, and are very close to our families,” Riley says, appreciating their shared interests. In addition to opening Riley's mind to commonalities with generations outside of her own, she noticed the joy this experience gave to Don. “I could tell our visit brought him so much happiness,” she says commenting on Don's distinct smile that was consistent throughout the entire event.

Don used to be a pastor, and has always seen younger generations in a positive light. As he reflected on the experience, Riley's motivation truly inspired him. “I enjoyed her focus. She was mature and I could tell she was taking the right steps towards the rest of her life,” Don shares. “The students made me feel better about the future,” he adds with a strong sense of hope in his voice.

Exchanging more than just poetry, many of the students asked residents for their email addresses to keep the intergenerational conversations going. As for Riley and Don, they both hope to keep in touch as they will always cherish the special connection they made that warm April day at The Village.
Music provides inspiration, motivation, and lifts the spirit. It can often be heard throughout the West Philadelphia Senior Community Center, whether it’s popular hits or the voices of the Center’s members. This past February, to commemorate Black History Month, the Center was filled with the musical talents of students from Discovery Charter School.

“To see young people come here and perform such a wonderful program was really something to see,” Suedell Cirwithen, a member at the West Philadelphia Senior Community Center, joyfully shares. “There’s nothing like witnessing young people come in and share their creativity. Most of us are grandparents, so there is pride in seeing them do something positive and artistic.”

“Having students come to the Center bridges the gap between the two groups where they learn a little more about the Center and our seniors,” Julia Diggs, Program Manager for the Center says. “It’s also a great opportunity for our members to see what’s happening in the schools within their neighborhoods.”

Throughout the performance, students shared songs that bear cultural significance to the African American experiences, including *Wade in the Water* and *Oh Freedom*. Additionally, several students demonstrated their skills at tap dancing.

“It’s hard for me to pick out a favorite part of the performance. They did an amazing job. The time we were able to spend with the young people afterward was really enjoyable,” Suedell relays. “It was wonderful to see them glow when we told them how well they did. Speaking with young people keeps us young too. It’s always interesting to find out what they’re interested in, and what the latest trends are. It’s wonderful.”

The experience was equally appreciated by the talented performers. “The choir performance at the Senior Center was a valuable experience because the seniors got a chance to share some of their wisdom with the students. They told us how to do better in school, and to listen to our parents,” Saniya, an 8th-grade student, shares. “In turn, the students were able to bless the seniors with wonderful music, while we received positive feedback.”

“Music is a universal language. No matter who you are or where you’re from, music speaks to you and your soul,” says Tanya Murphy, a music teacher for Discovery Charter School. “Developing a connection between generations can create a sense of fulfillment for both older adults and young people. By sharing their experience both groups open up new worlds and understandings that builds a better path for their lives.”
Since January of this year, residents of The Hearth at Drexel have embarked on a learning experience with a different melody. The Visiting Instructor in Piano at Swathmore College, Zach Zaitlin, has been conducting a fascinating tour through the history of music for curious members of The Hearth's community. With his friendly demeanor and wealth of knowledge, Zach has made the seemingly complex world of music both approachable and fun.

“Zach has done a good job connecting with the community here. He always makes time for questions and encourages discussion,” says Grace Lewis, a resident at The Hearth for more than three years. “He started with Gregorian chants. From there, he showed how music grew—from singing, to instruments, and then whole symphonies.”

For Grace, life at The Hearth has not meant slowing the tempo of her life for even a moment. As an active member of the book club, knitting group, Shakespeare club, and card group, Grace is always looking for new ways to learn and grow among the company of friends.

The Great Composer Series is a ten-week course that combines the classical structure of a lecture with the modern flourishes of technology. Each session is accompanied by videos and performances by Zach in an effort to bring each piece of historically significant music to life.

“Both learning and music have been shown to have therapeutic benefits for memory,” says Jessica Buck, director of community life. “By combining the two, we hope to offer a positive experience that reminds residents of the joy found in discovery.”

“I think the only thing that people wish is that they had started attending sooner,” added Grace with a laugh. “We are about to head into the romantic period of classical music, and I know everyone is going to like that.”

Indeed, Zach’s The Great Composer series has been so well received that he will be returning by popular demand in June to continue with the second of his ten-week courses. This new series will cover Beethoven through modern music.

Zach noted, “It’s always neat to teach music history to seniors because many have had deep and extensive musical experiences of their own, which helps contribute to a rich learning environment. They keep me on my toes by asking on-point questions and making insightful comments about the music and composers.”

“By attending the courses regularly, I have watched attendance grow as the music has progressed. Zach has been a wealth of knowledge, and it is nice to see so many people come out to learn,” Grace concluded.
It's a rainy Friday afternoon in early April, a time when most would call it a day and settle in for dinner or a movie. But for one group of residents of The Manor at York Town, the energy and competition are just heating up. Every week, The Manor's Wii Bowling Team comes together to practice their technique in the arena of digital bowling. But this is no arcade-style video game. By using motion-sensing controllers, members of the Wii Bowling Team reenact the same form to send the digital ball rolling down the alley that they would in real life—complete with curves, split pins, and realistic physics.

"I had never heard of the Wii before," comments Richard Stout, a regular in the club. "My wife and I really enjoy it, though, because she can participate even though she needs to stay seated."

The group's enthusiasm continues to grow through the afternoon—each member encouraging and teasing one another as the score goes back and forth. Everyone applauds when one of the players, Art, picks up a tricky spare. Today, it's men vs. women, but the team as a whole has their eyes set on a larger prize.

"We played Paul's Run a while ago. Boy, they came in wearing matching uniforms and really knew their stuff," says Ruth, excitedly. As one of the team's founding members, she holds a vested interest in their success. "It was so much fun to compete with another community, and we are looking forward to playing them again in the future."

"During our first competition with Paul's Run, The Manor's team was unsure what to expect. By the time the first frame was completed, however, it was clear we were going to have a great time. After the game, everyone mingled and started planning a rematch. What a great way to exercise, socialize, and enjoy a little friendly competition," says Robyn Fine, director of community life at The Manor.

"The whole experience has been a positive one," adds Wendy Petro, executive director of The Manor. "They picked up the game very quickly, and it has been a great chance for residents who may not know one another to become fast friends."

Even though the men's team picked up the win today during practice, everyone enjoyed making the most of their time together before heading over to Happy Hour. A relaxing afternoon can become a cherished memory when shared with friends, and by the sounds of laughter that echo into the hallways of The Manor, everyone was coming out on top.
Carol Marke remembers her mother, Renee, as a strong and independent woman. “Mother with a capital ‘M,’” she calls her. When you ask Carol about her mom, she speaks of her vivacity and her ability to provide for herself and everyone around her. When there came a time that Renee needed someone to care for her in return, Carol knew Liberty Hospice would always be there.

Director of Liberty Hospice, Annette Conran explains that each family member processes an end of life journey differently. “Whether it’s a Sesame Street book about grief for children, or anticipatory grief support groups for adults, our entire Liberty Hospice team works together to support these families across generations and give them the resources they need no matter where they are.”

As an only child, whose father passed away when she was only 18, the special mother-daughter connection that Carol and her mother shared made Renee’s end of life journey especially difficult. Liberty Hospice did everything they could to provide care for the mother who always cared for everyone else, and to bring peace to her daughter as well.

Growing up through the Great Depression, Renee had many responsibilities at home as she took on the role of second mother to her two younger sisters. “She was very bright,” Carol says describing her mother graduating high school early even with her busy life at home. Not long after graduation, Renee landed a job at a local accounting firm, a career she enjoyed working hard at for her entire life.

In her later years, Renee moved to the Independent Living neighborhood at Paul’s Run. “She kept herself very busy,” says Carol admiring her mother’s energy through every stage of life. After being diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, Renee began facing various health challenges. A friend at Paul’s Run told Carol that Liberty Hospice would give her mother the compassionate care she deserved, and as it turned out, she was right.

“During the last two weeks of my mother’s life, the care was amazing,” Carol says remembering Liberty Hospice being there until the very end of this emotional journey. “I was there when she passed away. It’s an indescribable experience. Liberty Hospice does everything they can to help the person and their family not suffer.”

Through her later years, Carol and her mother both knew they wanted Renee to stay in the comfort of her own apartment at Paul’s Run. Liberty Hospice did everything they could to provide care for Renee in the place she knew as home, bringing peace to both mother and daughter throughout each of their unique journeys.
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