

The Heartbeat

United Church of Christ Homes

A place to be yourself and celebrate your life

Special Interest Articles:

- Annual Corporation Meeting Held
- 28th Annual Helping Hands Event a Success!

Individual Highlights:

- Annual Meeting 2
- Resident Spotlight 3
- Volunteer Focus 4
- Meet A Resident 5
- Mission Support 6



On My Mind...A Message from UCC Homes President/CEO Beth McMaster

"Oh how sweet the light of day. And how wonderful to live in the sunshine."

Ecclesiastes 11:7

Summertime. A time of relaxation and perhaps moving at a slower pace. It is a time I fondly remember Sunday afternoon fishing trips, catching lightening bugs, neighborhood baseball games in a vacant lot next door, hide and seek after dark, and laying in bed watching thunderstorms roll through. A time for nipping beans, canning tomatoes, eating lunch on the picnic table in the backyard, drinking Kool-Aid or water out of the hose. There are so many wonderful memories of childhood when times were simpler.

Our residents, too, have wonderful memories from simpler days. They willingly share these memories and bits of wisdom with visitors who ask and then sit and listen as they weave their tales. Their memories are those bits of gold that never quite make it into a history book but nonetheless describe and indeed document how the local areas where they grew up were molded. Some call this living history, stories as precious for those of us who hear them as they are for the people who tell them. Their stories deserve to be told and, in some cases, documented. They are stories for us to learn from and live by.

We encourage you to call your local UCC Homes' community and volunteer to visit one or more of our residents. You will be amazed at how enriched you will be by forging friendships with these local historians.

To donate now to UCC Homes, please visit our website at www.ucc-homes.org and click on the "Click Here to Make a Donation!" button on the home page.

UCC Homes' 61st Annual Corporation Meeting Held

The 61st Annual Corporation meeting of United Church of Christ Homes was held on April 25, 2024 in the Willow Community Room at the Giant Food Store in Camp Hill, PA. Pastors, lay delegates, Board members and staff gathered for refreshments and fellowship prior to the business meeting.

Chair Rev. Dwight Hein called the meeting to order and Rev. Dr. Galen Russell offered the invocation. The minutes of the 2023 Corporation Meeting were approved as presented. Acting as Treasurer Pro Tem, Mr. Laurence Kilpatrick, Vice President of Finances/CFO, presented an overview of the current financial position of the corporation and the audited 2023 financial statements, which showed that the organization's financial strength increased and remains stable.

President/CEO Ms. Beth McMaster recognized the following employees with significant anniversaries, who work selflessly and tirelessly to provide care and service for the residents: Mr. Laurence Kilpatrick for 25 years, Mr. Neil Weiser for 10 years, and Mrs. Diane Shaffer for 5 years.

Ms. McMaster announced the winners of the newly created UCC Homes' Distinguished Awards program and provided a brief description of the qualifications for each award. The following employees were nominated by their peers in each category and winners received an acrylic award and framed certificate:

Reine Russell, Ephrata Manor – Staff Member of the Year
Linda Dubbs, The Lebanon Valley Home – Direct Caregiver of the Year
Kathy Coy, Sarah A. Todd Memorial Home – Licensed Caregiver of the Year
Emily Enright, The Lebanon Valley Home – Manager of the Year
Laurence Kilpatrick, Corporate Office – Kay Price Lifetime Achievement Award

Several UCC Homes' employees were also nominated for various LeadingAge PA awards. Chosen from many applicants from across the state, Ms. Lori Stager, The Lebanon Valley Home, was selected as Staff Member of the Year and recognized during LeadingAge PA Annual Conference. Ms. Sharon Eyster, Vice President of Operations/COO, was inducted into McKnight's News' 2024 Women of Distinction Hall of Honor, recognizing women at a level of vice president or higher who have made a significant impact on their organization or in the industry. Ms. Eyster was honored at an in-person celebration and award ceremony in Chicago.

Outgoing Board Chair Rev. Dwight Hein received a certificate of appreciation along with a handmade bowl and towel, traditional Christian symbols of service, with gratitude for his six years on the Board, two of which he served as Board Chair.

Rev. Dr. Christopher Rankin facilitated the election and installation of nominees to the Board of Directors of UCC Homes, who have agreed to serve a three-year term. Volunteers elected to Board of Directors and installed included Mr. Roy Blose, Mrs. Kay Deaner, Mrs. Mary B. Jones, Mr. James Lyons, Rev. John Rieker, and Rev. Dr. Galen Russell. After Rev. Dr. Rankin offered an inspiring and thoughtful benediction, the business meeting adjourned.

UCC Homes Helping Hands Event a Success!

UCC Homes 28th Helping Hands event raised over \$28,500 for the Benevolent Endowment Trust Fund! We are extremely grateful for the individuals, congregations, sponsors, businesses, and organizations who supported this event. Additional thanks to Special Events Committee members Kathi Blose, Kay Boyer, Isabelle Boyer, Melissa Cawley, Lorna Davis, Kay Deaner, Gail Havens for all the time and effort put forth to make this event so successful!

**Please mark your calendars for our 29th Helping Hands event on Saturday, May 10, 2025
at the Hershey Country Club!**

Resident Spotlight on Kindred Place at Annville

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations & Fund Development

Visit Kindred Place at Annville on a Friday night and you are bound to find 20 residents playing Chickenfoot in the Dining Room. Mrs. Helen Keller, resident since 2013, educated me about the game of Chickenfoot, a form of Dominoes, when I visited her recently.

Mrs. Keller is no stranger to education and training and certainly not a stranger to UCC Homes. She is one of the original staff members of The Lebanon Valley Home, hired as a Charge Nurse in 1965 and eventually became Assistant Director of Nursing. Mrs. Keller, along with the first Director of Nursing Mrs. Earla Enck, worked tirelessly for months prior to the opening of The Lebanon Valley Home, washing everything, setting up equipment, carrying mattresses and creating a “Home-Like Home Near Home” environment for residents. On the day of the first admission, Executive Director Mr. John Young gathered the 11 staff members and said, “There is no turning back now.” Mrs. Keller took that to heart and moved forward with a strong work ethic and outstanding dedication to the mission to serve the elderly.

Working together previously at the county home, she shared that she and Mrs. Enck worked well together and made a great team. When hiring new staff, Mrs. Enck would only hire those with little to no experience so that she and Mrs. Keller could educate and train them the “UCC Homes” way. Their high expectations combined with their passion for helping others earned a stellar reputation for The Lebanon Valley Home across Lebanon County. They worked together at The Lebanon Valley Home for 24 years, when Mrs. Enck retired. Mrs. Keller retired in 1996, exactly 25 years from the day she began at The Lebanon Valley Home. Over her 25 years at The Lebanon Valley Home, Mrs. Keller witnessed firsthand significant renovations and changes. At the beginning there weren’t required certifications, regular health inspections, electronics, or computers, fewer staff, and no retirement plan. While many things changed during her tenure, the constant was the focus on exemplary care and compassion for the residents, exemplifying Diakonia...service among others while transforming faith into acts of love and compassion. The opportunity to make certain that the elderly were not forgotten or alone is something she is very proud of in her career. After retiring from The Lebanon Valley Home, her desire to continue to serve led her to provide a much-needed service to those in their own home, including foot washing, nail clipping and foot massage options. She thoroughly enjoyed meeting new people and continuing a service of care to those in need.

Amazing hospitality extended into Mrs. Keller’s personal and family life. Her wonderful home faced Lake Strause, with a beautiful yard that was perfect for entertaining. Group picnics, church services, one baptism, and family gatherings filled her free time. She hosted visitors from East Germany, friends of friends needing a shower and hot meal after days on the Appalachian Trail, and a pastor and his family while they waited to settle on a home. Friends of her two sons and one daughter still visit her today, sharing their memories of learning to swim or ice skate at her house and the hot dogs and s’mores she shared with them.

Mrs. Keller calls herself “the Last of the Firsts,” referring to the fact that she is the only surviving original staff member. “Nursing is in my blood. I’ve lived my best life caring for others and have been blessed to do so. My faith has kept me going, as I try to live a Christian life through my actions.”

She continues to live with a servant’s heart and a love of people. Her teaching and organizational skills are still put to good use, running the Chickenfoot games and inviting new residents to learn and join in on the fun!



Mrs. Helen Keller

Volunteer Focus on Thornwald Home

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations & Fund Development

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart”

-- Elizabeth Andrew, American Author

Ms. Stephanie Cornwall, former employee of Thornwald Home turned volunteer, is one busy lady with a heart focused on helping others. Her greatest passion, outside of being a mother and raising a daughter and two sons to be responsible adults, has been her nursing career. At the time she graduated from Harrisburg Area Community College’s School of Nursing, there were many opportunities to work in long term care and that is when her life-long work of caring for others sprouted. As a nurse, she has worked all shifts, became a supervisor, worked as both an Assistant Director of Nursing and Director of Nursing before taking on the role of Registered Nurse Assessment Coordinator (RNAC) at Thornwald Home. Originally hired for a part-time 11pm to 7am nursing shift at Thornwald Home, within two weeks of her hire date she was promoted to RNAC and excelled in that position until she retired seven years later in 2022. She strived to set a good example of following protocol and being kind to all. Stephanie thoroughly enjoyed working at Thornwald Home and keeps in contact with many of the friends she made during her time there.

Shortly after she retired, she regularly visited her cousin who was a resident at UCC Homes’ Sarah A. Todd Memorial Home. It was during one of her visits that the former Chaplain, Rev. Mark Ruzicka, asked her if she might consider volunteering occasionally, taking the ice cream cart around so that residents could enjoy a cool and tasty treat. Remembering the ice cream days at Thornwald Home when she was an employee and the joy that she saw on the faces of residents made her response easy...yes! She now is the ice cream cart lady at Thornwald Home, delivering joy in the form of ice cream scoops to the residents. She shared that while many of the residents’ favor fruit flavored ice cream (peach is very popular), as a self-proclaimed “chocoholic” she prefers any kind with chocolate!

As a mother who worked full-time, Stephanie did not have time during her career to do much volunteering. Now that she is retired, volunteering is a major part of her life. An active member of the United Methodist Church in Carlisle, she serves as the Hospitality Coordinator, which is a job that occupies a good portion of her free time. Stephanie also volunteers at Project Share at least twice a month, putting together “Share Boxes” for food distribution to those in need in the local community, and at Mission Central, preparing hygiene kits for disaster relief. She shares her love of reading by volunteering weekly at Little Lights Daycare, reading stories to two and three year old children and assisting with special events as needed. Stephanie tries to match stories with what the children may be learning at the time but reveals that Eric Carle books are always a favorite! She also finds time to help with meal prep for Supportive Partnership for Youth (SPY), assemble start up kits for Homeless to Home (H2H), and serves on the Board for senior living apartments under CCHRA at One West Penn.

A life lesson that Stephanie tries to exemplify is, “to Live like Jesus.” She expressed, “I’m a work in progress and still learning.” The pure joy and smiles seen on the faces of the residents of Thornwald Home when she visits and the wide-eyed expressions of excitement and amazement of the young as she exposes them to adventure through storytelling inspires her to continue volunteering her time and sharing her gifts with others.



Ms. Stephanie Cornwall

Meet a Resident at Ephrata Manor

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations & Fund Development

Mrs. Kathryn Sweigart, Personal Care resident at Ephrata Manor, loves a good mystery! An avid reader since she was young, her favorite author is John Grisham. Her daughter just gave her his newest book, which she is looking forward to cracking open and delving into the plot. What attracts her the most to his novels is the excitement of not knowing what will happen next and what twists may unfold with each page turn.

She may love mysteries in the written word, but it is no mystery how much she loves and cherishes her family. Mrs. Sweigart and her late husband, Harold, were married for a wonderful 69 years. They dated in high school, but it wasn't until after she graduated from nursing school at the University of Pennsylvania that they married. He served in the Navy and when he returned, she had graduated and a week later they were married. He still had two years of college at Penn State to complete so they lived in State College until he graduated with a degree in Chemistry. Both raised in the Ephrata area, they decided to move back home. With careers in chemistry being limited at that time, Mr. Sweigart eventually became the Purchasing Manager for a corporation in Lancaster, where he worked for 36 years. Mrs. Sweigart worked as a nurse at the Ephrata Hospital and assisted with the transition from the old hospital to the new one, transporting patients into the new building. They raised four children together, two sons and two daughters. She said that her husband always gave her all the credit for raising such caring and loving children, but she gives him credit for setting a good example of a strong work ethic and loyalty. As her children grew and began families of their own, so did her love for them. Mrs. Sweigart is extremely proud of her four children, 11 grand-children and nine great grandchildren. Each of her kids visit her once a week, each on a different day, and her grandchildren who live locally visit as well. Her grandchildren who live in different states visit her when they travel home. A digital picture frame displays family photos, including the newest great-grandchild, and framed photos of her husband and family hang in prominent areas of her room, visual signs that she highly values her family.

Members of Trinity Lutheran church in Ephrata, Mr. & Mrs. Sweigart both sang in the choir for over 40 years. Mrs. Sweigart also chaired the committee that would decorate the church for all the different season, including the flowers for Easter and Christmas. Their love of music extended beyond the choir loft. They loved the music of the 1940s and 1950s. An icon of American music, Frank Sinatra was renowned for his impeccable phrasing and time and his romantic swagger, but it was his enunciation, allowing her to hear and feel every word, that made him her favorite performer. She saw him live in concert twice, once at the Valley Forge Music Center and once in Hershey. In addition to her love of music and reading, one of her most favorite things to do was to play Bridge (the card game), which she played for 70 years, many of those years in a fun-loving bridge club.

The Sweigarts were all set to move into an apartment at Ephrata Manor but sadly, he passed away before they could move in. She treasures the trips they took together, especially a two-week tour of Europe, a trip to Hawaii, and multiple adventures to Canada. A painting of the covered bridge that leads to the Log Cabin restaurant, where they celebrated many anniversaries, hangs across from her favorite chair. Smiling, she shared that her husband would stop halfway through that covered bridge for a kiss!

She felt very welcomed and made new friends when she moved to Ephrata Manor and now she takes joy in welcoming new residents. Mrs. Sweigart is blessed with many family and friends who visit, which makes her heart happy!



Mrs. Kathryn Sweigart



United Church of Christ Homes

30 N. 31st Street
Camp Hill, PA 17011



UCC Homes

30 N. 31st Street
Camp Hill, PA 17011
(717) 303-1502
(717) 303-1607 FAX
www.ucc-homes.org

Community Locations

The Lebanon Valley Home
550 East Main Street
Annville, PA 17003
(717) 867-4467

Thornwald Home
442 Walnut Bottom Road
Carlisle, PA 17013
(717) 249-4118

Ephrata Manor
99 Bethany Road
Ephrata, PA 17522
(717) 738-4940

Kindred Place at Annville
One Kindred Place
Annville, PA 17003
(717) 867-5572

Sarah A. Todd Memorial Home
1000 West South Street
Carlisle, PA 17013
(717) 245-2187

Kindred Place at Harrisburg
4700 Oakhurst Blvd.
Harrisburg, PA 17110
(717) 657-7900

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