

# The Heartbeat

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*"In the Spirit of Christ's love, the ministry of United Church of Christ Homes is to provide care and service to elders through acts of love and compassion."*

UCC Homes invites you to visit our new website at [www.ucc-homes.org](http://www.ucc-homes.org) or scan the QR Code below and please share with friends!



## United Church of Christ Homes

*A place to be yourself and celebrate your life*



## A Message from UCC Homes President and CEO Meredith Schell Fields

Our mission at United Church of Christ Homes has always been rooted in faith, service, and a commitment to providing compassionate care for older adults. As a not-for-profit organization, every decision we make is guided not by shareholders or profit margins, but by the well-being of our residents and the sustainability of our ministry.

Today, the long-term care field is facing unprecedented financial challenges. Rising costs of healthcare, staffing shortages, inflationary pressures, and changes in reimbursement models have placed a significant strain on providers across the country. Like many organizations, we must navigate these realities while remaining faithful to our calling of serving with love and compassion, in the form of dignity and respect toward our residents and excellence in the quality of care we provide.

What sets United Church of Christ Homes apart is our commitment to stewardship. We are carefully managing resources, seeking innovative solutions, and advocating for policies that support both residents and caregivers. At the same time, we continue to invest in what matters most – our people, our programs, and the faith-based culture that has defined us since 1962.

Despite these challenges, I remain hopeful. Our dedicated staff, supportive families, strategic Board of Directors, and mission-driven approach give us the strength to adapt and thrive. Together we will continue to provide not only quality care, but also communities where residents find comfort, purpose, and belonging.

Thank you for your trust and partnership as we walk through this season with faith and resilience.

To donate now to UCC Homes, please visit our website at [www.ucc-homes.org](http://www.ucc-homes.org) and click on the Make a Donation button at the bottom of the home page.

## Resident Spotlight on The Lebanon Valley Home

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations & Fund Development

With the walls of her room at The Lebanon Valley Home covered with special citations, certificates of achievement, letters of recognition, and a customized poster of Rosie the Riveter with her own face imposed, Mrs. Lorraine Koons is delighted to share about her experiences during her 103 years on this earth.

A proud original Rosie the Riveter, Mrs. Koons remembers the day she felt called to help with the war efforts, “I was listening to the radio and President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that Japan had just bombed Pearl Harbor and that we were going to war. Being patriotic with a deep love for my country, I knew I needed to do something.”

An opportunity for her to do something soon presented itself. When she learned the Middletown Air Depot was hiring women to replace the men going off to war, she quickly applied and took a four-hour test, which she was pleased she passed. She then was sent for three months of airplane repair training. Always being interested in tools and knowing the names of different tools prior to this training was extremely helpful. From 1942 to the war’s end in 1945, Mrs. Koons worked in the fuselage department, repairing gas tanks, oxygen and oil systems, and any damage from enemy fire on B-17 bombers and C-47 cargo planes. After the war was over, Mrs. Koons worked at the Capitol building in Harrisburg, issuing checks to returning veterans. It filled her desire to continue to support those who had gone to war.

“We all were working for the benefit of the country, not for awards or recognition. We were all doing what we could and were proud to do so,” Mrs. Koons explained.

Earlier this year, Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medals were distributed to the real-life women who supported war efforts, including Mrs. Koons. After her marriage to her late husband, Herbert, she ranks working on airplanes to support our country in time of distress as being one of the greatest honors of her life and was humbled to receive the Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medal, the highest medal a civilian can receive.

Another area of life that she holds in high regard is her civic duty as an American to vote. Her interest in politics was sparked at a very young age when an Aunt that was interested in local politics took her to rallies. She couldn’t wait to turn 21 (the voting age at that time) to be able to vote in her first election. She worked the polls for 20 years as a committee woman and even helped to count votes. In 1997, she was inducted into the PA Voters Hall of Fame. At the age of 103, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives presented her with a special citation, honoring her for voting 81 consecutive years in general elections, a Pennsylvania record.

Mrs. Koons pointed out a framed letter from the National Archives of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, signed by the current Director William A. Harris, providing recognition and admiration of her 103 years. It is one of her favorite items that adorns her walls. Being recognized as living history brings her gratification and joy.

Mrs. Koon credits her longevity to her “We Can Do It” spirit, faith, never having smoked or drank alcohol, and a daily dose of Dr. Pepper, of which her lovely niece, Karen, keeps her well-stocked. Her best advice, “Always try to do your best, help other people, and make someone else happy!”



Mrs. Lorraine Koons

## Staff Focus on Ephrata Manor

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations & Fund Development

United Church of Christ Homes is proud to announce that two employees of Ephrata Manor have been awarded scholarships through LeadingAge PA's 2025 Professional Development Scholarship Program. Ms. Christina Kelly and Mr. Emil Lukusa, both dedicated Registered Nurses, are two of 31 recipients in Pennsylvania to receive this honor, which supports employees from LeadingAge PA member communities as they pursue degrees, certifications, or continuing education in the aging services sector.

LeadingAge PA is an association in Pennsylvania that advocates for seniors and mission-driven, aging services providers. "Workforce development is essential to the future of our sector, and these scholarships are one way we empower dedicated professionals to grow, lead, and drive meaningful change," said LeadingAge PA President and CEO, Mr. Garry Pezzano.

Emil conveyed his heartfelt gratitude for being selected, "Receiving this scholarship empowers me to deepen my clinical expertise and continue delivering high-quality, evidence-based, person-centered, and compassionate care to our residents. The most rewarding aspect of my work is building meaningful relationships with residents and their families, being a consistent source of comfort, dignity, and advocacy in a place they call home."

Christina communicated her appreciation, "Receiving this scholarship has been such a blessing in my educational journey, empowering me to grow as a nurse leader dedicated to supporting older adults through some of the most vulnerable and challenging chapters of their lives. The need for compassionate, skilled nurse leaders in geriatric care is both urgent and profound. I find deep fulfillment in improving the patient experience – easing the discomfort that often comes with dependence and restoring the dignity and support every individual deserves. This scholarship not only reaffirmed the value of this vital work but also reignited my professional calling. It reminded me that there is meaningful, tangible support for those of us committed to advancing care for older adults – and that encouragement fuels my drive to lead with empathy, purpose, and resilience."

UCC Homes is thankful for the support and assistance from our partners at LeadingAge PA, as they continue to advocate on the behalf of all their members at the state and local levels to influence positive change and affect a healthy vision for the delivery of quality, affordable, and ethical care for PA seniors.



Erin McDermott (left), Director of Member Engagement & Workforce Solutions at LeadingAge PA, and Meredith Schell Fields (right), President/CEO at UCC Homes, joined Christina Kelly (center left photo) and Emil Lukusa (center right photo) for the presentation of the Professional Development Scholarship checks.

## Meet a Resident of Thornwald Home

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations & Fund Development

“You’ve got to keep trying and never give up. Life doesn’t come to you. You have to grab a hold of it and make the most of it,” exclaimed Ms. Margaret “Peg” Lewis, resident of Thornwald Home. During her four years at Thornwald Home, she’s invested much effort in enhancing life not only for herself but also for other residents.

After serving on the Resident Council at Thornwald Home for quite some time, she recently assumed the role of President, after her good friend and prior President passed away. She takes this leadership role seriously, with one of her primary goals to make life outstanding for all residents at Thornwald Home. While she already believes that Thornwald Home is the best place to be, she put her sharp mind and creativity to work to formulate a list of new activities together along with areas for improvement within the community.

Taking her own advice to “grab hold of life,” Ms. Lewis is participating in the PA Empowered Expert Residents Program (PEER) run by the PA Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office. PEER trains long term care residents to self-advocate and empower their fellow residents to improve their quality of life and quality of care in long term care communities. It is a partnership between residents, community staff, and the local ombudsman. The program is resident focused, gives residents a voice, provides connection with ombudsmen, volunteers, and other PEERs statewide, and offers residents opportunities to stay productive and involved.

Ms. Lewis shared that she and four other residents of Thornwald Home attend the PEER two-hour sessions once a week for five weeks, and are learning how to negotiate issues, communicate with staff, work on resident council issues, address confidentiality, report issues, and make the most of their care plans. She is looking forward to once-a-month Zoom meetings with a group of Presidents from other Resident Councils, to share ideas and best practices for issue resolutions. “I’ve learned a lot of helpful information already and plan to use it for the benefit of the residents,” she stated.

When she isn’t busy generating new ways to make life more enjoyable for others, she can be found on her iPad or computer, researching genealogy. She has traced her lineage back to the 1600s. She proudly shared that Rebecca Nurse, the woman who was falsely accused of witchcraft and executed in New England during the Salem Witch Trials and who was the main character in Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible* is her eighth-generation grandmother.

Spending time with her family, her daughter and two grandsons, is important to her. She recalls that one of her best trips was when she and her daughter traveled to Europe together, visiting France, Italy, and Spain. She is thankful that her grandsons helped her learn new technology and spend time with her when they are in the area.

Energetic and full of spunk, Ms. Lewis feels one of her best traits is her ability to talk to other people and make friends. She admits she does not openly talk about her faith daily but believes that God has brought her to Thornwald Home for a greater purpose, perhaps elevating the resident experience for her fellow residents.



Ms. Margaret Lewis

## Prioritize Nutrition: Benefits of A Well-Balanced Diet

By Tempest Gagnon, Director of Clinical Services and Education

Staying healthy begins with proper nutrition. As people age, the body's metabolism slows down and can be impacted by decreased mobility and changes in appetite or taste. A well-balanced diet that includes essential nutrients can help reduce the risk associated with chronic medical conditions.

Essential nutrient foods include:

- Bananas, oranges, spinach, and sweet potatoes, all which contain potassium. Potassium helps regulate blood pressure.
- Dairy products, such as fortified plant-based milk, and leafy greens contain calcium. Calcium supports good bone health.
- Fortified milk, fatty fish, and egg yolks contain vitamin D. Vitamin D helps with calcium absorption and bone strength.
- Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables support digestive health and reduce constipation.
- Meat, poultry, fish, and dairy contain vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 helps with nerve function and red blood cell production.

Maintaining a routine of three balanced meals a day, composed of essential nutrients, can lend to staying healthy. Including healthy snacks throughout the day as needed adds calories and assists in maintaining energy. Yogurt, energy shakes, fresh fruit, and nuts are all healthy snacks.

Also remember to stay hydrated. Seniors are at a greater risk of dehydration, due to a natural decrease of fluid retention and a diminished sense of thirst. Drink water regularly. Alternative fluids such as low-fat milk or 100% fruit juices also assists in staying hydrated. Try to avoid sugary and high sodium drinks.

A well-balanced, nutrient rich diet can help slow biological aging and support brain health. Prioritizing nutrition as you age can positively impact your overall well-being.





# United Church of Christ Homes

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Camp Hill, PA 17011



## UCC Homes

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### 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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***Thank you for your support!***

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