

The Heartbeat

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United Church of Christ Homes

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

Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens." And so, it is for all of us.

For the past 12 years I have enjoyed my relationship with United Church of Christ Homes, first as Vice President of Operations/COO and most recently as President/CEO. Now it is time for me to step aside for new leadership to continue the sacred work in which we are engaged. And so, on March 29, 2025, I will be officially retired.

As I write this last communication to you as President/CEO, the Search Committee of the Board of Directors is preparing to find my replacement. I have every confidence that they will successfully recruit and hire an outstanding individual to continue the work and mission of UCC Homes well into the future.

You are a very special group of people who truly know and understand our mission. It has been my honor and privilege to serve with you. I have always and will continue to hold each of you in my prayers of thanksgiving.

*"Retirement is not the end of the road.
It is the beginning of the open highway."*

-- Unknown

Resident Spotlight on Ephrata Manor

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations & Fund Development

“Let’s go Duke!” can be heard coming from the apartment of Mrs. Isabel Stewart on game day of the Duke Blue Devils basketball team. An enthusiastic college basketball fan, Mrs. Stewart cheers for her favorite team, often wrapped in a blanket adorning the blue and white colored Blue Devils logo.

Her love of basketball grew from watching her late husband, Kenneth, play basketball in high school. Born in Ephrata but lived most of her younger years in Denver, she met Mr. Stewart when the students from Denver Elementary School and Reinholds Elementary School merged into one high school. Their high school romance blossomed into 73 wonderful years of marriage, two children, three grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. Her son lives locally and visits weekly and her daughter, who lives further away, visits a couple of times each month. Mrs. Stewart feels blessed to spend holidays surrounded by her loved ones, building special memories with her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Faith played an important role in their family, even before they married. Her parents were Lutheran but since many of her girlfriends went to the Reformed Church, Mrs. Stewart would join them for Sunday services and other activities. When she and Mr. Stewart moved to Reinholds, they became active members of Swamp UCC. Mr. Stewart served as Elder, Deacon and eventually was elected as President of Consistory. Mrs. Stewart taught Sunday School, sang in the choir, served on the Alter Guild, and was Secretary of the Willing Workers.

Her faith, family, and love of college basketball are not her only passions. Prior to moving to Ephrata Manor, she was a member of the local Lioness Club and the Reinholds Fire Company Auxiliary and volunteered her time and culinary skills for a variety of fundraisers, a good many which involved cooking and baking. Mrs. Stewart continues to enjoy cooking and baking, often sharing with her apartment neighbors. Chocolate cakes and coconut custard pies are baking favorites and during the winter season, her homemade vegetable soup offers comfort and warmth. Her grandmother nurtured her fondness for baking. Mrs. Stewart recalls delivering her grandmother’s homemade doughnuts all over Denver on Fasnacht Day each year, keeping them warm in an old-fashioned basket and carrying powdered sugar with her if customers requested the extra sweetness.

The Stewarts moved into an apartment at Ephrata Manor in 2014. Two and a half years prior to their move, they toured the community and upon entering an apartment, Mr. Stewart proclaimed, “This is home.” They were added to the waiting list that day and never regretted their decision. Sadly, Mr. Stewart passed away in 2021. Mrs. Stewart maintains a positive attitude and continues to strengthen her faith. She attends the weekly worship service at Ephrata Manor and participates in Bible Study.

Sparrows, cardinals, tufted titmice, blue jays, and plump squirrels may entertain Mrs. Stewart as they visit the feeder on her patio, but she prefers watching her Blue Devils command the court and score winning hoops!



Mrs. Isabel Stewart

Meet a Resident of Kindred Place at Harrisburg

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations and Fund Development

Entering the lovely apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Richard and Eileen Timothy at Kindred Place at Harrisburg, nestled at the end of the building with a beautifully wooded area right off their patio, an extremely friendly furry friend rushed to greet me. Buffy, whom the Timothys rescued eight years ago, brings much laughter and joy to her owners and to the other residents, family members, and staff at Kindred Place. After delightfully accepting belly rubs from me, Buffy snuggled down with a toy in front of the sliding glass patio doors, as I visited with Mrs. Timothy, who also warmly welcomed me.

Before Mrs. Timothy was born, her parents bought a large farm in West Hanover Township and divided it into building lots. As life developed on this land, it became known as Houck's Manor. Most of the activity centered around her family's farmhouse. Her father expanded their home over the years, including space to house Houck's General Store. In addition to selling groceries, shoes, small farming accessories and tools, Houck's Store doubled as the Firehouse for several years. The fire truck parked in the basement and the Fire Company's fundraisers, including square dances, were hosted there. It also served as a social hall for other community celebrations and events. When the township celebrated its 225th Anniversary, Mrs. Timothy was honored to write an article about Houck's Store for the anniversary book. A great storyteller and creative writer, Mrs. Timothy's article captured the essence of life at Houck's Manor and Houck's Store, and the wonderful bonds that were solidified between those who lived there and the wider community.

"I grew up very happy. Those who lived in Houck's Manor became my extended family. Our store was so much more than just a store. It was a place to socialize as well as shop," she shared proudly.

One of her many creative gifts is writing poems. Mrs. Timothy especially loves to write poems for people who are celebrating significant anniversaries or life events. At the encouragement of a writer friend, she submitted her poem entitled "Snowflakes" to the Extra Country magazine. In January 2011, Mrs. Timothy became a published poet. In this published poem, she combined her love of snow with her love of poetry.

While I read her published poem, she left the room to retrieve a photo album. Cracking open the cover, amazingly detailed snow sculptures bounced off the pages. Skiers, dogs, Noah's Ark, teapot, flower planter, and a variety of different animals and birds were characters in her sculptures. One winter she crafted a Korean War Veteran in honor of her husband, Dick, and a neighbor who also served in Korea. On two opposite pages was a favorite beach scene with a full-size sun bather on a lounge chair and an outhouse with snow people. A framed photo of a Model A Ford snow sculpture hangs on their wall. As a little girl she would play in the snow until she was half frozen and that didn't change as she aged, spending hours and hours building detailed snow statues every winter season.

Mrs. Timothy met her husband when her aunt decided to play matchmaker and invited her and Mr. Timothy's family to Sunday dinner. They fell in love, got married and celebrated 58 years of marriage this past December. Their son, Keith, lives in locally and visits regularly.

Living at Kindred Place for the past two years, Mrs. Timothy expressed that they love everything about it! As nature lovers, they are entertained by many deer and wildlife who visit their yard. Resembling the extended family experienced at Houck's Manor, she, Mr. Timothy, and Buffy are blessed with a fun and loving Kindred Place family!



Mrs. Eileen Timothy

Staff Focus on Kindred Place at Annville

By Victoria Velez, Director of Public Relations & Fund Development

It is not common that an employee's career extends almost five decades with the same organization but Mrs. Mary Zitsch's longevity with UCC Homes exceeds conventional norms with 48 years as faithful team member!

Mary began working as a nursing assistant at The Lebanon Valley Home in 1976, where she worked for 25 years. The first 17 years she worked on the 11pm to 7am shift and then moved to the 7am to 3pm shift for the next eight years. In April 2001, Mary began thinking about her future. If she planned on working in long term care until she retires, Mary determined she needed to switch to a position that would be less physically demanding. At that time, a nursing and universal worker position became available at Kindred Place at Annville. Thankful for the opportunity to remain working in a community of UCC Homes, Mary transitioned to the nursing and universal worker role at Kindred Place at Annville and has worked there for 23 years.

A wonderful honor for Mary presented itself when she was working at The Lebanon Valley Home. UCC Homes' first Director of Nursing, Mrs. Earla Enck, with whom Mary worked for in her early years as a nursing assistant became a resident of The Lebanon Valley Home. Mary shared that she had the privilege of caring for Mrs. Enck during her time at that community. Another original staff member of The Lebanon Valley Home, Mrs. Helen Keller, former Assistant Director of Nursing is a current resident at Kindred Place at Annville. Mrs. Keller and Mary both worked there for 25 years, with 14 of those year working together, creating a unique bond between them.

What motivates Mary to continue to serve in this ministry? "It is enjoyable helping others and making their lives a bit easier. I get to be a small part of their lives and that feels good. I learn so much about them and their different backgrounds," she shared. "When I discover what they like, I talk with them about their hobbies or favorite sports, often finding common interests."

Mary's interests outside of work include baking, miniature golf, and watching hockey and tennis. She and her husband of 35 years are members of Faith Baptist Church, where Mary is active in the Calvary Club for Kids. Spending time with "crawlers and toddlers" brings joy to Mary.

When asked what word she would use to describe herself, she responded, "Caring." Her co-workers agree. Ms. Lauren Clark, Executive Director of Community and Home-Based Services, said, "I consider it a privilege to have known and worked with Mary at The Lebanon Valley Home and now at Kindred Place at Annville. Through the years I have see Mary give special attention to specific needs of the people she serves. I have also seen her go to extraordinary means to help meet a need. Her heart towards the people she serves is appreciated more than I can say. She is as dedicated as people come, and exemplifies her faith in the way she serves others." Mrs. Angela Heisey, Manager of Kindred Place, also shared, "Mary is wonderful! She is a caring person and a hard worker. Her dedication of 48 years to UCC Homes and our residents is awesome."

UCC Homes is blessed by Mary's amazing 48 years of faithful service to our mission-focused ministry. Her impact on residents, families, and co-workers is immeasurable.



Mrs. Mary Zitsch



United Church of Christ 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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