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OPEN!

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Recovery 6

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PARADISE

A Liberty

Better Together

*Partnerships and
camaraderie can guide
us through the most
challenging of times.*

FALL 2021

RESPONDING TO DISASTERS BIG AND SMALL

By John Pyron, Program Director of LDR-US

I've been involved in disaster response work since 2004 and started as a volunteer on the Gulf Coast in Mobile, Alabama following Hurricane Ivan. Throughout the years I have served in a variety of roles from construction to long-term recovery group coordination.

I've also served with two Lutheran Social Service agencies before transitioning into the role of Program Director for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's (ELCA) Lutheran Disaster Response-US (LDR-US) program, which is where I am now.

Our program engages a national network of Lutheran synods as well as Lutheran social service organizations and external partners that respond to the needs of communities impacted by disasters. We understand that all disasters are local and our focus is to empower communities to engage and recover. We support organizations like Liberty Lutheran and Lutheran



*John Pyron, Program
Director of LDR-US.*

Disaster Response-Eastern Pennsylvania (LDR-EPA) because we know that they are the ones on the ground who are closest to the needs of each community.

Everything we do is survivor-centric. When we support LDR-EPA we ensure that the people impacted by disasters can get the assistance that they need, and we can't do that without funding. The majority of funding that we receive comes from direct contributions. A lot of those donations are 20 or 50 dollars. All of those donations really do make a difference and we would not be able to support organizations like LDR-EPA without them.

LDR's impact is crucial for so many communities impacted by disasters as governmental assistance will largely not be sufficient to meet all of their needs. This is especially the

case for disasters that are small and highly localized, the ones that aren't getting media attention. That's where the impact of fundraising really helps to ensure those communities are not overlooked. A great example of this is the Eastwick neighborhood of Philadelphia, where LDR-EPA is working actively.

This is a historically underserved community and disastrous weather is piled onto their already existing challenges. The exciting part is when an organization like LDR-EPA works with community members to address some of their larger issues and the root causes of their vulnerability. LDR-EPA can help them build resilience to make their neighborhood stronger. I am excited to support the work that LDR-EPA is doing and look forward to additional partnerships in the future.

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ABOUT THIS EDITION'S COVER

Liberty is thrilled to see residents spending time together in the places they call home.



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Up Front

Greetings from the President



Better Together

Liberty Lutheran is founded upon a mission to faithfully accompany individuals and families who are facing life-changing situations through an empowering approach that honors their choices and well-being. How do we stay true to this mission? We come together.

The stories we highlight in this issue of *At Liberty* demonstrate how we are truly better together, and how partnerships and camaraderie can guide us through the most challenging of times. We are grateful for the strong bonds and connections throughout our family of services, and the kindness we receive from our supporters.

As you read through this issue, you will discover heart-warming stories that portray the joy and excitement of Community Life and how fun, engaging activities bring residents together. Our faces may often be protected by masks, but we know there is a smile behind them as our staff continue to ensure the happiness of our residents, members, and clients each day. Together, we provide them with meaningful opportunities for fulfilling lifestyles.

When we reflect on how we are better together, consider the role that technology plays in keeping friends and loved ones connected. It is wonderful to see our family of services utilize technology in creative ways to promote friendship and create meaningful bonds. We are grateful to expand our digital horizons and stay current in our digital world.

This past year we were also reminded of the many hands it takes to respond to disaster. Hundreds of homes in vulnerable neighborhoods were damaged from storms like Isaias and Ida. Through Lutheran Disaster Response-Eastern Pennsylvania (LDR-EPA), we are actively supporting long-term recovery efforts for individuals and families impacted by these events. This work would not be possible without the generous support from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and the partnerships formed with local congregations and synods.

Your continued support for Liberty Lutheran makes these partnerships possible and provides opportunities for togetherness and joy. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of those we serve. Together, we can make a positive impact. Together, we are better.

Luanne B. Fisher, PhD
President and CEO, Liberty Lutheran

LEADING LIBERTY

WITH ROBYN FINE, *Director of Community Life at The Manor at York Town*

Q: How does Liberty Lutheran compare to other organizations, and what impact does that make for the people we serve?

A: In my opinion, Liberty Lutheran is the gold standard among retirement communities. The level of compassion, attention to detail, and commitment to staff and residents far exceeds other organizations. Management supports its staff in making the right decisions for the residents we serve. Whether these gestures are on a large scale or something small, like helping someone carry a heavy box or offering technical help with their phone, tablet or TV, staff are supported and truly encouraged to go the “extra mile” to help a resident in need.

Q: How do you see the work that you do inspire others in the community?

A: The Manor at York Town coordinates multiple charitable events each year including food drives, clothing donations, Christmas collections, and more. Our resident Stitch Club provides dozens of handmade blankets for patients at local facilities. Residents often come to me with suggested philanthropic projects when they hear about a charity in need.

We alternate our donation drives to suit the needs of local organizations. Recently, a resident began knitting “fidget sleeves” for patients in nearby

hospitals and nursing facilities. These sleeves involve sewing trinkets, beads and buttons onto comfortable arm sleeves, thereby drawing attention away from IV tubes and focusing on colorful items to keep their hands busy.

For this project, we wrote an article in our community newsletter asking for donations of broken jewelry, plastic beads, and any items that are durable and can be run through the washing machine. I was so impressed by the outpour of donations for this effort. Even local residents outside of The Manor saw our article on our Facebook page, and brought over items for the collection. We are so blessed to live in a caring, supportive community.

Q: Tell us about an experience you have had here that impacted residents and families.

A: Because we are a smaller, boutique-like community, I truly get to know every one of our residents. From the day they move in, I meet with every resident to determine their interests, hobbies, and desired community activities. One resident was a former actress, so we formed a play reading group.

Another resident enjoys casino games, so we started an

evening blackjack club. If residents express an interest in a theater, museum, or local point of interest, I am always happy to coordinate the effort. I always strive to remain positive and encourage residents to try something they haven’t done before, or support their fellow neighbors.





Members are happy to be back at the Center enjoying their favorite activities and spending time with friends.

We Are OPEN!

Members of the West Philadelphia Senior Community Center felt ready to return to their home-away-from-home, and they needed it more than ever after a year of restrictions and social distancing. The July reopening of the beloved community center allowed WPSCC members to gather together again to socialize, exercise, and play games. Familiar sights and sounds have returned as members enjoy Bingo and table games, creative movement classes, and line dancing.

"It was a great feeling when the Center reopened," shares Bertha Martin-Nagbe, President of The Advisory Council for WPSCC. Initially, Ms. Martin-Nagbe felt reservations about returning. A mild case of COVID-19 slowed her down earlier this year. After-effects of the virus affected her breathing; however, the Center became a remedy for her.

She felt ready to leave her house, enjoy the fresh air, and see people. "I'm feeling better," Ms. Martin-Nagbe reflects, "because the people make me feel great. We need people. People need people," she adds.

Other members missed the Center and felt equally eager to return. Rose Richardson, executive director of the West Philadelphia Senior Community Center, took every precaution to ensure the safety of members and the community. Members must sign up in advance before coming and wear masks at all times while inside the



Center. Some programs, such as daily lunches, remain on hold for safety reasons.

As a testament to the work team members have done to keep everyone safe, Ms. Martin-Nagbe reports, "We haven't had anybody get sick. Everybody is coming and enjoying themselves."

What did members miss the most? "Line dancing is the big one. They'd get 100 people back if they could," Ms. Martin-Nagbe shares. Members love being back together playing Pinochle, Phase 10, Dominos, and more. They also thrive through the return of classes like Art Therapy, which fosters their creative spirit and expression.

West Philadelphia Senior Community Center means a great deal to its members. For older adults who feel lost, the Center provides a sense of belonging. For those who live alone, the Center provides community and friendship. The Center is the go-to place for members to socialize and have fun together.

"I always tell the members to do whatever they can for the Center. Let's make it the best place for the older adults who are coming. There'll be people who need this, and this neighborhood needs this Center," Ms. Martin-Nagbe affirms.



Eastwick Recovery and Partnerships

In times of crisis, partnerships form to help people in need. Tropical Storm Isaias left a trail of destruction in the Mid-Atlantic region during the summer of 2020. Record flooding and water rescues made headlines and dominated the evening news broadcasts. More than one year later, the Eastwick section of Philadelphia continues to recover from the devastating flooding caused by Isaias.

Partnerships play a key role in supporting Eastwick's recovery efforts. Julia Menzo, director of community outreach for Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS), a ministry of Liberty Lutheran, and Chair of the Southeastern PA's Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, understands just how important these partnerships are to helping the people of Eastwick. "None of us could do this recovery work on our own," Julia expresses. "There's no way any one agency could do this. The resources for disaster response are limited. We all have different areas of expertise. So, we need to work with one another to leverage our unique expertise and capacity."

The residents of Southwest Philadelphia's Eastwick neighborhood live in one of the lowest-lying areas in the city. The close proximity of the Schuylkill River, Darby Creek, and Cobbs Creek make the neighborhood vulnerable to significant flooding from severe storms. Families often face substantial damage and repair costs.

This is especially true for the 120 families who were



Volunteers in Eastwick rehang drywall and replace wiring, in ways that protect against future flooding. Thank you volunteers!

affected by Isaias. Tropical Storm Isaias damaged homes with several feet of flood water. Some houses needed construction and rebuilding while other houses needed roof repairs and replacement of HVAC systems.

The partner agencies, such as the Office of Emergency Management in Philadelphia, the American Red Cross, and The Salvation Army oversee disaster assessment, mold remediation, community outreach, volunteer coordination, and fundraising.

As partners continue to work together, new challenges, such as severe weather and flooding, have complicated their recovery efforts. "Disaster Response utilizes already scarce resources—we have to stretch ourselves across different disaster events, and it takes attention away from where attention is needed," Julia shares. "When you hear about a tornado, it's more attention-grabbing than long-term recovery from flooding."

Despite the challenges, LCS and the partner agencies see an end in sight. "We're close to finishing the Isaias recovery," Julia says. Ten homes still need funding to pay for general contracting supplies and professional services like electricians, roofers, and more specialized contractors. The Eastwick recovery effort, like all disaster response efforts, relies on time, determination, patience, volunteers, and cohesive partnerships and is a perfect demonstration of how we are better together.



Stanley and Paula enjoy spending time together outside in Artman's beautiful surroundings and garden.

Friends, Family, and a Continued Passion

Artman resident, Stanley, and his daughter, Paula, feel comfort and peace of mind thanks to Artman's compassionate care. "The greatest benefit for my dad since moving to Artman has been having an entire community of people around him who he can relate to, whether it's for care or companionship," Paula shares. Stanley moved to Artman in March of 2021 and has truly enjoyed meeting the friendly faces of this community.

"One of the things I really enjoy about living here is getting to eat meals with other residents in the dining area. I've met several residents since moving in," Stanley remarks. "I wrote all of their names down," he laughs. Stanley has four children, five grandchildren, and four great grandchildren, all of whom are very happy he's living at Artman.

"We do a family Zoom twice a week. My dad uses his

computer and hooks it up to the TV so he can see all of us on the big screen," says Paula. Stanley's experience with computers extends far beyond hosting family Zooms each week. In fact, Stanley has been studying and teaching computers for years. His first introduction to computers was in 1963 when he was obtaining his Master's degree in Education from the University of Pennsylvania.

"They had a computer lab where they built the IBM 1620, which is one of the most elementary computers," Stanley recalls. Stanley taught science in the Philadelphia School District for 37 years. While there, he successfully obtained a donation of 11 computers and established a computer lab for his students. Stanley was also the Regional Director of the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science and served in World War II.

Although Stanley is officially retired now, his love for computers continues as he has three computers at Artman and a printer, which he is using to complete a very special project. "Many years ago I started to write a children's book, and I finished the first chapter. I'm finally starting the second chapter, and my great granddaughter is drawing the illustrations," says Stanley.

As Stanley finishes his children's book, he is happy to spend time with friends and family at Artman. And his daughter and her siblings feel peace of mind knowing that within this community their father is well cared for.



Dancing Together with Friends and Neighbors

Dancing has a way of bringing people together. This is especially true in Zumba class at Paul's Run, led by the community's Resident Wellness Program Coordinator, Kate Pinker. Kate has worked at Paul's Run for four years, and enjoys uplifting residents' overall well-being through exercise. "I have a degree in Exercise Science and have a certification in Zumba Gold, which is a version of Zumba that's modified for older adults to practice it safely," Kate explains.

Zumba is a fitness program that pairs music and dance moves for an engaging cardio workout. "Zumba really gets your heart rate going while working every muscle in your body. And it's dancing, so you don't really feel like you're exercising," Kate reflects. Kate offers Zumba class to residents once each week and classes are always well-attended. "The classes are full every time," she says.

Kate begins her Zumba program with a warm-up song that prepares residents' muscles and joints for their upcoming exercise. "After the warm up, I have about five different songs with dance routines that I've memorized beforehand. I will demonstrate the movements and cue the residents as we go so that they can see me and follow along and understand what moves are coming next," Kate notes.



Above & Right: Paul's Run residents make exercise fun in Zumba class.



As Kate engages residents in an active aerobic workout, she helps them maintain more than just their physical health. "Zumba clearly benefits residents' physical well-being, but it's also just fun. Especially after the challenges during the pandemic, being able to come together and not only be in the same room, but dancing together and laughing, it's really great. I see the big smiles on residents' faces and I can tell they're enjoying themselves," Kate reflects.

Resident, Adele, certainly enjoys attending Kate's program each week. "I like Kate very much, and I participate in all of her exercise classes. I like to be active, and Zumba helps me do that. What I especially enjoy about Zumba is being with other residents and participating with other people," Adele affirms.

Kate agrees. "Residents come to Zumba and do something fun with their neighbors who they may have never met otherwise. It's exciting when a resident attends class for the first time and loves it so much that they tell a friend. And then that friend will show up next time and new people continue to attend. I guess dancing really brings you together," Kate says smiling.

THE MANOR *at York Town*

Crafting with Luanne and Friends



Lee enjoys painting coasters and spending time with friends during Crafting with Luanne.

Crafting is a relaxing way to spend time with friends and express creativity. For a group of residents at The Manor at York Town, crafting is one of their favorite activities led by the community's creative concierge, Luanne. As The Manor's concierge, Luanne ensures fulfilling lifestyles for residents and her role as the community's go-to crafter continues to bring her happiness and reward.

"I have been crafting for many years, and have always enjoyed being creative. It's rewarding to be able to share that with residents at The Manor," Luanne reflects. Luanne's activities, known to residents as "Crafting with Luanne," features in-depth projects that engage residents in creative expression while socializing with their fellow neighbors.

Organizing three to four projects each year, residents who participate in "Crafting with Luanne" have created everything from wood-carved

snowmen to beautifully decorated masks for Mardi Gras and wood-carved Easter bunnies. "Part of what makes these activities so great is that you get to walk away with something you've created and that you can actually use," says resident, Lee.

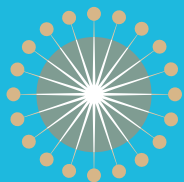
Lee has lived at The Manor for two years and has been participating in Luanne's crafts since moving in. In fact, Lee is quite crafty herself as she used to make beautiful quilts for over 40 years. "I am a quilter at heart. I have a slew of them in my apartment and I've given many to friends and family," she notes.

Continuing to express her creativity, what Lee enjoys most about "Crafting with Luanne" are the bonds formed between residents and friends. "What is really great about creating these projects is the camaraderie between residents. There are so many wonderful people at The Manor and Luanne's crafts are a time for us to get together," Lee reflects.

One of Luanne's most recent

projects brought residents together to decorate beverage coasters. Using acrylic paint and a wide variety of stencils, residents were excited to see what they could create. "The key to stenciling is to not use too much paint," Lee explains. "They turned out great, and the most important part was that we had fun. Plus, we get to use these coasters outside of crafting," she adds.

Residents who participated in coaster making plan to put their creations to good use at The Manor's weekly happy hour. As for Lee, she wants to donate her coasters to the community so The Manor can use them for various events and celebrations. What craft will Luanne come up with next? She's undecided, but one thing is certain, her crafting continues to bring residents together for fun, creativity and enjoyment.

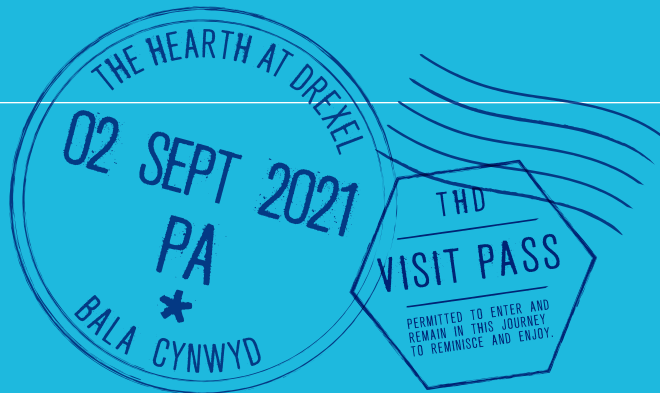


The Hearth
..... at Drexel

PASSPORTS TO PARADISE

Imagine traveling around the world from the comfort of your home. The residents at The Hearth at Drexel don't need to imagine such travel—they've taken part in it since 2017. The creation of the *Passports to Paradise* program creates a virtual armchair travel adventure that combines memory and imagination for residents at The Hearth.

"A former staff member created *Passports to Paradise*," says Jessica Buck, director of community life at The Hearth at Drexel. "This idea really made an impact, and we continue to create and facilitate this program because residents have shared that they still feel eager to



learn and discuss worldly topics. Residents bring their passports to each presentation for stamping as they are taken on a journey to different countries around the world," Jessica explains.

Virtual travel involves lectures about the history of each country, the culture, and notable statistics. Residents also experience the local cuisine. Additionally, each presentation features a special beverage or dish from the selected country.

Because many residents have already visited these destinations in-person, *Passports to Paradise* allows residents to share their personal experiences, reminisce about the past, highlight what they most enjoyed about their trip, and educate their peers.

"My favorite part of the *Passports to Paradise* program was getting together with the other residents to share stories of our favorite places to travel," Don, a group member, shares. Nancy, another group member, enjoys the learning aspect of the program. "Even if I had been to the country in-person, there is always more to learn," she adds.

The *Passports to Paradise* group has virtually traveled to different cities in the United States, the beautiful Caribbean, North & South Africa, Greece, Ireland, Spain, the British Isles, Italy, and Japan. The virtual trip to Ireland especially delighted Don as he shares, "I would have loved to have made it to Ireland in-person to golf."

The local cuisine usually makes a lasting impression. "I always enjoyed trying the specialized food associated with each country," Gracie, another group member, reflects. Nancy agrees that the food is a nice treat.

"Residents truly benefit from the camaraderie of their fellow neighbors, sharing personal stories, memories, and recalling past events," Jessica reveals. "They love trying new foods and listening to the interesting facts presented," she adds.

Passports to Paradise lets residents travel, learn, and imagine together. After all, travel feels more memorable with a friend. At The Hearth at Drexel, residents always travel with friends.

The Village

AT PENN STATE



Connected Living

Connection went digital this past summer. The Village at Penn State introduced Connected Living, a platform that connects The Village residents with news bulletins, the day's dining menus, activities, and each another. The need to modernize communication methods became apparent after traditional methods of communication, such as the in-house TV and printed memos, broke or became lost.

"The reason we introduced Connected Living is because we were looking for something to help residents connect for engagement purposes," says Ellen Corbin, executive director at The Village at Penn State. "We wanted to get information out to residents in a timely manner, keep them involved and up-to-date with everything happening at The Village."

Residents access the Connected Living platform on their iPad, iPhone, Android, or desktop computer. The platform provides the information they need, such as news bulletins, menus, the activities schedule, the resident handbook, resident biographies, and the resident directory. Residents particularly love the biographies—and easy access to the dining menus.

Updates that once took weeks take seconds. Any change made to the handbook, news bulletin, and schedule updates immediately, in real time, within the platform. "You'll have to see it to believe it," Ellen said. "Everything is right at their fingertips."

For residents who had never used a computer or struggled to adapt to the technology, Ellen created a group



Above: Connected Living touch screens are located throughout The Village to connect residents with their community.

Left: Resident Champions of Connected Living discuss how to help other residents learn this new technology.

of seven Resident Champions that helped roll Connected Living out to the community. The Resident Champions travel around The Village helping their fellow residents learn the system and resolve issues. Residents have remained positive and eager to learn.

"A gentleman I met with, who's in his 90s, told me, 'Paul, I will master this machine,'" says one of the Resident Champions, Paul. "He was absolutely committed to figuring out how to use this thing. And I sat there and said, 'Wow! Go for it!'" Paul adds.

"The people who are really the champions are the residents that had to wrestle with the technology," Paul, continues. "For all of us who had had some kind of technical background or were instructors or teachers or faculty, this was pretty easy. But for the ones who had never touched a computer in their life, it was a real effort to get them on board. They really did a good job," Paul affirms.

Working and learning together has nurtured the community's spirit of determination and togetherness. "You see little groups working together to help one another because some might understand the system better," Ellen says. "It definitely creates a better sense of community here."

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