



THE BRIDGE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS WITH AGELESS FRIENDSHIP

Friends Across the Ages • Nursing Home Outreach in Gainesville, Florida

Vol. 4 No. 4 Fall 2006



STEVE & ALLISON BLAY

Directors' Message

"BACK TO SCHOOL"

During a recent visit, one of our new volunteers, a nursing student, was given heartfelt career advice by one of the residents, who was a nurse herself for over 30 years. This advice focused on the hard work that would be required, as well as the crucial importance and significance of this career path.

When discussing this later, it occurred to us that one of the most beautiful things we can do for a nursing home resident is to be a student to them. This means not just listening to their old stories, although that is certainly a nice thing, but also finding out what their areas of expertise are and letting them teach us. This can be something as simple as asking for lessons on growing a garden, since many of the residents we visit used to be farmers.

There are also residents who were nurses, electrician's, scientists, and engineers. And many of the residents have good general life lessons to offer, from the wisdom they have gained from long experience. The possibilities for learning from the residents are endless! They may not be up to date on the latest technology, but that does not mean that their experience is irrelevant. We do both ourselves and them a favor when we become their students.

BUS TRIPS ARE BACK!

As many of you will remember, one of the highlights of our volunteer activities at The Manor at Gainesville nursing home used to be bi-monthly bus trips to various locations around town such as the mall, the museum, the zoo, etc. Our dear friends at the *United Children of God* nursing home outreach always provided the transportation via their wheelchair accessible bus, while *Friends Across the Ages* provided the volunteers, and usually the lunch as well. Unfortunately, these trips abruptly came to an end when *United Children of God* was forced, due to the rising costs of gas and insurance, to sell their bus.

But now, after a brief hiatus, we are pleased to announce that the bus trips are back! Through some hard work and a little "assertiveness" on the part of activity director Nikki Thomas, over 15 residents at *The Manor* were able to obtain bus passes for people with disabilities, known as "ADA cards". These passes enable them, for the bargain basement price of \$2 to ride a wheelchair accessible van anywhere in the city.



Alonzo "A.C." Mason, took full advantage of the "all-you-can-eat" policy at CiCi's (was that his fourth plate of pizza?).

On August 9th, for the inaugural voyage in this new era of bus trips, residents went on a trip to Wal-Mart and Cici's Pizza Buffet for lunch. All the residents who participated were thrilled, because it makes such a difference for them to be able to get out a bit and also to be able to do some of their own shopping. Mitch Willis used the opportunity to buy more gator gear.

If you have never accompanied us on one of our bus trips, please consider doing so! Check out the October e-mail of group events for details on our upcoming trip to the Homecoming Parade!

LETTERS TO SOLDIERS IN IRAQ

This past summer, on June 11th, volunteers from the *Friends Across the Ages* interfaith coalition helped residents of *University Place* nursing home write letters to soldiers serving in Iraq. By the end of the event the residents had made 23 cards. The residents who participated in this event were so happy to have this opportunity, since so many of them are veterans, or spouses of veterans, themselves. Regardless of how they feel about this current war, these residents just wanted to let those who are serving know that they are thinking about them. The letters were mailed to a special address where they were taken and distributed randomly to U.S. soldiers in Iraq. Special thanks goes to Jean Lansford for coordinating this event. Jean is our *Friends Across the Ages* volunteer coordinator at *University Place*. She took the initiative on this idea, and made it happen!



Resident Spotlight...Sally Smith



Sally Smith and Laura Nielson

Sally Smith was born in Haines City, FL on April 27, 1950. She is the second oldest of seven children. Sally's family relocated to Huttons, New York until she was in 3rd grade. It was at this time that her family moved back to Ocala,

FL where she stayed until she graduated high school.

Sally is an excellent speller! She won the Marion County Spelling Bee competition in 1962. Sally was very active in her high school, Howard High. She was President of the Future Teachers Association and the Para-Medical Club. Sally was also Miss Howard High in 1966.

After high school, Sally moved to Washington D.C. where she attended Howard University. She received her B.F.A. in Fine Arts and went on to teach 11th grade English for a little while. While she was in college, Sally was Captain of the Angel Flight Society and secretary of Meridian Hill.

Following college, Sally had a stint in a movie starring Dustin Hoffman called Lenny, which was about the life of Lenny Bruce. Her scene was actually with Dustin Hoffman himself! Sally says that her role in that scene was to encourage Mr. Hoffman and reassure him that everything was going to be okay. She recalls, with much fondness, that between takes Mr. Hoffman would grab her hand and say, "Let's dance!" She says that he was very pleasant to work with.

On another interesting note, Sally is related to the famous blues artist, Bessie Smith who is a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Bessie Smith is Sally's great aunt (her father's aunt).

I have thoroughly enjoyed my visits with Sally. She is someone of great spiritual strength whom I look up to and who encourages me to seek out the best in life with energy and optimism. Sally has a zest for life that is contagious! Plus, she is a huge Neil Diamond fan like me! I am so grateful to know Sally because she has such an open and loving heart that she shares with all she comes in contact with.

...BY LAURA NIELSON

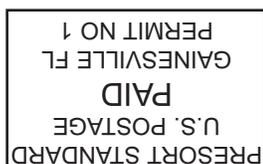
Welcome New Volunteers

- ✿ PATRICIA ALLSHOUSE and SARAH BAILIN at Gainesville Health Care Center
- ✿ DONNA MOORE (plus children KYLE and CHASE) at North Florida Specialty Care
- ✿ CINDY PEREZ and HUY PHAM at University Place

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PO BOX 14698
GAINESVILLE, FL 32604

