



THE BRIDGE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS WITH AGELESS FRIENDSHIP

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

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STEVE & ALLISON BLAY Directors' Message

Got Talent... or Time?

If you have a talent to share, such as playing a musical instrument, dancing, or even just "clowning around," we have a job for you! As you will see in the article to the right, one of our long time volunteers, Florence Van Arnam, has been throwing a monthly birthday party at a local nursing home since 1983. She is always looking for people to help with entertainment.

She has recruited family and friends for entertainment over the years, including a grandson who is a champion fiddler, a granddaughter who dances, a friend from church, Vicki, who plays the guitar and sings, and even, years ago, a daughter who played the violin and now is a music professor and violist in Wisconsin. But she really could use some more entertainers, so if you are available on the last Thursday of the month, let us know!

Another one of our long-time volunteers, Ruth Hazen, is also looking for an assistant. She does manicures at another local nursing home almost every Tuesday morning, and has been doing so also since about 1983. If you or anyone you know would be able to help out, please contact us at 352.381.1117 or info@acrosstheages.org. Training will be provided!

FLORENCE VAN ARNAM 34 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE - AND COUNTING!

What a difference one person can make. So says Florence Van Arnam, nursing home volunteer for the past 34 years. But she is not speaking of herself. She is talking about a woman named Toy Whitley who used to teach second grade at P.K. Yonge Laboratory School here in Gainesville.

"My daughter was in that class, and it was through Ms. Whitley that I got started helping with the Adopt-a-Grandparent program she established," says Mrs. Van Arnam. "If I had not known Ms. Whitley, I might never have started volunteering. You just never know how you affect the people around you."

Mrs. Van Arnam is a native of Gainesville who graduated from Gainesville High School 60 years ago, and is probably one of the more active people in the city. She is the longest running active member of the Alachua General Hospital Auxiliary (50 years), she belongs to the Daughters of the American Revolution, is a curator for the Robb House Medical Museum, and is a member of the Gainesville Woman's Club. It was through this last group that, in 1983, she became a founding member of the Nursing Home Volunteer Auxiliary (NHVA), parent organization to Friends Across the Ages. But Mrs. Van Arnam was active at the nursing home well before the NHVA, through the Adopt-A-Grandparent program mentioned above.

"I just believed in that program so much that I did everything I could to support it, long after my daughter was no longer in that class," says Mrs. Van Arnam. "The children would come over from P.K. Yonge two or three times a week, and would even bring some select

residents over to the school. It really caused a transformation in those children. They looked at the elderly differently."

When the NHVA got started, Mrs. Van Arnam came up with the idea of having a monthly birthday celebration. After a bit of experimenting, she decided to concentrate her

efforts on what was then called Community Convalescent Center—now known as Parklands Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. She has been hosting birthday parties there on the last Thursday of the month ever since, and rarely misses it.

"They are counting on you. They feel like it is one of their family come to throw them a

birthday party," says Mrs. Van Arnam with her kindly smile.

She now has a faithful assistant for the parties, especially flowers: Helen Beard. They take turns bringing in flowers from their own gardens, in arrangements that use baby food jars for vases. Entertainment for the parties is often difficult to find, but it is something Mrs. Van Arnam strongly believes in.

"I am a nurse, and I have seen what a healing thing music is. The residents just come alive," she says. "I think the birthday parties in general are therapeutic."

When asked if she has any advice for new nursing home volunteers based on her 34 years of volunteering, Mrs. Van Arnam says "Don't think you don't make a difference. Your presence is what matters. Don't think in terms of time. Just watch the people from the time you come in to the time you leave—they will have come awake. You will have made a difference."



Resident Spotlight ... Hilda Lynn

BY KATIE APPOLD

Hilda Lynn was born in Webster, FL on June 17th, 1927. Hilda's family lived around the Webster and Bushnell areas until she was 10 years old when they relocated to Gordon, Alabama. Her childhood days were spent working on her family farm picking cotton and peanuts and fishing with friends in her spare time. After graduating from high school, Hilda went on to earn a degree from the University of Alabama.



One of Hilda's most prized possessions is the watch her parents gave her upon graduating from college; she still wears the watch today!

After college, Hilda had a son named Virgil Nicholas and moved to the Gainesville, Florida area. She was hired as a foodservice worker by the Alachua county schools. Hilda was employed by the Alachua county schools for over thirty years and worked her way up from foodservice worker, to manager and eventually was named the foodservice director. One of Hilda's crowning achievements during her career was making the first pizza served in the Alachua county schools! The pizza was made from homemade pizza dough, tomato sauce, ground beef, and cheese—YUM!!

In her spare time, Hilda enjoys cooking, sewing, and watching Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy. She also loves animals and has a white cat named Winky.

Getting to know Hilda over the past few months has been a joy. She and I have many of the same interests, as well as similar careers which has formed a great bond between us. I feel very fortunate to have a friend like Hilda!

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Welcome New Volunteers

- ✿ ERIN HAWKINS, SABINA JOSEPH, AND ANGIE RIVIERE at *Gainesville Health Care Center*
- ✿ MICHAELA GROSS AND AMY JOSEPH at *University Place*
- ✿ PRIEL SCHMALBACH AND HANNAH KAUFMAN at *Parklands*
- ✿ PATTY ORWICK at *North Florida Rehab*

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