



THE BRIDGE

Bridging Generations With Ageless Friendship

Friends Across the Ages Nursing Home Outreach in Gainesville, Florida

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President's Message



Jon Shinn

One of the many things that my involvement with Friends has helped me discover is the unexpected link between compassion and joy. When we first consider the suffering of others, we may wonder: "Do I really want to get close enough to care deeply about someone who is in a difficult circumstance? Am I not opening myself up to more pain and sadness by doing so?" It's a difficult leap, and many people will never make it. But those who do come to discover that holding someone else's pain can have a transformative effect. It softens our hearts and makes us more open and receptive to the joys of life.

Many times our visits with our friends in nursing homes are joyful in and of themselves. But when they are not, remember that somewhere in the act of sharing the sadness of another person lies one of the keys to our own unconditional happiness.

Honorary Donations

✿ IN HONOR OF RUTH HAZEN, who has contributed so much of herself to so many in nursing homes *from Ann & Bill Preston*

✿ IN HONOR OF GRETCHEN & JACK GRIGSBY *from Anna & Willis Bodine*

Huy Pham, New Administrative Coordinator of *Friends Across the Ages* BY DONNA MITCHELL

When Huy Pham says that 2008/2009 Administrative Coordinator Sarah Scales left big shoes for him to fill, no one is going to contradict him. But those of us who know Huy (think whoWHEE) through volunteer activity at Signature, Parklands or Gainesville Healthcare or from his participation at *Friends* board meetings can tell you that this is someone wearing big shoes of his own.

Huy is the guy whose hand shoots up when, at a board meeting, the question comes up of who can take on a task or a project. Huy is the guy who is visiting residents at not one or two but at three of the nursing homes where *Friends* sponsors volunteers. (He is also volunteer coordinator at Gainesville Healthcare.) And Huy is the guy who said "yes" when *Friends* needed a seamless transition from one Administrative Coordinator to the next.

A native of Riverview, Florida (south of Tampa) and recent graduate of the University of Florida with a BS in Microbiology and Cell Science, Huy is taking his MCATs at the end of March and hopes to enter medical school next year on a military scholarship. He says he has

always wanted to have a career in the military and that the hospital job he had in high school, where he met and talked with various doctors, was where he fell in love with medicine. His parents, who were among the

first wave of Vietnamese to come to the U.S. in 1975, are supportive of their son's ambitions. "But it's not because they want me to be a doctor," he says, "it's because they've always encouraged me to do what I want, to do what I love."

Since joining *Friends* and

becoming a regular visitor to nursing homes, Huy has realized he wants to focus his medical career on the field of geriatrics. For the time being, he has gotten his training to be a Certified Nurse Aide, and he becomes impassioned as he talks about life in nursing homes. "When I operate the *Friends* volunteer booth on the UF campus, there are long lines of people volunteering to be Big Brothers and Big Sisters. That's great, but the elders need protection, too. The 'greatest generation' is in our nursing homes. What are they getting?"



Resident Spotlight... Evelyn Chambers

BY HEATHER BECK, Evelyn's Friend

Evelyn Chambers is a sweet, caring, intelligent woman who isn't afraid to take charge or push the envelope. In her younger years as a nurse in Tampa, she often says that the other nurses frequently asked the charge nurse "Why does Nurse Chambers always get away with so much?" The charge nurse responded "Chambers knows just how far to take it without going too far." Evelyn and I share a laugh each time she tells me this. And I remark that I am not surprised by this at all. A sweet, responsible woman who has been a caring mother to many children, yet a woman with a fiery, daring, and highly assertive side who won't let anyone walk all over her -- that is Evelyn Chambers.



sorrows and trials too. And she tells me about these too. And I have to say that I'm glad she tells me about both, that she feels comfortable sharing both the bitter and the sweet of life. For it is both trial and triumph which make people who they are, both that teach us, both types of tales that teach me so much about life through Evelyn Chambers.

One of my favorite topics that Evelyn shares is anything revolving around her southern gentleman husband who graced her life with a redeeming companionship. The same joy that glows in Evelyn's eyes when she speaks about climbing trees and swimming in the creek sings when she talks about him, about Hubert. Hubert was a good and honest man who treated her with the care and respect that she deserved. He knew her favorite color and the last dress he bought for her was that -- blue. In his companionship, she found much love, joy, peace, and hope, gifts of companionship.

Born outside of Wachula, she grew up mostly in Bowling Green, Florida. Much of her childhood consisted of farming, picking lots of strawberries, climbing trees, and swimming in the local creek where she once encountered a snake about as large as an anaconda! I asked her if she took a ride on the anaconda, since she is so daring. Her eyes got huge and she laughed boisterously. She had a ball with her friends, Ms. Chambers did. She even climbed to the tops of trees that were forbidden to play upon. That is an example of "pushing the envelope" in her teenage years, and there are many more stories where that came from. You can see in her eyes that she lived her childhood with joy when she shares these anecdotes.

I have left Signature countless times marveling at the mix of ups and downs Evelyn's life has brought, a mix of blessings and of trials. Evelyn's stories remind me that the sun does indeed come after the rain, and that it is so very important to be grateful for our joys and blessings. Visiting with Evelyn brings me hope and gives me peace. It is her friendship that brings me these gifts, and friendship brings out these gifts in all of us, doesn't it? Gifts such as these are the results of living life with others, of enduring struggles, and of sharing with each other as Evelyn has done with so many as a nurse, mother, wife, sister, and friend.

Yet, as every human being, Evelyn has had her share of

Volunteer Service Anniversaries

The following volunteers are celebrating their Friends Across the Ages anniversaries:

Jean Lansford (Signature Healthcare)6 years
 Robbie Curry (Parklands)3 years
 Stephanie Carrasco (Signature)1 year
 Rashida Basrawala (Parklands)1 year

Hassan Baber (Parklands).....1 year
 Judy Wibbelsman (Park Meadows)1 year
 Kate Kennedy (Park Meadows)1 year
 Michael Woodman (Palm Garden).....1 year

The Bridge

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JON SHINN, <i>President</i>	DONNA MITCHELL
DIANNE WALSH, <i>Vice President</i>	KIM MITCHELL
STEVE BLAY, <i>Treasurer</i>	JUDY WIBBLESMAN
KERI SHINN, <i>Secretary</i>	HUY PHAM, <i>Administrative Coordinator</i>
ALLISON BLAY	RUTH HAZEN, <i>Honorary Lifetime Board Member</i>
GEORGE HAMILTON	

Welcome New Volunteers

🦋 PARKLANDS: Tiffany Witt
 🦋 SIGNATURE: Purita Dayawon, Conrad
 Dayawon, David Hornilla, Jaleesa Jackson, Eric Van Veelen, Linda Lane
 🦋 PARK MEADOWS: Shelby Durrance