



# THE BRIDGE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS WITH AGELESS FRIENDSHIP

*Friends Across the Ages • Nursing Home Volunteer Network*

Vol. 11 No. 2 Spring 2012

## President's Message



JONATHAN SHINN

*In January and March we were treated to two wonderful presentations as the first installments in our new speaker series. Both speakers were experts in their areas, and the content of their presentations included many nuggets of wisdom. Beyond the specific content, it struck me that the most valuable aspect of attending these events may be the way they encourage personal reflection on activities that might otherwise become habit. For example, Vi Asmuth's presentation on Listening left attendees with many things to consider regarding what it truly means to listen to and communicate with another human being.*

*Like so many aspects of our experiences with Friends, these presentations can have meaning in our lives well beyond their specific application to our nursing home visits. If you haven't already, please consider attending one when our speaker series gets going again in the fall!*

## REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND RUTH HAZEN, 1919-2012

By Allison Blay

About 10 years ago, an article appeared in *THE GAINESVILLE SUN* focusing on Steve Blay and his work with *Friends Across the Ages*. A few days later, a lady named Ruth Hazen called. She was a member of another Gainesville area nursing home volunteer group called the *Nursing Home Volunteer Auxiliary*, and she was wondering if there was some way we could combine our efforts. *Friends*



was a rather new organization which Steve and I had started only three years before. The *NHVA*, on the other hand, was well established, having been founded through the Gainesville Woman's club in 1983. Ruth felt that joining the fresh energy of *Friends* with the experience of the *NHVA* would be a perfect combination. A couple of months later, Ruth's idea was realized: in May of 2002, the two groups merged together under the name *Friends Across the Ages*. A new board of directors was formed, and the first board meeting took place at Ruth's home. That was the beginning of Steve's and my friendship with her.

I can still remember how gracious she was at that first board meeting. I was a little nervous about what she would think of us. Here was this elegant lady in her early 80's, a beautiful woman in every sense of the word, with silver hair, pink cheeks, and kind brown eyes—and the most generous spirit imaginable. She had been retired for a long time, and had spent the past 20 years or so doing manicures each week at one of the local nursing homes, because, as she put it, "everyone deserves to feel pretty." She made everyone present feel very welcome in her home, and what could have been a rather awkward gathering instead felt energizing and hopeful. She never seemed to have any trouble with the fact that Steve and I were in such a different places in life than she or that our backgrounds differed from hers. She treated everyone she met with the same respectful, gentle, sweet manner.

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# Resident Spotlight . . . Pauline Davis

By Christine Hall, Pauline's "Friend Across the Ages"

As a small child, Pauline Davis would walk up and down the road with a sling shot shooting birds, especially mocking birds. She would then retrieve the injured birds and nurse them back to health on a diet of worms and bread moistened with milk. As a child, she would pray to God, "God if you let me get grown I will never let anyone run over me." It is with this spirit that she made her way through life. Anyone sitting down with her today can still surely see the spunk that brought her through eighty-nine years of life.

A nurse by profession, she embarked on her career choice by accident. Ms. Pauline was attending Beauty Culture College while living and working in a Jacksonville nursing home. She started on this path by washing the hair of the residents that lived there and running small errands, especially at night, because she saw it was harder for the residents to get around.

Born in a time before nursing required a formal education, Ms. Pauline learned on the job. She used the skills she learned while caring for these residents to raise eight children. She had three children with her first husband, whom she states was "no good", and after ten years of marriage she left with her three boys and married another man. She was married to this man for fifty-six years and raised two step-daughter and three more children

that came along.

Always the caregiver, Ms. Pauline now spends her days gossiping with visitors (the more scandalous the gossip the better). Her favorite visitors are children, whom she spoils readily, and you will see some of the most overweight squirrels and birds she feeds in the garden. Having not lost the spirit that carried her through life, she always has a funny story to tell (she is quick to keep people in line), a juicy piece of gossip, or a piece of advice she feels you must know, like how she wishes all the girls that come to visit would carry pepper spray because it is too dark when they leave.

My daughter and I met Ms. Pauline a year ago, while she was feeding the fattest squirrel I have ever seen. On one of our visits she noticed I was getting chunky and suggested I had a bun in the oven, and she was right. Over time

we developed a friendship that has enriched not only Ms. Pauline's life but those of mine and my children. She gives me something to look forward to each week, and a ready hug each visit. She is also a person that looks forward to seeing us during the week and asks for nothing more than our time. Loving spitfires like Ms. Pauline makes volunteering with *Friends Across the Ages* something to look forward to each week, and shows us that no matter how young or old you are, you always have something to contribute.



Ms. Pauline surrounded by Friends volunteers-- Christine Hall on the far right and Christine's two children at center and in Ms. Pauline's lap.

## Friends Across The Ages Board

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| JON SHINN .....       | President           |
| ANDREW MITCHELL ..... | Vice President      |
| CAROLYN LUKERT .....  | Secretary           |
| STEVE BLAY .....      | Treasurer           |
| ALLISON BLAY .....    | Network Facilitator |
| HEATHER BECK          | KIM MITCHELL        |
| GEORGE HAMILTON       | KERI SHINN          |
| ANNA KIM              | DIANNE WALSH        |

## Honorary and Memorial Donations

- Anna and Willis Bodine...in honor of GRETCHEN GRIGSBY  
 Dorothy Fillmer.....in memory of RUTH HAZEN  
 Ann Preston.....in memory of RUTH HAZEN  
 Florence Van Arnam.....in memory of RUTH HAZEN

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Over the years I have said many times that “I want to be like Ruth when I grow up”—and in this I was not alone. Ruth was admired by almost all of her acquaintances, and rightfully so. She lived her life with such energy and vitality. She went to the gym nearly every day to keep her body in shape because she did not wish to become a burden to others. She drove herself for visits to her mountain cabin in North Carolina through dirt roads right up until a few years before she died. She continued her volunteer work at the nursing home for as long as she could, only stopping a couple of years ago when pain in her leg made it difficult to carry on. She served on the board of *Friends* until 2006, at which time she retired from the board but was designated an “honorary lifetime board member” because of the inspiration and vision she had given us all.

Ruth adored babies, and was delighted when our son Peter was born in late 2005. I can still remember how Ruth’s eyes lit up when she first saw him, and her arms went out, immediately

wanting to hold the baby. The picture on page 1 is Ruth with Peter, just before her 86th birthday and his 1st birthday. Peter—and later his sister Annie—called her “Grandma Ruth” and it just seemed to fit. We would stop by and visit her every so often and she would offer the kids sweets and show them the birds and flowers in her backyard. She would pick up whoever was the baby at the time and say “I’m going to get your sugar” and kiss them just under the ear while they giggled and screamed with delight. We will always remember and treasure those times.

How blessed we were that Ruth came into our lives all those years ago. How lucky we were to know someone of such integrity, vision, and grace. How sad we were to lose her this February. We will miss her so much. But we will try to learn from her example and to live as she lived, with vitality, generosity, faith, and love. She has left an incredible legacy and we will do our best to honor it.

## *Friends Across the Ages* Members Share Their Memories of Ruth Hazen

“I first met Ruth at a board meeting for Friends Across the Ages and immediately thought, *What a beautiful woman!* As I came to know her better I found she was a beautiful person all around...I’m so happy I got to have a little of her in my life.” —DIANNE WALSH

“When I think of Ruth the first response is she was full of grace in every way.” —FLORENCE VAN ARNAM

“The last time I saw Ruth before her time at Hospice was at the award banquet at Signature that Steve attended also close to 2 years

ago. *Friends* was recognized as a group, and so was Sheriff Darnell. As soon as the Sheriff and Ruth saw each other, they embraced. Ruth had given the Sheriff her first job - at the tag agency Ruth headed - while the Sheriff was still in high school. The two of them sat next to each other all evening enjoying each other’s company.” —JEAN LANSFORD

“Ruth was a wonderful cook and her vegetable soup was a real favorite with our PEO chapter. We all loved going to her house on a cold day for a bowl of hot soup.” —DOROTHY FILLMER

## Volunteer Anniversaries

Congratulations to those whose celebrating anniversaries of volunteering with Friends Across the Ages  
Winter and Spring 2012

### 11 years

AGNES BIERBAUM - Parklands

### 5 years

ROBBIE CURRY - Parklands

### 4 years

ANDREW MITCHELL -Signature

KIM MITCHELL -Signature

### 1 year

CINDY GICALA - Parklands

### 1 year

CHRISTINE HALL - GHCC

PRIYANKA JAGTRAP - Park Meadows

COLBY LOWE - Palm Garden

HOLLY MANN - GHCC

TAYLOR MAY - GHCC

RACHEL MONTEALEGRE - Parklands

SHANNON PATTERSON -Signature

OONA TAKANO - Park Meadows



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# Speaker Series off to a Strong Start

This January, *Friends Across the Ages* launched a new speaker/workshop series to be offered four times a year during our monthly membership meetings. The purpose of these sessions is to offer volunteers—and anyone else who might be interested—a chance to explore various topics of interest to people who care about residents of nursing homes and want to further develop skills that might be of use. So far the feedback we have received about our first two presentations has been incredibly positive, so we plan to continue this series in the fall.

The first session was led by board member Carolyn Lukert on the topic “Strategies for Effective Nursing Home Visits.” She covered such things as how to break the ice, how to determine the level at which a resident is capable and interested in interacting, and strategies for working with residents who have dementia. Carolyn is a long time nursing home volunteer who works with professional caregivers to aid people staying in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities, as well as in their homes. She is involved in the family care for her father, who is experiencing

dementia. We felt privileged to have someone with her level of expertise and experience to discuss this topic with us.

Our second session on the topic “Hearing vs. Listening” was also led by someone with extensive qualifications, Dr. Vi Asmuth. Vi has a doctorate in Communication with an emphasis on Communication and Aging. She teaches a course at UF on the topic of “Listening”—and this presentation was an overview of her course material. Vi was a long-time weekly volunteer with *Friends* and spent 8 years visiting one-to-one with residents and coordinating one of our volunteer groups. She is still a member of *Friends Across the Ages* and will be leading one of the events for our upcoming Spring Festival.

We want to thank Carolyn and Vi for offering such high quality and inspiring presentations, and we hope to have both back to speak again in the future. Our speaker series will be on hiatus for the summer, but stay tuned for more offerings in September and in November. You won’t want to miss them!

## Welcome New Volunteers

Winter and Spring 2011

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ✿ MATTHEW BROSMAN ....Park Meadows Health & Rehab | ✿ CAITLIN SHERMANN..Gainesville Health Care Center |
| ✿ AMANDA DORR .....Parklands Nursing & Rehab      | ✿ JORDAN WEBB.. .....Park Meadows (in PT)          |
| ✿ ANA MARIA HERNANDEZ..Signature Health Care      | ✿ ALYSE WELDER.. .....Signature Health Care        |
| ✿ GEORGE TERRE.....Signature Health Care          | ✿ DIANNA VAUGHN.. .....Parklands Nursing and Rehab |
| ✿ HEATHER REILLY .....NFRSC                       | ✿ MARTA VUCEMILOVIC.. Parklands Nursing and Rehab  |