



THE BRIDGE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS WITH AGELESS FRIENDSHIP
Friends Across the Ages - Nursing Home Outreach in Gainesville, Florida

Vol. 4 No. 1 Winter 2006



Steve & Allison Blay Directors' Message

"How ya doing today Annie Mae?"
"Oh, 'bout the same!"

Those two opening lines have been repeated almost every day for the past seven years of our lives. From there we would go on to learn of picking up pecans, Model-T Fords, feed sack dresses, and small town living. Annie Mae Townsend was born near Hawthorne, Florida and lived there until coming to the nursing home 8 years ago. We became close friends with her very soon after we began visiting the nursing home, and over the years had become like family. She had a pure heart, an innocence, and an enduring sense of humor from which we could all learn.

Annie Mae died peacefully in her sleep on Friday, November 25. We feel blessed to have had all these years with her, yet in some ways it all went by too fast. We will miss her so very much. We continue our work in nursing homes in honor of her and the many special people we have met over the years. They are not forgotten. We love you, Annie Mae.



"I sure love babies" Annie Mae would always tell us. Here she's pictured on Halloween Day with Jenna Nishida and her daughter Talia.

Residents Reach Out

Carolyn Davis, Patricia Thomas, and Peggy Weyland have become such good friends that they call themselves "sisters." They have known each other for just a few months as residents at Park Meadows, but they have become very close in that time. Patricia says "The only difference between us is the color of our skin, but we aren't going to let that get in the way because we are all the same underneath." They enjoy sharing meals together and listening to each other's confidences. Carolyn says, "It is important if you have to live away from your friends and family to have people here that you can count on. I know I can count on my 'sisters.'"



Carolyn Davis, Patricia Thomas and Peggy Weyland

We all know that Friends Across the Ages volunteers reach out to lonely nursing home residents. Many people do not realize, however, that it is often the nursing home residents themselves (like Carolyn, Patricia, and Peggy) that do the reaching out – whether it is to their fellow residents, to visitors at the facility, or even complete strangers. Here are a few other examples:

- Residents of Gainesville Health Care Center participated in a Friends Across the Ages Interfaith Coalition event in which they made Halloween goody bags for children affected by Hurricane Katrina.
- Warren Bowshot of Park Meadows has been teaching volunteer Rachel Fisher magic tricks.
- Imogene Eilers of Gainesville Health Care Center taught volunteer Ingrid Paredes how to paint a beautiful picture frame with flowers and butterflies.
- Stephanie Smith of The Manor at Gainesville gave her entire savings of \$10 to a Hurricane Katrina relief fund.
- Nathaniel Clarke of University Place has instructed volunteer Patricia Meng on how to graft citrus trees. Using his method of grafting tangerines and grapefruit onto an orange tree, she could have three kinds of fruit on one tree!

And the list goes on. In important ways, many nursing home residents share their wisdom and their love with others. They can truly be models for us in this season of giving, and throughout the year.

"Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and impossible to forget."

J. Randolph

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Resident Spotlight



Charles Lee

by Erica Ross and Catherine Alford

We first met Charles Lee about four months ago. He is now a good friend, who goes by the name of "Billy". Billy was born in Starke, Florida and is an expert on cabbage growing from his years of tending to his family's cabbage patch. He was able to inform us about the different breeds of cabbage. Billy loves to be around people and spends most of his time wheeling through the halls or chatting in the common areas with others. His warm and energetic presence is always felt on the fourth floor of Gainesville Health Care Center.

Billy loves festivities and holidays when the nursing home decorates and hosts parties. Though he is not a big bingo player, he enjoys observing the others play. Billy is especially fond of music and loves to dance and clap along. He attributes his love for music to his parents. When he was a boy, his mom played the violin and his dad played the guitar and Billy loved to dance.

On our weekly visits, he always greets us with smiles and hugs. He once told us that he doesn't put sugar in his coffee because he is already sweet enough; he's beginning to convince us that this is true! Billy is such a joy to be around and we are thankful to have met such a special friend.

Welcome New Volunteers

- ✿ Michael Black at Gainesville Health Care Center;
- ✿ Rachael Fernandez, Allison Ortega, Rhiannon Sforza-Flick at The Manor at Gainesville;
- ✿ Elizabeth Stackfleth at University Place;
- ✿ Karen Mentz at North Florida Rehab and Specialty Care.

We would like to thank and recognize these special "Friends of *Friends*."

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