



THE BRIDGE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS WITH AGELESS FRIENDSHIP

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

Vol. 7 No. 1 Winter 2009

Directors' Message



STEVE & ALLISON BLAY

Commencement

This is the last time you will see our picture in this corner—or at least for the foreseeable future. As most of our supporters are aware by now, we two are stepping down as directors of *Friends Across the Ages*, a role we have filled in various incarnations for the past ten years. However, we are not stepping down from the leadership of *Friends*. We will be part of a rather large leadership team, and are so very excited about the prospect!

This leadership team will consist of all the people you will find described inside this newsletter, and will be assisted by our amazing new administrative coordinator, Sarah Scales, described in the article to the right. Sarah is a real jewel, and the leadership team is full of dynamic, dedicated and compassionate people. The team will be headed up by our new board president, Jon Shinn, who has been with *Friends* almost from the very beginning, and has played an indispensable part in the extended process of strategic planning and restructuring that *Friends* has undertaken over the past year.

So, with such an incredible group of leaders, we hope you will agree that we are all on the verge of an exciting new chapter for *Friends Across the Ages*. Here's to an amazing future of "bridging generations with ageless friendship."

MEET SARAH SCALES

BY KERI SHINN

Friends Across the Ages is excited to introduce our new administrative coordinator, Sarah Scales. Sarah is a UF graduate with a degree in Public Relations. After spending several years working in New Orleans as an administrative coordinator for the Louisiana State School of Dentistry, she is happy to be returning to Gainesville.

Sarah was chosen from a pool of more than forty applicants for the position based on her administrative experience, positive attitude, energy, and professionalism. The position started in October, and we already have many reasons to believe that Sarah was the perfect choice.

The administrative coordinator's most important responsibility is to support new and existing *Friends Across the Ages* volunteers. Sarah manages new volunteers through the application/interview process, connects them with the coordinator at an individual nursing home when they are ready to begin visiting, and follows up regularly with all volunteers. In addition, she handles daily administrative tasks and is the central point of contact for volunteers, coordinators, nursing home staff and members of the *Friends* leadership team.

"Hiring a part-time administrative coordinator was a big step for *Friends*," said Jon Shinn, incoming president. "Many of us believed that the organization needed a staff person in order to grow, but we still had reservations—until we found Sarah and saw how much was accomplished in the first month of her employment. It's not just her direct contributions—Sarah's presence has helped catalyze the rest of the leadership team, magnifying her impact."

Sarah feels the position is a great fit for her as well. Because the job requires only 10 hours each week, she is able to work while she pursues her Masters degree in Communications Sciences and Disorders. "I've loved everyone that I've met – I'm so impressed with the amount of time and effort that everyone puts in to make it work. It's not a once-a-month thing like so many organizations; there are so many people that are really committed to this worthy cause and are willing to work together to achieve great results. I'm excited to be a part of it and see where it goes," she said recently.

With Sarah and the new leadership team working together, we expect 2009 to be a year of growth and maturation for *Friends Across the Ages*. We look forward to these changes allowing us to reach out to an increasing number of nursing home residents to provide meaningful friendship where it is so urgently needed.



FRIENDS ACROSS THE A

STEVE AND ALLISON BLAY

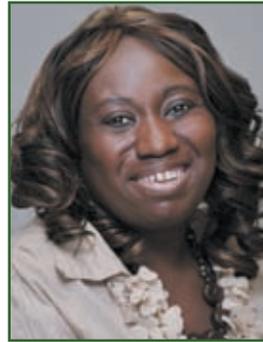
Founders



Simply put, without Steve and Allison Blay's dedication, enthusiasm and persistence, *Friends Across the Ages* would not be the organization it is today. After becoming close with some residents at Parklands, they realized the need for a team of volunteers and *Friends* was born. Seeing our volunteers in action makes them realize how amazing our community is.

SHERICE BECKMAN

Board Member



As Activity Director at Signature Health Care, Sherice Beckman has seen *Friends* in action and recently joined our group because she loves bringing joy to people and she believes our group makes that possible. Sherice hopes to bring a fresh, new perspective to the team and provide a better quality of life to those in need.

JON SHINN

President



Jon Shinn's interests in organizational management and humanitarian service make him the perfect candidate to carry on the *Friends* mission as its new board president. Jon's goals for *Friends Across the Ages* include finding many new volunteers, "while always maintaining the mission of the organization and the quality of the experience for the volunteers and residents."

LINDA GARDNER

Board Member



Linda Gardner has long been involved in senior issues and was a Long Term Care Ombudsman for three years. She coordinates the Catholic Charities Respite program and besides *Friends* is also active in RSVP and the Community Coalition for Older Adults. Linda also finds time to read, do yoga and spend time with friends and her pets.

VI ASMUTH

Vice President



Vi Asmuth studied interpersonal relationships between nursing home residents and Certified Nursing Assistants for her Ph.D., and learned how many residents lack one-on-one relationships. She plans to help with communication training, and feels volunteers need to be reminded that communication is a two-way process in which both groups should reap the benefits.

GRETCHEN GRIGSBY

Leadership Team



Gretchen Grigsby's positive experiences with her father's nursing home in Ohio inspired her to help others in similar situations in the immediate area. She has been visiting Palm Garden for five years and has developed close friendships with many of the residents and staff. She also runs a periodic 'Rhythm Circle' music program at various nursing homes.

KERI SHINN

Secretary



Keri Shinn feels that working with our organization over the years has allowed her to develop a familiarity and respect for an element of the human experience that "seems critical for leading a life unencumbered by fear." Aside from *Friends*, which she serves in a number of capacities including secretary, marketing team, and various committees, Keri stays busy playing tennis and being mother to her two-year-old son, Jonah.

GEORGE HAMILTON

Board Member



As nursing home administrator at North Florida Rehab and Specialty Care, George Hamilton has a wealth of knowledge. George believes that, "under difficult, trying and end-of-life times, it is impressive and a testament to the power of love and the hearts of people that there are so many positive experiences." George served as immediate past president of *Friends*.

AGES LEADERSHIP TEAM

By Sarah Scales

ERIN HAWKINS
Leadership Team



What started as an educational experience for Erin Hawkins to learn more about the elderly through *Friends* became a life-changing one. As a member of the marketing team, she intends to reach out to younger generations and encourage them to join *Friends Across the Ages*. Erin is studying to become an Audiologist, plays French horn, and enjoys training for triathlons.

SANDY JOHNSON
Board Member



Sandy Johnson has spent all her life helping others, and has worked for many years in mental health and in recreation therapy at nursing homes. She has recently retired, but keeps very active with *Friends*, with her dream of bringing a senior center to Gainesville, and with studies, as she has recently started work on a degree in psychology.

JEAN LANSFORD
Leadership Team



Outgoing Board President Jean Lansford has big dreams for the future of *Friends*. She wants to grow the number of volunteers through friendship and mentoring so every resident with no visitors has a *Friends* volunteer. When she is not coordinating her large group of volunteers at Signature Healthcare, Jean enjoys traveling and gardening.

DONNA MITCHELL
Board Member



Visiting a friend at a nursing home led Donna Mitchell to *Friends*. She cherishes her time working with nursing home residents because there is a giving and taking of warmth, trust and interest. Donna is also a professional photographer and took most of the pictures for this newsletter. In her free time, Donna enjoys reading, art and cooking.

MARIA DE PILAR "PILI" PAZ
Board Member



Pili Paz has lived throughout the Caribbean, South and Central America, and the U.S, but when she got to Gainesville she knew she wanted to lay roots and become part of our community. She assists with volunteer mentorship at Signature Health Care and intends to help with outreach marketing.

Florence Van Arnam
Leadership Team



Florence Van Arnam is a native of Gainesville and has spent much of her adult life helping to improve our community. She was a founding member of the Nursing Home Volunteer Auxillary (NHVA), which was a precursor organization to *Friends*, and continues to host monthly birthday parties at Parklands.

DIANNE WALSH
Board Member



Keeping still is not one of Dianne Walsh's strong suits. She is a *Friends* volunteer, coordinator at Palm Garden, a volunteer at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens and for the National Alliance on Mental Illnesses. She has 6 children and 13 grandchildren. She is an integral part of our team and her graphic designing talents help us to spread the word about our group.

2008 RESIDENT MEMORIAL

We will greatly miss all of our Friends Across the Ages residents who passed away in 2008:

Warren Bowshot
Annie Bruton
Vivian Bryant
James Chandler
Hildegard Drake
Mary Erickson
Dorothy Feinberg
Catherine Mabry

Maggie Middleton
Sherrill Morehouse
Verlene Robinson
Lana Schuld
Philomena Troutwine
Robert Weir
Annie Williams

Resident Spotlight...Sunday Noon Gossip Girls

BY ERIN HAWKINS

“Bridging generations with ageless friendship”—the motto that defines *Friends Across the Ages*. I can’t help but think about it every Sunday afternoon when I sit down with my friends Eleanor, Louise and Mrs. Flowers. This past year, we’ve shared stories, downfalls, triumphs and much more. I look forward to every Sunday meeting as a chance to spend time with my girlfriends.

Eleanor (commonly known as “Granny”) became my very first friend at Gainesville Health Care Center. She definitely provides the laughter in our conversations. She loves to reminisce about her childhood home in North Carolina -where she spent most of the time on the family farm tending the crops.

I remember one Sunday afternoon, I went into Eleanor’s room and her roommate (Mrs. Flowers) stopped me at the door and informed me that Eleanor was taking her afternoon nap. I introduced myself and in no time Mrs. Flowers and I were engaged in conversation. Mrs. Flowers has a big family and keeps photo albums of her grandchildren beside her bed to show me each Sunday - there’s always at least one new photo! Mrs. Flowers is quite the bingo player and instead of spending her bingo-bucks, she started a piggy bank for her grandchildren.

Louise is Mrs. Flowers and Eleanor’s next door neighbor. She is a very sweet lady and I’m glad Mrs. Flowers and Eleanor introduced me to her. Louise enjoys partaking in the various GHCC activities throughout the week. She likes arts and crafts time the most, and a few of her creations are hanging up on the wall beside our meeting table.

No matter what the conversation, as I sit there on Sunday afternoons with Eleanor, Louise and Mrs. Flowers, I feel connected through our friendships, and our age differences are no longer noticeable. Eleanor, Louise and Mrs. Flowers are my very good friends, and I view it as a blessing from God to have met them.



Erin, with two of her friends, “Granny” (left) and Mrs. Flowers.

Welcome New Volunteers

Summer and Fall 2008

- ✿ TERRY BYATT, Palm Garden
- ✿ NAKUI CREARY, Signature Health Care
- ✿ JENNY MILLER, Palm Garden
- ✿ ALVERDA NAYLOR, Palm Garden
- ✿ ETOSHA OTTEY, Park Meadows
- ✿ ROSS SIMON, Signature Health Care
- ✿ BENJAMIN STEWART, Signature Health Care
- ✿ EMILY SULLIVAN, Parklands

Memorial Donation: DON WALSH by Dianne Walsh
 Memorial Donation: PATRICK & ELLEN HEALY, by Marion H. Freund

We would like to thank and recognize these special “Friends of Friends.” FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS 12/07 - 11/08

BENEFACTORS \$500 AND UP

Barr Systems
 Dennis and Joan Blay
 Francois and Susan Burianek
 John and Anne Curtis
 Dan and Gini Eckert
 Gainesville Prosthetics
 Special Projects Interagency
 Council for the Elderly
 (SPICE)

PATRONS \$100 AND UP

Robert and M. Violet Asmuth
 David’s Real Pit BBQ
 Tom and Leticia Ewbank
 Ruth Hazen
 Linda Johnson
 Rob and Sharon Kain
 Jean Lansford
 Nancy Meffe
 St. Augustine Church
 Dianne Walsh

DONORS

Christine Alicot
 Helen Beard
 Gene and Agnes Bierbaum
 Anna Bonacorsa
 Bob Sh’mal Ellenberg
 Marion Freund
 Linda Gardner
 Margaret Green
 Marianne Hawkins
 Karen Kain

Andrea Little
 Frank Maturro
 Peg McIntire
 The Nishida Family
 Ann Preston
 Donald and Janet Rou
 Priel Schmalbach
 Joel and Diane Strangis
 Ken and Susan Wilder