

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

This past September, Steve and Allison Blay and their kids had the opportunity to travel to California (all expenses paid!) to meet with businessman and philanthropist Shlomo Rechnitz. He is the owner of Brius Healthcare Services, the largest nursing home provider in the State of California. Mr. Rechnitz learned about *Friends Across the Ages* via our website, and contacted us, asking if we might be able to help begin a similar program in his nursing

homes. We are still in conversation with him about how we might be able to help, but it is exciting to dream about the possibilities for "bridging generations with ageless friendship" in a different setting and on a bigger scale. We are intrigued by the idea that it might enable us to create a template for spreading the *Friends Across the Ages* concept more broadly. We hope to have more to share with you about this project in the new year!



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

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THE BRIDGE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS WITH AGELESS FRIENDSHIP

Friends Across the Ages • Nursing Home Volunteer Network

Vol. 16 Fall - 2016 Winter - 2017

President's Message



ANDREW MITCHELL

Another year has passed, and what a year it has been. 2016 had a lot in store for everyone, including a tumultuous election season. One thing that I have always been grateful for is the fact that, when I am volunteering with our organization, politics is never an issue. Political ideals take a backseat to compassionate action when people organize to help others. The fact of the matter is that the need for companionship and empathy will never be filled by a person in any office of any capital city. That need is filled every day by devoted volunteers who sacrifice their time to turn their words into action and make someone else's life a little brighter. Thank you to all of our volunteers and supporters. May 2017 bring us all closer together in happiness and love.

NOT-SO-TALENTED SHOW

On Saturday, November 5th, we held our first ever "Not-So-Talented Show" at Terrace Health and Rehab. Volunteers, staff and residents were encouraged to perform whatever they thought others would enjoy. The show included performances on piano, flute, ukulele, guitar, and singing. Also, magic tricks, jokes, and hula hooping were part of the mix. The winner was baby Will Mitchell, who stole the show demonstrating how he can walk and dance. Fun was had by all, so we hope to do more of these shows at other facilities in the future!



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GROWING UP WITH Friends

By Peter Blay, Grade 5

I have been visiting nursing homes with *Friends Across the Ages* since I was born, and still visit to this day! Because of this and because the residents are kind and friendly, it has always been an important part of my life.



Ms. Flowers, Ms. Erin, and Peter playing Luau Bingo at the Spring Festival, 2013

CHANGES

My experience at the nursing homes has changed a lot over the years. For example, I have gotten more comfortable going to the nursing homes. I mean, there is always some uneasiness going to a nursing home. But you get used to coming over the years and don't think of the uneasiness as much. Another change is that we visit different people over the years as residents come and go. When a person we

know dies, we try to go to their funeral. I truly feel sad when one of our friends passes away.

FAVORITE THINGS

I used to enjoy visiting Ms. Doris and Ms. Rhunette. Ms. Doris would go all hugs and kisses when we saw her, and Ms. Rhunette would usually say to my dad, "Hey Steve, you got your kids there?" Today, my favorite people to visit are Mr. Donnie and "Queen" Victoria. I like them because Mr. Donnie always pays close attention to what I'm saying, and "Queen" Victoria is always offering me lollipops and drawings of flowers that she made. Some of my favorite *Friends Across the Ages* events are Luau Bingo nights, drum circles, and spring volunteer appreciation parties. I have enjoyed meeting all of the *Friends Across the Ages* volunteers over the years. Two of my favorites are Ms. Heather and Ms. Erin, especially because they used to babysit me, and are always very friendly to me.

IMPORTANCE TO ME AND THE RESIDENTS

Visiting the nursing home is important to me because I like to see the smiles on the residents' faces when we visit them. I think the residents really appreciate our visits, and it makes me feel good to see them looking happy. If I grow up and end up in a nursing home, I hope that children will come to visit me, too.

VOLUNTEER ANNIVERSARIES

Summer and Fall 2016

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 41 Years | FLORENCE VAN ARNAM |
| 18 Years | STEVE & ALLISON BLAY |
| 10 years | DONNA, KYLE, & CHASE MOORE |
| 2 Years | JOHN HOBBS ROSHA POU DYAL PAUL VOLPE |
| 1 Year | CASSIE COOPER |

Welcome New Volunteers

Summer and Fall 2016

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| SYDNEY ACHINGER | Park Meadows |
| ALEXANDRA ARMENGOL | Signature |
| KAYLA MILLER | Park Meadows |
| CAROLINA PORRAS | Parklands |
| JAYA REDDY | Parklands |
| MARIKA ROSARIO | Parklands |
| TERRY TILLMAN | GHCC |
| BEN WALKER | Signature |
| ROSE WILDER | Park Meadows |

Resident Memorial: Rhunette Clark, Doris King, and Norma Leas

Those of us who volunteer at Parklands Nursing and Rehab have lost three very special resident friends there this year: Rhunette Clark, Doris King, and Norma Leas.



Rhunette had been at Parklands for as long as we can remember. She was born in 1921, lived in rural Macon, Georgia, the oldest of six children. She lived there until 1960 when she moved to Gainesville with her son and daughter. Rhunette worked 29 years for a Gainesville family as a housekeeper and babysitter for their children. Rhunette will

be missed by all of us, but most especially by our volunteer John Hobbs, who visited her every week. We had a special birthday party for her 95th birthday this past April, at which we gave her some of her favorite things: a book from her childhood that John found, Pepsi, chocolate, and, her special request, pickled pigs feet!



Doris, who celebrated her 94th birthday in July, was at Parklands for about eight years, and was best known to all of us for her love of children and animals. Doris lived in the little town near Gainesville of Keystone Heights, where she and

her husband built their own house from the ground up. She had two wonderful sons, Bill and Terry, but always wished she had a girl, too! Our daughter Annie always had a special bond with her, as did our volunteer Jamie Kistler. We will miss Doris' sweet smile and her hugs.



Norma was someone that many of us visited, since we usually found her in the dining room keeping watch over all the doings at Parklands. Norma was Italian and loved to cook in her earlier days; she always had great advice to share when any of us was stumped about what to make for dinner. She moved from Pennsylvania to Fort Myers as an adult, and

described herself as a "beach bum" who loved seashells. Norma and Allison shared a birthday (August 18th). Her 87th birthday is the only time Steve will admit to stacking the deck a bit at our monthly poker game, so that Norma could win something! Norma was a woman of great spirit, intelligence, and love, and our visits to Parklands aren't the same without her.

We feel blessed to have been able to get to know each of these three wonderful women, and though they have gone on, we will remember them always.



THANK YOU, AGNES!

As we look back over the history of *Friends Across the Ages*, a few really faithful volunteers stand out. Agnes Bierbaum, who has been volunteering weekly at Parklands Nursing and Rehab for over fifteen years, has been a profound inspiration to us, not only because she has been so faithful, but also because of her willingness to share her love and curiosity with so many different kinds of people. Agnes started one of her first friendships at the nursing home over a bag of "corn curls" (cheesy puffs) with Verlene Robinson. Over the years, her friends at the nursing home taught her how to cook skunk for dinner, and how to soak worms in onions to catch more fish. She would bring fresh baked goods with her on

every Tuesday visit, earning her the nickname "Cookie Lady" with some of the residents. Besides volunteering with *Friends Across the Ages*, Agnes volunteers in many other ways in the community, and even wrote a book about her volunteer experiences to inspire others to do the same. This past month, she and her husband Gene moved to Central Florida to be closer to one of their children. We are so sad to say good-bye to her, but deeply grateful for her many years of service.