



Wesley Willows
Extraordinary Senior Living

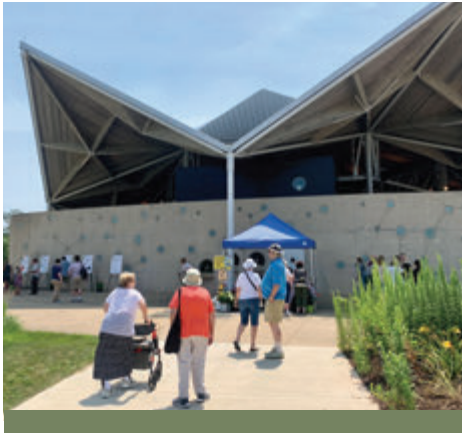
SPRING 2022

Connections

LIFE AND NEWS FROM WESLEY WILLOWS



Celebrating 50 Years of the
Good Samaritan Fund Annual Benefit



2021 Box Office Benefit



THE WESLEY WILLOWS ANNUAL BOX OFFICE BENEFIT 50 YEARS

In 1957, our visionaries, Roy and Minnie Johns donated 16 acres of the 160-acre Johns Family farm to build a church and a home for the elderly. They dreamed that once a senior moved to a home, they would not be asked to leave due to financial reasons. The Good Samaritan Fund was created before the first person moved into Wesley Willows.

On June 16, 1966, a Methodist minister's widow was the first resident to move in. Wesley Willows was the first senior home of its kind in Northern Illinois.

In 1972 the "Annual Benefit" for the Good Samaritan Fund was created to help the fund financially. Today, we call it the Box Office Benefit. This annual event has become a tradition that our residents, family members, businesses, and staff have come to expect, enjoy and enthusiastically attend.

The Good Samaritan Fund at Wesley Willows provides care for an average of 30 residents a year for those who have outlived their financial resources while living at Wesley Willows.

This usually happens at the time when they need the support the most while naturally occurring in later years. It is an average yearly cost of \$44,000 per person for charity care. We are honored to continue to take care of those that have committed to making Wesley Willows their home. The foresight that our visionaries had, in creating the Good Samaritan Fund, is just as important, if not more important today!

On **Sunday, August 7, 2022**, at Rock Valley College Starlight Theater, we will present the 50th celebration with the production of **Hello Dolly!** We invite you to join us for a family-friendly afternoon of fun and entertainment with the grandeur of celebrating 50 years of this essential event.

Our 50th anniversary celebration will include an opportunity to participate in a brunch, a Hello Dolly Parade, and finally the traditional production at Starlight Theater. Be on the lookout for an invitation coming soon. We are excited to see you, your family, and friends at this year's Box Office Benefit!

A message from Bill Pratt

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Connections newsletter. I trust you have remained safe over this long winter season. Did you note how very little snow we experienced? Meanwhile, the temperatures were inconsistent with some really cold weather. I certainly welcome Spring with my arms wide open.

The two volunteers we have recognized this month will be inspirational as you read their stories. It's our pleasure to recognize dedicated residents who give their time and talent to make a difference on both of our campuses and in the Rockford community. Thank you, Gene and John, for all you have done and will continue to do as volunteers!

It's exciting to think about our 50th annual fundraising event. I remember 22 years ago when I arrived at Wesley Willows as the CEO, we held our annual fundraiser at Court Street United Methodist Church in downtown Rockford. The music was Barbershop Quartet style music and over the years we had good crowds. In 2007, we changed the venue to Rock Valley College using the Starlight Theater for our Box Office Benefit since then.

The talented staff has done wonderful performances with the exception of the 2 COVID years. We truly hope you will join us and enjoy a fabulous afternoon of fun as we celebrate with Hello Dolly.

In this issue, you will also learn of our CFO, Brett Nelson's, success in becoming a

licensed Nursing Home Administrator. Brett is one of four staff who is on this career path to add depth to our leadership team. **Congratulations Brett!** Our Robert Ash Legacy Society had some activity this year adding new members, but also recognizing the legacy of nine people, eight of which were former Wesley Willows residents. We are so grateful for those who have remembered Wesley Willows in this way. Finally, in the midst of COVID-19, we have had more than 30 families decide to call Wesley Willows or Peterson Meadows home. We warmly welcome them to the campus of their choice and enjoy having them become part of the larger Wesley Willows family.



I hope you enjoy this edition and feel free to drop me a line or give me a call if I can be of assistance.

Bill Pratt
CEO

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Robert Ash Legacy Society Donors in 2021 - 2022

The Robert Ash Legacy Society (RALS) is our planned giving program that allows donors to help Wesley Willows vision for the future and create a deeply connected legacy to our history of charitable care. To be in RALS, you have committed to putting Wesley Willows in your Will, Trust, Life Insurance Policy, Stocks, etc. We want to acknowledge our legacy givers from January 2021 - February 2022.

We are very grateful for these residents that named Wesley Willows as a bequest in their Will, Trust, Life Insurance, Stocks, or Gift Annuity. They left a beautiful and generous legacy!



Lorraine L. Bruns

Joanne E. Conley

Elaine J. Green

John T. Herbert

Marie Kamens

Verne Loeppert

Miriam Richardson

Isadore Schwartz

Wayne & Ruth Diehl



The Robert Ash
Legacy Society

Wesley Willows

Nursing Home Administrator License

We are happy to announce that Brett Nelson, Chief Financial Officer, received his Nursing Home Administrator license in January. It took determination and persistence to gain this certification. Brett has worked with Wesley Willows for three years and we are grateful for his leadership and commitment to making sure our residents are living their best lives at Wesley Willows.

Congratulations Brett!

Wesley Willows Volunteer Extraordinaire – Gene Skogland

Volunteers are the heartbeat to the essential needs of our residents. Gene Skogland has volunteered at Wesley Willows for more than 25 years. He has never asked for recognition but it is time to share with you the dedication and commitment he displayed throughout the years. It is extraordinary!

Gene and Carolyn Skogland moved to an east side home at Wesley Willows on Dec. 15, 1995, from the Rockford community. Gene retired from O&H Foundry after 39 years and Carolyn worked hard as an at-home Mom raising two children. Carolyn passed away in 2016.

Gene started his volunteer career at Swedish American Hospital helping patients to their car by wheelchair. Gene did this for 26 years. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Gene stopped his volunteer work at the hospital.

While Gene was not at the hospital, he started volunteering his time with the Peddler's Cart at Wesley Willows. The Peddler's Cart is filled with sundries from the Arbor Gift Shop. Gene would walk the halls with the Peddler's Cart selling items to the residents. When Gene heard that a fellow resident, "Mrs. Johnson" would take the bus to get the supplies for the Arbor Gift Shop and Peddler's Cart, Gene offered to help get the items so Mrs. Johnson did not have to take the bus.

Soon Gene found himself clipping coupons, scouring the newspaper sale ads to find the best deals for the items being purchased. Gene even had the Walgreens staff and his neighbors saving him coupons! Gene would then go shopping once a week and generally shopped at 3 stores to purchase all the items needed.

Now, I don't want to leave out this detail, Gene faithfully would go to the Arbor fitness center 365 days a year to walk 8000 steps on the treadmill. After he walked, Gene checked on the Arbor Gift



Shop, checked on the supplies and stocked the shelves if needed.

Gene not only helped with the purchasing for the Arbor Gift Shop, but he also balanced the checkbook and made the deposits at the bank every Friday. There is another person that helped with the success of the Gift Shop and that person is Joyce Hart. Once a month after the Arbor Gift Shop "books" were audited, Gene would pick up Joyce at her home to make a deposit at the bank. Then they both would go to Gill's Diner for lunch and, for what they called their monthly business meeting.

Gene was asked, why did you give so much of your time and talents to the Arbor Gift Shop and Gene's response was: *"you always need someone to report to."* That is a wise statement!

Wesley Willows is very grateful for the time, effort, and dedication Gene gave to the success of the Arbor Gift Shop. Thank you, Gene!

With our next issue of Connections, we will share the story of Joyce Hart, Gene's volunteer partner.

(All proceeds from the Arbor Gift Shop go to the Good Samaritan Fund at Wesley Willows.)

Welcome Home

We are excited to have new individuals in our growing communities! (September 2021 – February 2022) We welcome these residents to our Wesley Willows and Peterson Meadows families where they will experience active and secure lifestyles for Seniors. It is a blessing to have them join us!

***This list does not include residents who wish to remain anonymous.**



Wesley Willows

Ann & Paul McNamara

Barbara Powell

Bart Wahlmark

Betty Miles

Brenda McGaw

Carol Schroeder

Carol Sheridan

Clarice Lewandowski

David Miller

David & Martha Pippitt

Dian Russo

Edward Leach

Jane Rees

Jim & Barbara Campbell

Karen & Gary McGraw

Priscilla C. Heath

Robert & Patricia A. Page

Shari Smallwood

Sue Pedersen

Virginia Lucas

Peterson Meadows

Joe & Sharyn Castrogiovanni

Kathy Reid

Brock & Karin Dorn

Bob & Susan Morgan

Dominic & Phyllis Miccolis

Herman & Judy Krunfus

Conversations with our Chaplain

“Encouragement for the Journey”

Who doesn't love to feel a little encouragement? Today, I challenge you to think about what encourages you in your life and your journey of faith. We all need a little encouragement when the past few years, life has been so full of discouragement. I beseech you by the mercies of the living God to let His Word encourage your heart.

All the Apostle Paul's letters contain a beautiful balance between doctrine and duty and the book of Ephesians is the perfect example. The first three chapters address doctrine and our riches in Christ, while the last three chapters explain duty and our responsibilities in Christ as we continue our spiritual journey. In Ephesians 4:1-3, Paul shares these words with the church in Ephesus, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with

all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." What a wonderful and powerful word of encouragement! Paul's words exhort us to walk worthily with humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, love, diligence, and in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Remember, that you are a child of the living God, a member of His body sealed by the Holy Spirit. Your life reflects His glory to the world. Keep walking by faith and remind others that we have a greater hope through God our Father who is overall and works through all. My friends, continue living to encourage and to be encouraged! "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns" (NLT, *Philippians 1:6*).

Wesley Willows Chaplain Ministry



Rev. Thomas DeWitt, M.Div, BCCS
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Rev. Allen J. Shuler, Jr., M.Div
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Coffee, Conversations, and Connection

Let's have a cup and catch up!

For the last couple of years getting together with one another to enjoy a cup of coffee and some conversation proved to be a little challenging during times of COVID-19. Paula and Kathleen in the Fund Development Department had the desire to connect with residents informally just to talk and say HI!



The Fund Development Department started having **Coffee, Conversations, and Connection** time once a month in the driveway, (outdoors and with masks on for safety.) We saw familiar faces, as well as new ones, come to meet fellow residents and just “get out” a bit. There was no agenda, we just wanted to provide a space where we could gather and connect again.

“It brought us joy to see new residents meeting other residents for the first time and the welcoming feeling that was shared,” said Kathleen.

The date and times of this coffee talk were scheduled so that residents could come shop at Décor & More before or after visiting. It was a good way to bring traffic into the store and support Wesley Willows Auxiliary and the Good Samaritan Fund.

We are looking forward to getting out and starting our coffee time again this year!

Come by and say hi!

Upcoming Coffee Dates!

*April 20th @10am

*May 18th @10am

*June 15th @10am

For more information, contact

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Fund Development Coordinator

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FAMILY ESTATE PLANNING

Charitable Bequest A Gift from your Will or Trust

A bequest is the act of giving or leaving something by a will. Anyone can make a bequest to a nonprofit, like Wesley Willows, through their will or Estate Plan. Donors can allocate a specific amount of money to give after they die, either in a lump sum or a percentage of their total wealth, or they can choose to give the remainder of their estate to Wesley Willows after all of their other expenses are paid.

Making a bequest to Wesley Willows will make you a member of the Robert Ash Legacy Society.



**To learn more about
bequests, contact**

Paula Capone
Fund Development Director
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paulac@wesleywillows.org

Wesley Willows is a non-profit 501-(c)-(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible.

Peterson Meadows – *John Bendixen*

We have a SUPER volunteer for the Rockford Community, John Bendixen! He is an inspiration and we thought we would share with you about John and his commitment to making life better for so many people.

John and Marilyn Bendixen came to Peterson Meadows two years ago from the Rockford area. John retired from Rockford Manufacturing Group and Marilyn was a school teacher. Together they raised a son. During his long career in the sales and marketing field, he traveled all over the world – including Singapore and Brazil! John’s boss (who was also a mentor) not only encouraged the importance of physical fitness but also emphasized volunteerism.

John’s volunteer career began with the organization Big Brothers Big Sisters, a national one-on-one mentoring program for kids. For seven years, John would meet weekly with his “Little” to build confidence and give them all the support they needed. The two of them would often attend sporting events, play with their little toy soldiers and go to carnivals and fairs together. Some favorite memories were camping together at Lake Summerset.

As the result of corrective eye surgery, John had several pairs of glasses that he no longer needed. Instead of throwing them away, he wanted to donate them after having heard of a partnership between the Lion’s Club and the Center for Sight and Hearing glasses program.

He was invited to a lunch where he thought he was just going to drop off the glasses – but instead, he was invited to join the Lion’s Club International on the spot! He felt an immediate connection to the Club and their motto, “WE SERVE”, something that is well known to John’s heart. John has volunteered with Lion’s Club for almost 20 years, has received various awards, and served with pride in many respectful positions. He is still very active with the Club and enjoys participating in the Annual Rose Sale which also supports the Center for Sight and Hearing. Additionally, he picks up glasses from various drop-off centers that eventually are donated to the needy in Central America. One of John’s favorite memories is the Lion’s Club – Candy Days fundraising event. A gentleman gave John a very generous donation and referenced back to the feelings of when he was a young boy and “dirt poor”; Lion’s Club helped him out and this was his way of giving back. This memory helps reinforce John’s commitment to serving a wonderful organization for many years and for years to come.

As a result of his volunteer work and extensive business knowledge, John was invited to be on the Board of Directors for the Center for Sight and Hearing in Rockford, IL. As you’ve already read, John has had extensive involvement with this center throughout his life and was excited to continue his journey with them. He has now been with the center for five years and serves as a member of their Finance Committee.



John is also an active member of Westminster Church where he has served as an Elder and Deacon. He particularly enjoyed all the times delivering food baskets to the needy for the church, but these days, he enjoys watching church via YouTube.

Not to mention, with all that John has done with his career, family, and volunteer work, he still found time to accomplish 2,500 miles swimming for the Australian Crawl! Now that is a pretty amazing accomplishment!

Thank you, John,

for demonstrating what it means to **SERVE** and give back to the Rockford Community.

Make Wesley Willows your home: **815.316.1500**



Our Mission

We promote active secure lifestyles for Seniors through ongoing personalized care.

Our Vision

Wesley Willows will be the leader in providing exceptional programs, services and amenities for Seniors.

We are here to encourage each resident to remain independent and active; feel and be safe; and benefit from the programs and services that are tailored to meet their individual needs.

We empower residents to enjoy a lifestyle within a safe, secure environment where they may remain as active and independent as possible. Meeting their goals enables us to fulfill our mission.