

A MAGAZINE *from* UMRC & PORTER HILLS

# Community

*Special Edition:* A SPRING UPDATE FROM UMRC & PORTER HILLS CORPORATE AND FOUNDATIONS



Your Support keeps us  
**Growing!**

Enjoying the new Dr. Robert W. and Lynn H. Browne Rooftop Garden at Porter Hills Village – details on p. 3

# Team Member Support Services

## Fulfilling Dreams, Changing Lives

In November, the UMRC Foundation and Porter Hills Foundation launched a competitive **Scholarship** program for team members at Porter Hills, emulating the program started in 2014 at UMRC. Part of the **Team Member Support Services** fund, we are honored to award scholarships to team members at UMRC & Porter Hills – like Erica Pledger at Chelsea Retirement Community, and Elle Merrill at LifeCircles PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) in Holland. Hear how their scholarships have made a positive impact on their careers and the older adults they serve.

## Letter from Erica Pledger



Erica Pledger, BSN

I've always wanted to help people. Since I was a little girl, it has been my dream to become a nurse and follow in the footsteps of several of my family members, including my aunt who was a Director of Nursing.

For the last 2 ½ years, I have worked full-time as an LPN at Kresge Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center, where I provide care for older adults requiring long-term skilled nursing. I also work per diem at another nursing home, while attending Baker College full-time to complete my BSN degree.

As the mother of two growing sons, ages 7 and 11, it is a lot to keep up with, and college is expensive.

*The Team Member Scholarship program has been life-changing for my family and me.*

The opportunity for scholarships has allowed me to attend school and pay for classes, without worrying about paying my bills. It has been a four-year journey of working toward my Bachelor's degree in nursing, which I completed in December 2020! I am so thankful for the Team Member Scholarship program. Not only will my degree allow me to grow in my career, it has also given me the confidence and knowledge to help me better care for the wonderful residents who call UMRC & Porter Hills 'home.'

On behalf of my team members across the state who are also dreaming of a better future for themselves and their families, please join the UMRC Foundation and Porter Hills Foundation in growing the Team Member Support Services Fund. **Your generosity can literally change lives! ■**



*"The Team Member Scholarship is a huge contribution to my studies. It is strengthening my opportunity and helping fuel my passion for taking care of people and assisting the needs of others."* – Cassie Lockwood, Certified Nursing Assistant

## Letter from Elle Merrill



Elle Merrill, Registered Dietitian

**A**s the first full-time dietitian at LifeCircles PACE Holland, I am proud to offer the highest level of nutritional care to all our participants. It's important for me to make connections with people. I always wanted to work with older adults, and there is such a need for geriatric healthcare professionals. Then I discovered PACE. I can create my own programs, build relationships, and be creative and flexible in providing the best possible health outcomes for each PACE participant. It's a great place to be.

I am pursuing my graduate degree in Nutrition and Dietetics, thanks to the **Team Member Scholarship** I received in November.

Each day, my education supports my work with participants who have a variety of chronic diseases and individualized dietary needs. Having my graduate degree will greatly enhance my confidence and ability to make healthy recommendations for our participants, including sustainable weight loss, diabetes management, medical nutrition therapy, and more.

Engaging with participants in the LifeCircles Day Center is one of my favorite parts of my job, including working with the recreational therapy team to provide cooking demonstrations, prepare recipes together, and sample new foods. I also enjoy the opportunity to share healthy nutritional advice to my team members across UMRC & Porter Hills in my role as a Wellness Champion for the organization.

Thank you to the Porter Hills Foundation for this scholarship. It has made me feel super appreciated as a team member. I feel very supported. This degree will truly help me reach my highest potential. ■

**You can support success stories like Erica's and Elle's!**

To learn more about **Team Member Scholarships**, contact the UMRC Foundation at 734.433.1000 ext. 7502 or the Porter Hills Foundation at 616.577.2297.

# Dr. Robert W. Browne

Gift to Porter Hills Foundation Supports Team Member Scholarships  
and Names Rooftop Garden at Porter Hills Village

**D**r. Robert W. Browne's success in the fields of dentistry and business was influenced by many facets of his early life – from growing up with his hard-working grandparents during the Depression, to the discipline he learned as a 19-year-old serving in World War II. As a young man, Dr. Browne was driven to set and achieve goals and to serve others.

*“Gratitude holds no bias. It only seeks to return a kindness that someone chose to bestow on another.”*

Dr. Browne's quote illustrates his passion for giving back, whether to his hometown of Coldwater, Michigan; to his alma mater, the University of Michigan, where he graduated from dental school and earned an advanced degree in orthodontics; or to the Porter Hills Foundation in support of older adults and our team members who provide excellent care and service.

Last summer, Dr. Browne provided a generous gift which supports both the Porter Hills Foundation's **Team Member Scholarship** fund and the creation of the **Rooftop Garden** at Porter Hills Village, named for Dr. Browne and his late wife, Lynn.



Dr. Robert W. and Lynn H. Browne

“My parents have always been philanthropic and particularly interested in the pursuit of education,” says their son, Jim. “In addition, Porter Hills has taken care of many of my parents' friends. Dad has always been impressed with the care provided at Porter Hills, where he now lives. A gift that supports the educational pursuits and career goals of Porter Hills team members seems like a natural fit for my dad.” ■

# Hicks & Sarns Neighborhoods

## At Kresge Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center

Close friends Jack and Martha Hicks and Dick and Norma Sarns have recently taken their friendship to a new level – the second floor of the newly completed **Kresge Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center**, to be exact. Two households – one for traditional long-term care residents and one for those living with dementia – have been named in their honor for helping to make this project possible: Hicks' House and Sarns' Sanctuary.

“We have been personal friends for many years,” says Norma. “We love the idea of having such a mission-focused community named after us, and that we can be neighbors in perpetuity.”

Based on the Action Pact Household Model of culture change, this model of small household living embraces person-centered care, individual choices, and close personal attention, and includes common kitchen and living spaces that feel like home. “We’re honored to be part of such a beautiful concept,” says Martha.

Jack and Martha, long-time residents of Ann Arbor, have made their home at Chelsea Retirement Community for four years, as did Martha’s mother. “We could not have made a better choice,” says Martha. “It was true for my mom and true now.”

Dick and Norma, also of Ann Arbor, served for many years on the UMRC Foundation board and are the founders of NuStep. “With over 60 years in the healthcare field, our focus is on health and wellness,” says Dick. “That’s what we want our legacy to be.” ■



Dick and Norma Sarns



Jack and Martha Hicks



# Empowering Team Members and Valuing Their Gifts



**T**he UMRC Foundation and Porter Hills Foundation recently launched a joint mini campaign to raise funds for the **Team Member Support Services** program. These funds support competitive *Scholarships* and *Emergency Aid* for eligible team members.

“Our outstanding team members at UMRC & Porter Hills go the extra mile every day to make life the very best it can be for the older adults we serve,” says Wendy Brightman, President of UMRC Foundation and Porter Hills Foundation. “Our foundations are proud to offer these programs with the help of friends and donors.”

The UMRC Foundation launched a Scholarship and Emergency Aid program in 2014. “Since UMRC and Porter Hills affiliated in March 2019, many best practices have been shared throughout the organization and its foundations, including these programs for team members,” Wendy says. “We were delighted to emulate the Team Member Support Services program for our dedicated team members at Porter Hills in November 2020.”

In an industry that faces extreme challenges to retain its workforce, this program has proven its success with *71% of scholarship recipients since 2019 remaining actively employed at UMRC & Porter Hills. The average tenure among scholarship recipients is nearly four years.*

# Serving Those Who Serve Older Adults

*"I extend my deep appreciation for the kindness and generosity you have shown me. The people in this foundation are the real deal, full of compassion, generosity, and a desire to invest in the workforce of a much-needed organization in the growing senior population. Thank you for making me feel valued for the gifts I have to give."*

- Emergency Aid recipient

"Our compassionate culture and unique approach to empowering team members has resulted in UMRC & Porter Hills' lowest turnover and highest retention rates in the past five years," says Wendy.

Since 2014, over \$384,000 in educational scholarships have been awarded to 115 team members to pursue their career goals. More than \$91,000 in emergency aid has helped ease the burden of a temporary financial hardship for 119 team members.

*"Programs of this magnitude are virtually unheard of in senior living,"* Wendy says. "We are thrilled to provide these programs which benefit our team members and their families while helping to ensure consistent, high-quality care from loyal employees for the older adults we serve at UMRC & Porter Hills." ■



"I believe in lifelong learning, and this scholarship is helping me get there. What an amazing opportunity that supports team members and reflects the care of the organization!"

– Moriah Gumbert, Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) Compliance Coordinator, Thome PACE

To learn more about how your gift can make a difference for team members at UMRC & Porter Hills, visit  
[UMRCFoundation.UMRCPH.com](http://UMRCFoundation.UMRCPH.com)  
or [PorterHillsFoundation.UMRCPH.com](http://PorterHillsFoundation.UMRCPH.com).

# Ken and Arloa Vander Kolk

## The Gift of Love

**D**r. Ken and Arloa Vander Kolk made their retirement home at Cook Valley Estates. Generous and faithful, the Vander Kolks included Porter Hills in their giving as members of the Porter Hills Legacy Society. “They were the most gracious, grateful, positive people,” says their daughter, Judy. “The Benevolent Care Fund motivated their giving, but today, I believe they would be inspired by the Team Member Scholarship Fund for Porter Hills’ amazing team members, to honor them and help promote their healthcare careers.”



Ken and Arloa Vander Kolk

**YOU, TOO, CAN LEAVE  
A LASTING LEGACY!**

**A GIFT IN YOUR WILL TO THE UMRC  
FOUNDATION OR PORTER HILLS  
FOUNDATION:**

- ◆ Costs you nothing today ◆
- ◆ Makes a difference in the lives of older adults ◆
- ◆ Still allows you to take care of your family ◆

*“Thank you to the Porter Hills Foundation for my scholarship! The Team Member Scholarship program is a sign that the organization wants us to grow, too! I can grow here in my career!”*

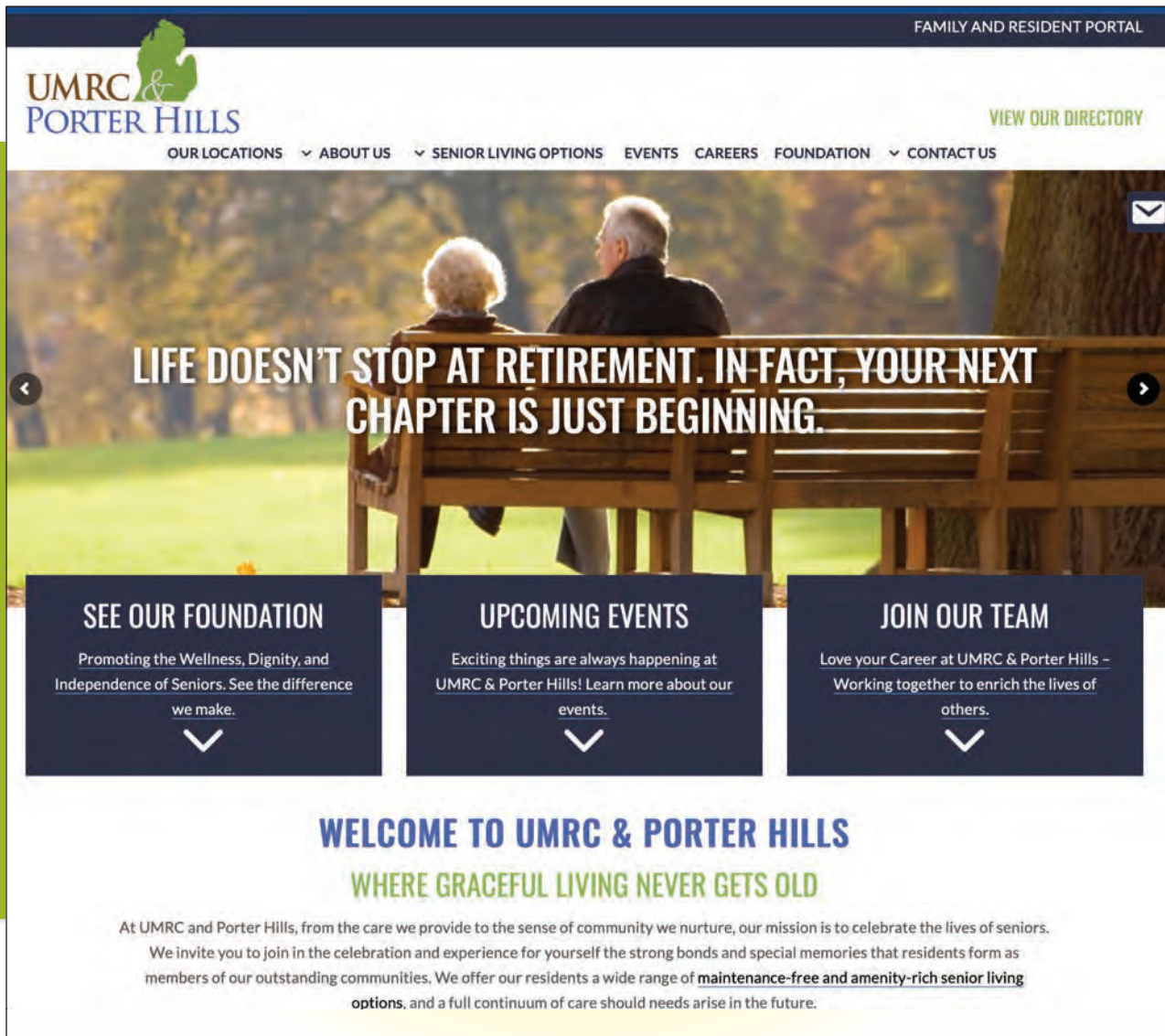
– Dee Sutawijaya, Porter Hills Village

For more information, visit

UMRCFoundation.UMRCPH.com  
734.433.1000 ext. 7502

PorterHillsFoundation.UMRCPH.com  
616.577.2297





**CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!**  
**WWW.UMRCPH.COM**

**Our new website creates a unified look and feel based on our two parent organizations, UMRC and Porter Hills!**

**It offers all the great content you found on our previous websites with some exciting updates. CHECK IT OUT!**

# Here Comes the Sun

As we marked one year since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UMRC & Porter Hills chaplains across the state shared a blessing to honor and thank all of our outstanding Healthcare Heroes and team members. We are grateful for our team members for all they have done, and continue to do, to keep older adults as safe and healthy as possible and to spread love and joy to all we serve.

*One year ago. We all remember when schools closed, churches went online, people died, and the pandemic shut us down. Everything changed. May you continue to know that in the midst of it all, you are not alone, and we are ever so grateful for your hard work and help along the way. God be with you.*

– Chaplain Julie Kilmer

God of us all, your love never ends. We pray for every member of our team as they seek to serve you through our ministry to our elders. Help us to continue to show your face through the faces of all our team. Continue to give us strength and courage every single day.

– Chaplain Melody P. Johnson

*Bless our team with inward peace and contentment, with patience and endurance, with love and tenderness, with grace and finesse.*

– Chaplain Eric C. Britcher

*Anniversaries of important events are sacred, whether the event brought happy or unhappy changes---or both. Change encourages us to remember that wherever we are, God is carrying us in this moment.*

– Chaplain LeAnn Seto

Gracious God, we pray for the health and safety of our UMRC & Porter Hills team members as they serve our precious elders. Give each of us strength to carry on, comforting tired and weary hearts.

– Chaplain Nancy Claus

*Like the stars and the moon light up the night sky, so does our light shine in the dark. Divine Love infuses us with light which means darkness cannot overcome. Keep your light shining.*

– Chaplain Deborah Geiger

There is a Basque proverb that says, “God is a busy worker, but loves to be helped.” To every employee at UMRC & Porter Hills, your caring work on behalf of the residents and their families, is a labor of great holiness. Thank you for all you do and may you be strengthened and blessed each day.

– Chaplain Tina Zimmerman ■

# Bringing Music into the Homes

## of UMRC & Porter Hills Residents



Prairie Cottages residents Linda and Charlie Britton, and their black lab, Ember, enjoy a concert in their living room.

To warm the hearts and cheer the souls of residents at UMRC & Porter Hills this winter, the UMRC Foundation partnered with Creative Washtenaw, based in Ann Arbor, to provide a virtual Concert Series from January through the end of March. This series was made possible thanks to support from the Elizabeth Loder Fund.

“COVID-19 has been so difficult for our residents to be isolated from friends and family members,” says UMRC Foundation and Porter Hills Foundation President Wendy Brightman. “We were thrilled to bring music and joy to the older adults we love and serve at UMRC & Porter Hills through this concert series

and grateful to the Loder family for making it possible.”

Artists, representing an array of genres and styles, recorded their concerts, and residents were able to view a new broadcast each week through their computers, tablets, or Smart TVs.

“Washtenaw County is home to many world-class performers and musicians, many who have been side-lined by COVID-19,” says Deb Polich, President and CEO of Creative Washtenaw. “We applaud UMRC and the Elizabeth Loder Fund for presenting this series and providing the joy of music to residents and artists, too!” ■





# Five Things That May Surprise You!

## UMRC & Porter Hills:

**1** Offers **24** distinct locations and service lines for more than **7,400** older adults of all income levels each year.

**2** Serves **sixty percent** of these older adults through our home- and community-based programs.

**3** Provides affordable living communities across Michigan, including Detroit's **first and only** affordable assisted living option, The Thome Rivertown Neighborhood.

**4** Helps nearly **1,000** low-income, nursing home-eligible older adults each year, across 15 counties, to live independently in their own homes and communities, thanks to our five PACE sites (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly).

**5** Employs over **1,200** team members across Michigan.

Watch for our UMRC & Porter Hills Summer Magazine to learn more! ■

**UNITED METHODIST RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES**

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**616.949.4975** | 3600 East Fulton Street | Grand Rapids, MI 49546



[UMRCPH.com](http://UMRCPH.com)