

A MAGAZINE *from* BRIO LIVING SERVICES

# Community

*Special Edition:* AN AUTUMN UPDATE FROM BRIO LIVING SERVICES AND UMRC-PORTER HILLS FOUNDATION

## Live Life *Joyfully!*



Vibrant Affordable Living Options Offer Joy and Care!



# In Faithful Service to Older Adults

A letter from Colleen Dolan-Greene, Brio Living Services board member and chair of the board's Affordable Housing Committee

One of the outstanding services that Brio Living Services provides to older adults across the State of Michigan is affordable housing. It was my pleasure to be invited to join the United Methodist Retirement Communities (UMRC) board just as our Thome Rivertown Neighborhood was under construction in Detroit ten years ago. Along with other senior living partner organizations, Rivertown provides affordable housing coupled with Medicare and Medicaid services to create truly affordable independent and assisted living, as well as an onsite PACE, or Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly. Combined, Brio's eight affordable housing communities and five PACE locations enrich the lives of more than 1,600 older adults annually across the state.

Our Fall 2022 **CommUnity** magazine features the important and faithful work we do to serve older adults through our Affordable Living communities and services. *We are proud to serve the most economically diverse population of older adults in the state!* Thirty percent of the total 8,000+ older adults we serve through all of our communities and service lines are low-income.

Thank you for your thoughtful support of our mission: welcoming all, partnering together, enriching lives. ■

Sincerely,



**Colleen Dolan-Greene**  
Brio Living Services Board

**"It's so important to be able to meet the housing needs of older adults of all income levels. You learn what people have gone through in their lives and how those circumstances led to where they are today. Affordable Housing provides a safe living environment for people to reside."**

– Debbie Steggles,  
Senior Director of Affordable Housing,  
Brio Living Services

## Lora Underwood: A Cheerleader for Health and Wellness

Since 2015, **Lora Underwood** has been offering health and wellness classes and activities for the residents living at **The Thome Rivertown Neighborhood Affordable Assisted Living** in Detroit. Lora offers classes two days a week for one hour each, including chair aerobics, strength building exercises, stretching, and flexibility.

“In general, I try to encourage as much movement as possible, so older adults can stay active and mobile,” says Lora. “They get really excited when we play music from their era. Activities with music, such as line dancing, help motivate movement.”

Upon retiring from the Michigan Court of Appeals after 36 years of service as a judicial assistant, Lora followed her passion for health and fitness by becoming a master trainer and program coordinator for the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan.

Chronic diseases such as arthritis and kidney disease can make movement more difficult, Lora says, but “if we keep moving, it helps. I understand the extra effort it takes to exercise for residents who are on dialysis, for example. I encourage them to work at their own pace and do what they can do. I say, ‘Challenge yourself and you’ll be surprised at what you can do. Your body will thank you.’”

Says Lora, “I enjoy my job, and I enjoy older adults. I love seeing the joy on their faces



Lora Underwood encourages health and wellness.

when we interact. It feels good to be part of their health and well-being. You have to have a heart for older adults; they can tell when you care. I’m their cheerleader.” ■

## Residents of Harvest Way in Sparta Share



Dori Johnson

**H**unky-dory” is an expression **Dori Johnson** of **Harvest Way** has used all her life. She combined her love of people and travel in a 22-year career as a travel escort for bus trips. She has visited every state in the Union (her favorite city is New Orleans), and she has traveled to Canada, England, and Switzerland. She retired at 72.

Dori lived with her only daughter, Lori, and her family until her daughter moved to Florida. Lori encouraged her mom to move to Harvest Way, so she wouldn't be by herself. Dori had already been attending Senior Neighbors Senior Center activities at Harvest Way, so she knew a lot of the people. Harvest Way has been her home for about a year.

*“The thing I like most about Harvest Way is the people,” says Dori.*

She likes to play games and participate in the activities, especially the trips that Senior Neighbors coordinates, like a recent bus trip to Grand Haven. “I also like not having to get out in the winter,” she adds. “They’re real sweethearts here. I’m very happy.”

**D**an Nuttall is originally from Casnovia, on the borders of Kent and Muskegon counties. He worked as a service technician, servicing molds for injection machines, for twenty years, but his real passion was for woodworking. He opened a shop in Newaygo where he did custom woodworking projects. “Anything the customer wanted,” says Dan.

Twice a widower due to cancer, Dan first moved to a for-profit retirement community with few amenities and no activities. Eventually, his sister, who lives near Sparta, suggested Harvest Way as an alternative. He’s happy to now have his own kitchen, activities to participate in, and coffee hour to socialize with others, while paying just a third of what his fee per month had been at the other community.



Dan Nuttall

*“It’s a good senior village,” Dan says of Harvest Way. “It’s a nice place for me.”*

## What Makes Their Community Special

**N**orma Taylor grew up in New York near Niagara Falls. When her sister's husband needed back surgery in 1970, Norma came to Michigan to help with their young children. "It was only supposed to be for a few months, but I never left," says Norma.

The middle child of six siblings, Norma never married. Instead she made a career of taking care of others and worked at Blodgett Hospital for 42 years, first as a nurse assistant, then unit secretary, and eventually worked in medical records.

Norma learned about Harvest Way when Jane Ringler of Senior Neighbors came to talk to a support group that Norma was involved with. When Norma sold her house, she only had one day to move out. She contacted Phil Hirschy, Harvest Way Community Manager, and there was an apartment available. Norma remembers, "It was right during Covid. I moved in on July 21, 2021 at 7:30 at night in 90 degree weather."

Norma used to live alone and her only outside world was going to church. "As soon as I moved in, they made me feel welcome. Living at Harvest Way has made me more social," says Norma, who is now involved with decorating the Harvest Way holiday tree each month and on the decorating committee for the monthly Senior Neighbors parties.



Norma Taylor displays her handiwork.

*"Before I felt like I was in a cocoon. I should have moved here a long time ago, as soon as I retired. Now I have companionship." ■*

# Giving Back, Sharing Talents

## Bailey's Grove Shoe Drive



Jan Bradley and Mary Rynbrand Collect Shoes.

**J**an Bradley has been a resident of **Bailey's Grove Affordable Living** community in Kentwood for almost five years. A few years ago, on a visit to the local cleaners, she learned about a charity that collects shoes and clothing and puts them to good use for people around the world.

"I thought this seemed like a worthy cause and an easy thing to do," says Jan, a retired cosmetologist of 53 years. Since then, the residents and team members of Bailey's Grove have donated countless pairs of shoes.

Mary Rynbrand, Service Coordinator at Bailey's Grove, delivers the shoes 2-3 times each year to the business. "We usually have a box filled to the brim with shoes," says Mary. "Our residents enjoy the opportunity to give back to others."

"We take shoes for granted in our country," says Jan. "It's so simple to clean your closet and make a difference in someone's life." ■

## The Pines Art Show



Diane Alexander shares her talent.

**I**n July, **The Pines Senior Apartments** in Chelsea held a resident art show, displaying their depth of artistic talent in a variety of mediums, including charcoal, painting, photography, and pottery. **Diane Alexander**, a Pines resident who volunteers as director of resident-led activities, organized the show. "We wanted people to bring their art, not just for art's sake, but because it's what they enjoy. We wanted to show off their work," says Diane, whose own art is inspired by her time living in Colorado. ■



"There is something so relaxing about working with your hands." – Judy Irwin

# “Find your passion, your interest, and let that be your cause.”

Debbie Steggles, Brio Living Services’ Senior Executive Director of Affordable Housing, follows these words in her career and in her giving to the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation.

**D**ebbie’s career began in the recreation field, but when she began to look for “a career stretch,” she came upon Cook Valley Estates where she became the director in 2000.

“I knew of Porter Hills because it’s where my husband’s grandmother wanted to move when she needed more care,” says Debbie. “She moved to Porter Hills Village Assisted Living at age 88 and lived there for almost ten years. Knowing about the safety net of **Benevolent Care** was a blessing, and she did receive assistance in her later years.”

Debbie’s commitment to giving back began at that time through her Payroll Deduction gifts to the (then) Porter Hills Foundation. “I believe in paying back what you get,” she says. “John’s grandmother was a great example of how the Benevolent Care Fund was there when she needed it.”



John and Debbie Steggles

When the Foundation’s **Team Member Support Services Fund**, including Scholarships and Emergency Aid, was launched for team members on the west side, Debbie began to support both funds. “When you see how the Emergency Aid Fund is there for your employees, it’s very meaningful. It makes you want to help refill that bucket.” ■

To learn more about how you can make a difference in the lives of the older adults we serve, and our team members, visit

[www.Foundation.UMRCPH.org](http://www.Foundation.UMRCPH.org).

# UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation Provides Life-changing Support

**A**n important part of **Leah Tremaine's** job as the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation Office Manager (west) is coordinating the Foundation's **Emergency Aid Fund**, which provides limited assistance in times of crisis for our family of Brio Living Services team members.

Leah is a woman of deep faith. As a cancer survivor, she remembers how her church rallied around her as she faced her treatments. "This outpouring of love from my church family really shaped who I am," says Leah.

It's why she enjoys this part of her work. For our team members, their emergencies run the gamut – from unexpected car repairs caused by hitting a deer, to more serious emergencies such as a house fire or death in the family. In every case, the Foundation's Emergency Aid Fund is there to help.

"We work with the team member as much as possible," Leah explains. "When it is a dire emergency, we work with the Finance team to get a check cut immediately, or we have provided Meijer gift cards to care for a family in immediate need. Generally, a team from the Foundation and HR will review the emergency aid request and supporting documentation and, once approved, Finance prepares a check to pay the vendor directly."



Leah Tremaine

**The Foundation provided nearly \$29,000 last year in Emergency Aid for team members in times of crisis, and over \$131,000 since the program began in 2014.**

"I don't know of any other place that does this," says Leah. "It's an amazing sense of joy when you know you're helping someone who is in great need. Being able to help in a crisis moment in their lives brings tears to my eyes. It is life-changing." ■

## Erin Johnson: Team Member Scholarship Recipient

**E**rin Johnson is a Resident Aide in Porter Hills Village's Assisted Living and Memory Care Center and a recent graduate of Grand Valley State University with a major in allied health science. This fall, she begins an Accelerated Second-Degree program to earn her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (BSN) – thanks to *your support* of the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation's **Team Member Scholarship** program.

"I was elated to learn I was selected to receive a UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation Scholarship, and I am endlessly grateful for your support," says Erin. "Thanks to your donation, I can fulfill my lifelong dream of becoming a nurse."

Combined with her studies, Erin has worked at Porter Hills Village for a year, working every other weekend, first shifts, and picking up hours when she doesn't have class. "Working at Porter Hills Village is good practical experience for me," says Erin.

Her scholarship from the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation is taking a big weight off her shoulders, helping her focus more on her classes and less on how to pay for them. She also continues in her role as a Resident Aide, where she loves getting to know the residents.

"For me, personally, I have an older family, and my grandparents passed away when I was younger," Erin explains. "Now I have so



Erin Johnson celebrates her graduation.

many grandparents with the residents I serve. Hearing their stories and life lessons is super special to me."

For those considering a career working with older adults, Erin is enthusiastic: "I would tell them to 100% go for it! I have loved my experience. Originally, I had considered pediatrics, but working with older adults has changed my viewpoint. Keep your options open!" ■

*Music, music, music!*

## The UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation Hosts Summer Concerts



Frank's Food Truck



Sandy and Bruce Moore



A wave from the tuba player

**T**he UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation is grateful to our donors, including those who have given to the **John Thorhauer Legacy Fund**, for blessing our residents with the gift of music this summer! Residents at our Cook Valley Estates, Chelsea Retirement

Community, The Cedars of Dexter, and Porter Hills Village campuses have all enjoyed some summertime treats, food truck fare, as well as toe-tapping live music! The smiles on their faces tell the story! ■



Smiles from Porter Hills Village



Grand Rapids Symphony



River Raisin Ragtime Revue



Sam's Swing Band entertains



Ken Fourn's Little Big Band



Karol Morris enjoys the concert



# A Fresh Start to Your Retirement!



In recent years, Brio Living Services has invested in our locations that serve so many across the state:

- Chelsea Retirement Community Art Studio and Dining Room
- Porter Hills Village common spaces
- The Cedars of Dexter patio
- Meadowlark exterior building improvements
- Huron Valley PACE & Thome PACE expansions

...and much more!

*The best is yet to come!*



*Come in for a tour and see for yourself!*

**LEARN MORE AT [www.MyBrio.org](http://www.MyBrio.org)**



# UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation Shows Gratitude for YOU!

**T**he UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation wishes to thank all who attended and sponsored our pair of *Giving Gratitude* events this fall, including our Lead Sponsor, Rose Pest Solutions! All proceeds provide support where needed most to help older adults live their best lives! ■

