

## Feelings of Renewal—Family Members Receive COVID-19 Vaccinations Together

Since Bethesda began vaccinating its residents and staff members in December, many have shared a desire to keep their loved ones and communities safe, and hopefully return to a normal life soon, as reasons for their excitement.

A few lucky ones, however, were also able to witness their loved ones receive the vaccine. In fact, Bethesda Southgate employees **Shelley Whisler**, who works in human resources, and her daughter **Alexa Whisler**, a registered nurse, received their vaccines together.

Shelley says she felt excited and proud to get vaccinated. Alexa said that after the quick needle

prick of the vaccine, she felt like she could breathe again. Both have subsequently received their second vaccine.

“After taking care of COVID patients and watching them overcome it against all odds, I’m excited to see our residents getting vaccinated,” Alexa says. “I also felt lucky to get the vaccine alongside my Mom in a place so special to both of us.”

At Bethesda Orchard, mother-son front desk receptionists **Julie** and **Tyler Hoppe** were seated side by side to receive their vaccinations at the same time.

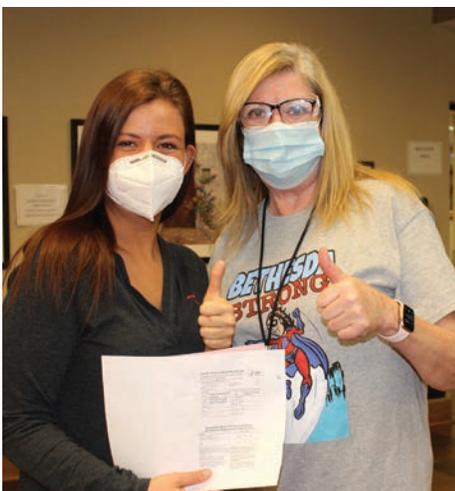
Julie says it was a special experience to get vaccinated alongside her son, and says she feels excited for a future beyond the pandemic.

Tyler says he’s hopeful that with all of the increased precautions and quick vaccination rollout from Bethesda, things will be able to return to normal soon.

“From my seat at the front desk, I’ve seen residents start to feel isolated,” Tyler says. “They’ve told me how safe Bethesda has made them feel during this scary time.”



**Tyler and Julie Hoppe** were the first employees at Bethesda Orchard to receive their vaccine.



**Alexa and Shelley Whisler** celebrate getting their COVID-19 vaccines at Bethesda Southgate.

Shelley and Alexa agreed that Bethesda has stayed ahead of the curve with continuous and frequent updates throughout the pandemic, as well as staying on top of vaccine availability.

“I’m proud of how the pandemic is being handled and how quickly our staff and residents were able to get vaccinated,” Shelley, a 20-year employee with Bethesda, says. ■

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## Klingler Elected as Bethesda Board Chair

**Kevin Klingler**, former President, Pharmaceutical Services, Biomedical Systems Corp. and a Bethesda Board member since 2014, has been elected Chair of Bethesda's Board of Directors for 2021.

Prior to assuming the position of Board Chair, Kevin has served the Board both as Treasurer and Vice Chair.

Kevin replaces **John Rowe**, who completed his second term as Board Chair in 2020. John also served as President & CEO of Bethesda from 1998-2010. John was elected Secretary of the Board of Directors for 2021.

"John's most recent tenure as Board Chair has included the celebration of our 130th anniversary and addressing the



**Kevin Klingler**



**Patrick Rooney**

numerous issues and challenges that arose as a result of the coronavirus pandemic," said **Joe Brinker**, President & CEO. "We thank him for his leadership and commitment as Chair for the past three years and in particular during this critical time of dealing with the pandemic.

"Kevin's experience and leadership will serve Bethesda well as we continue fighting the

pandemic and look forward to fewer restrictions for our residents, patients and families," Joe added.

New to Bethesda's Board of Directors in 2021 is **Patrick Rooney**, Retired Senior Vice President of Health Plans for Centene Corporation. "We are pleased Pat has joined the Board, and look forward to his fresh perspective on the challenging issues Bethesda faces," said Joe.

Joining Kevin, John and Joe as officers of the 2021 Board of Directors are **Gary Mayes**, Vice Chair; and **Jackie Yoon**, Treasurer. Joining Pat as members of the 2021 Board of Directors are **Jim Esther, M.D.**; **Phil Hutchison**, **Mike Keller**, **Dale Meier**, **Susan Moore**, **Mark Reifsteck**, and **Colleen Wasinger**. ■

## Dilworth HR Manager Shaves Beard to Celebrate Vaccine Milestone

For nearly 10 years, **Alex Reynolds**, Bethesda Dilworth's Human Resources Manager, has had some type of facial hair.

"From a goatee to a mustache, to my beloved beard, I hadn't been clean-shaven since 2011," Alex says.

Serving others is something Alex is even more passionate about than his facial hair. He's spent most of his career in healthcare, and enjoys his current role because he gets to focus on fun and creative ideas to keep his co-workers engaged and in high spirits.

Alex and his colleagues have experienced the stress and uncertainty of the last year firsthand.

"COVID-19 has affected every single one of us," says Alex.

"Receiving this vaccine meant doing our part to protect one another, our residents and our community at large."

Alex brainstormed ways to incentivize his Dilworth co-workers. "We were doing raffles and gift card giveaways, and then one of my co-workers (Senior Director of Nursing **Michele Kimball**) asked if I would shave my beard if our community reached its vaccination goals," Alex says. "At first I was really hesitant, but I realized if it helped get more people vaccinated, it would definitely be worth it."

On Feb. 3, in front of nearly a dozen eager spectators joining him outside and even more watching from inside, Alex sat in the courtyard and had his beard shaved by his barber. A video of the event can be seen on



**Alex Reynolds** before and after shaving his beard in honor of Bethesda Dilworth's vaccine progress.

Bethesda's YouTube channel and the Bethesda Dilworth Facebook page.

"I do miss my beard, but I'm really proud of the Dilworth community for showing up and getting vaccinated," says Alex. "We can all say we did our part to keep each other and our community safe and healthy, which is a great feeling." ■

## Independent Living during COVID-19: Residents Find Comfort at Bethesda

When the COVID-19 pandemic first reached the St. Louis area, many senior living residents were fearful of contracting the virus, as national headlines detailed what was happening in other cities.

**Bill and Noreen Pistrui** moved into Bethesda Terrace on January 8, 2020, a mere two months before the widespread quarantine began.

**Kristi and David Grabe**, Bill and Noreen's daughter and son-in-law, helped them search for independent living apartments. They viewed numerous communities but were instantly impressed with the team and accommodations at Bethesda Terrace.

"From the folks at the front desk to meeting with **Andrea Tripp** and **Marie Bartels**, we instantly felt comfortable with the team," Kristi says. "We were so impressed with the beautiful apartments and community activities; I knew it was the best place for my parents."

Noreen says she enjoys the great food and salon services, and Bill started attending happy hours and meeting people within the community pre-pandemic.

Once the pandemic hit, however, visitation restrictions were immediately put in place by Bethesda leadership, and Kristi was no longer able to visit her parents in person. She says Andrea gave her great peace of mind by transparently answering her questions and staying up to date on COVID-19 protocols to keep the Bethesda Terrace community safe.



**Bill and Noreen Pistrui**

**"I feel that my parents have been safer at Bethesda than they would have been in a single apartment, and the quality of their lives has improved tremendously."**

—Kristi Grabe, daughter of Bill and Noreen Pistrui

Kristi says the prescription deliveries and transportation to health appointments also helped her feel at ease, knowing her parents' needs were being met. She was able to drop off groceries and, when it was safe, visit her parents outdoors in the summer.

In May, Noreen came down with pneumonia and was hospitalized for 10 days. After she was discharged from the hospital, Noreen underwent her rehab at Bethesda Southgate, a decision Kristi says was key to her swift recovery.

"Her experience in rehab has given her back her true golden years," Kristi says. "Even her

other doctors have commented on how her health and physical stamina have improved since this therapy."

"The rehab was lifechanging for me," Noreen says. "Before coming to Bethesda, I used a wheelchair. After leaving rehab, I have been able to walk on my own with a walker."

When the vaccine became available, Bill says he was impressed with Andrea's dedication to get all the paperwork in order so their community could be among the first to receive the vaccine.

"I feel so relieved now that we are both fully vaccinated," Bill says. "We can start looking forward to the activities and socializing we have missed out on since the pandemic began."

Noreen says she can't wait to take part in bridge games and sing-alongs at Terrace. She is also eager to try new restaurants and go to the St. Louis Art Museum, two activities she and Bill greatly enjoy.

For anyone considering moving into a Bethesda independent living community, Noreen says it is a comfortable and safe place where someone is always available to help. She says she would highly recommend Bethesda Terrace for the stellar staff, excellent food and transportation services.

"It has been a blessing to have my parents at Bethesda this past year," Kristi says. "I feel that they have been safer there than they would have been in a single apartment, and the quality of their lives has improved tremendously." ■

## Bethesda Classes Provide Opportunities for Career Advancement

**Shon Whigham** has been passionate about caring for others since she was a little girl.

"I always knew I wanted to work in a field that allowed me to take care of other people," says Shon, who works at Bethesda Southgate. "I became a certified nursing assistant (CNA) about 20 years ago, and have been working in the health care industry in different positions since then."

As a CNA, Shon would assist residents with dressing, cleaning and eating their meals. She says she has enjoyed the time she's spent getting to know her residents over the last six years.

"I loved my job, but I started feeling the desire to further my career," Shon says. "I was referred to take part in Bethesda's certified medication technician (CMT) training and insulin

certification course about a year ago, but finally made the leap a few months back."

The availability of additional CMTs are appreciated by members of the nursing management team. **Michele Kimball**, Senior Director of Nursing at Bethesda Dilworth, says she is always looking for opportunities that will allow her staff members to grow and develop in their positions.

"Often times, because their position is entry-level, some CNAs begin to feel stagnant in their career. I feel it's a DON's job to recognize the CNAs who go above and beyond in their roles every day," Michele says. "I look for those with a close attention to detail and a true passion about what they do, then I suggest they take part in Bethesda's CMT training and insulin certification course."

The six-week course is sponsored as part of Bethesda's Career Ladder program, which offers team members a chance to develop their skills and careers. There is no out-of-pocket expense for those who participate, and upon earning their CMT certification they also receive a salary increase.

Shon's new role comes with more responsibility, which she feels prepared to handle thanks to the CMT training and insulin certification course.

"I can't stop bragging about the program to my co-workers," Shon said. "It was so well done, the teacher was incredible, and they were always willing to accommodate my work schedule at Southgate."

After completing the course, participants can officially administer medication and insulin to residents as a certified CMT.

"Now, I'm able to help our residents in a different way than before, which is what this was all about for me," Shon says. "I want to do everything in my power to care for our residents to the best of my ability."

"Bethesda is passionate about seeing our employees succeed in every aspect of their careers and giving them the resources to grow whenever possible," says Michele. "When you have smart, dedicated and caring employees, the whole operation runs smoother." ■

### Harp Receives Nursing Award



**Shelby Harp, RN**, a case manager at St. Andrews & Bethesda Home Health, was named the 2020 Nurse of the Year, Community Skilled

Nursing, by the local chapter of the March of Dimes.

"The March of Dimes Nursing Awards are among the most prestigious in the St. Louis area, and all of us at Home Health and throughout Bethesda are thrilled that Shelby's commitment to excellence and dedication to the residents and patients we care for was recognized with this award," says **Missy McAuley, RN**, Director of St. Andrews & Bethesda Home Health. ■



**Shon Whigham**, CMT at Bethesda Southgate, administers medication to resident **Marie Box** while **Mystee Ward**, CMT, observes.

## Life at Bethesda—Holiday Celebrations!

While CDC guidelines are still in place throughout Bethesda communities, safe celebrations were able to happen these past couple of months for Valentine’s Day and Mardi Gras!

If you would like to see more photos, please visit the Bethesda Facebook pages listed on page 8.



Bethesda Hawthorne Place



Bethesda Meadow



Bethesda Gardens



Bethesda Southgate



Christian Extended Care and Rehabilitation



Bethesda Orchard



Barnes-Jewish  
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Bethesda Corporate Office

## Thank-You Letters

(Editor's note: It seems that we often find ourselves on the receiving end of some wonderful letters written by family of residents or residents. We are very appreciative of these letters, and thought that we would share a few of them.)

I want to take this opportunity to express how thankful I am to have had two wonderful individuals care for me during my stay here at Bethesda Dilworth, **Ms. Stephanie Williams** and **Ms. Lisa Orange**.

I have been in rehab for more than two months. Not being able to see family and friends has been lonely, scary and hard to cope with. These young ladies have gone above and beyond to take excellent care of me. They treated me as though I was their own mother, not one complaint.

I received the news over the phone that a dear friend and co-worker passed away from COVID-19. You can imagine the hurt I felt not being able to be there for her or her family, but Stephanie and Lisa were there to comfort and support me.

I don't know of any other way to express my appreciation and gratitude to Stephanie and Lisa other than to share how wonderful they have taken care of me and to thank them for being so caring and amazing. These two ladies made these past few months a pleasant stay for me at the Bethesda Dilworth Rehab Center.

Dear **Joe** (Brinker, Bethesda President & CEO),  
I wanted to tell you how much we appreciated the love and care that our son was given at Bethesda Meadow. It meant more to us than we will ever be able to express.

Our thanks to **Tom Miskle** and **Susan LeBar** for making the transfer to Meadow from another facility easier for us. As a family with previous experience with Bethesda, having him at Meadow was reassuring and felt like "coming home."

The staff did everything they could to provide for his needs and individualize his care as much as possible. Ironically, being placed in a "nursing home" had long been a very real fear for him—and I think he got the best care in years and made many friends that were almost like family.

We also cannot say enough good things about the Hospice team we had; **Linda, Laurel, and Julie**. They not only took great care of him but were wonderful about communicating with us. Being able to visit those last three days was very helpful and they were so supportive.

We are grateful for every person there who touched his life and for the leadership that continues to instill the true mission of Bethesda. Seeing that played out every day is what sets Bethesda apart. Thank you!

Dear **Michelle** (Glass, Bethesda Corporate Vice President, Senior Living and In-Home Services),

I would like to compliment the management staff at Bethesda Orchard, particularly **Todd Meury**, on your constant efforts to prevent the intrusion of the virus into our environment.

Without Bethesda's efforts, I should have caught the virus by now. Your constant updating of protocols to reflect latest health regulations has kept us safe, while costing your staff extra work and expense.

Despite this difficult year, my resident neighbors continue to be upbeat and supportive. I am proud and thankful that when I looked for senior housing, I chose Bethesda Orchard.

## Did You Know...

... that Bethesda is once again participating in Give STL Day, the 24-hour online giving initiative sponsored by the St. Louis Community Foundation to expand charitable giving and strengthen the presence of charitable organizations? It takes place on **May 6**. Early giving begins April 5. Go to [www.givestlday.org/bethesdahealth](http://www.givestlday.org/bethesdahealth) between then and May 6 to participate.

... that Bethesda Hospice Care is again honoring our Vietnam War Era Veterans in recognition of National Vietnam War Veterans Day on March 29. Coverage of the activities, which will include care packages and a virtual panel presentation, will be shared in a future edition of the *Pulse*. ■

## BETHESDA

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## Social Media Platforms Provide Numerous Resources for Loved Ones

These unconventional times are causing many of us to use social media more than ever to keep up with our senior loved ones. For those interested in "following Bethesda," we are active in many platforms:

 [facebook.com/BethesdaHealthGroup](https://www.facebook.com/BethesdaHealthGroup)

 [twitter.com/BethesdaHealth](https://twitter.com/BethesdaHealth)

 [youtube.com/user/BethesdaHealth](https://www.youtube.com/user/BethesdaHealth)

 [linkedin.com/company/bethesda-health-group/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/bethesda-health-group/)



In many cases, a community has its own Facebook page. Here are the links to those pages:

[www.facebook.com/BethesdaDilworth](https://www.facebook.com/BethesdaDilworth)

[www.facebook.com/BethesdaMeadow](https://www.facebook.com/BethesdaMeadow)

[www.facebook.com/BethesdaSouthgate](https://www.facebook.com/BethesdaSouthgate)

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(for all retirement communities except Village North)

*Thank you for your continued interest in Bethesda, and please "Like," "Follow" and "Share" the posts on our social media platforms!*