

# Pulse

A publication of Bethesda Health Group, Inc. • Summer 2025

Fostering successful aging through  
compassion and innovation



## The Glamorous Life

# McDonnell, Teibel Join Bethesda Board

Bethesda is happy to announce two new additions to the Board of Directors—**Veronica McDonnell** and **Samantha Teibel**.

Veronica, a registered dietitian for more than 30 years, currently works as the Grants Manager with a local non-profit. She has served

on numerous boards throughout her career, including the National Kidney Foundation, the St. Louis Art Museum and Missouri Baptist Medical Center, and founded a mental health nonprofit.

Sam works as the Global Product Management Director at Enterprise Mobility, where she oversees mobility solutions serving customers in more than 90 countries and territories. She also volunteers as a financial coach at the United Way of Greater St. Louis.

“We are very fortunate to have added two people to the Board with the skill and experience in strategic thinking as Sam and Veronica,” says **Joe Brinker**, President & CEO. “I



Veronica McDonnell



Samantha Teibel

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Joe Brinker, President & CEO

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In addition to Veronica, Sam and Joe, the 2025 Bethesda Board is comprised of **Jackie Yoon**, Chair; **Dale Meier**, Vice Chair; **Kevin Klingler**, Treasurer; **Phil Hutchison**, Secretary; and members **Dr. James Esther**, **Fred Falker**, **Mike Keller**, **Gary Mayes**, **Patrick Rooney** and **John Rowe**.

## Bethesda Board Leadership

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\*Former Board Chair

Scan to view a complete list of our leadership team and board members.



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## Bethesda Residents Shine in Glamour Portraits

This summer, residents at Bethesda Hawthorne Place and Bethesda Southgate channeled their “inner models” for a day of makeovers and glamour they won’t soon forget.

At Bethesda Southgate, the day had a playful, fashion-inspired flair. High school volunteers from Villa Duchesne teamed up with team members **Amanda Schlueter, Amy Votaw, Lori Buehler** and **Nicole Carter** to create imaginative looks for more than a dozen residents. Each participant was styled with costume jewelry, flowing fabric and elaborate headpieces handcrafted by Nicole. Decorative backdrops transformed the community room into a photo studio.

The Villa Duchesne students helped personalize each resident’s look and spent meaningful time chatting while getting them camera-ready. One resident—once a professional model—effortlessly slipped back into her old rhythm, striking confident poses for the camera.

“The day was so fun,” says Nicole. “We had music playing and the residents really enjoyed interacting with the students. We had several stick around after they had their photo taken, just to continue talking to the girls.”

At Bethesda Hawthorne Place, staff members brought the glam to life in a different way, turning the activity room into a beauty studio just in time for Mother’s Day. With hair, makeup and nails done by staff volunteers, the residents then had their pick of costume jewelry and fancy hats before sitting for their professional portraits.

“The residents were just glowing during the photos,” says **Erika Roedel**, Life Enrichment Coordinator at Bethesda Hawthorne Place. “When the ladies looked in the mirror to check themselves out, their smiles were just priceless.”

Erika also invited residents’ family members to join in the fun. A few jumped at the opportunity, including a mother and daughter who posed together, as did a couple on the cusp of celebrating their 68th wedding anniversary.

After the event, Erika shared the portraits with families and displayed them in residents’ rooms.

“One resident’s daughter stopped me in the hall to say how meaningful the experience was to her,” says Erika. “She said she couldn’t remember the last time she had a professional photograph of her mother, and she knew it was something she and her family would always treasure.”

*These smiles are indicative of all of the fun experienced by the residents at the “Glamour” photo shoot.*

Both communities are looking forward to hosting similar events in the future, and the Life Enrichment Coordinators have already started throwing out ideas for different themes to execute in the future.

“It’s just something nice we can offer our residents and I’m happy we can do that,” says Erika.



## Orchard Follies Sparkle on the Summer Solstice

On June 20, as the sun lingered on the longest day of the year, Bethesda Orchard residents thrilled a standing-room crowd with the 7th Annual Bethesda Orchard Follies.

And we mean standing room. Chairs filled 30 minutes before the show began, as residents gathered to cheer on their talented friends.

The show began with director **Rosemary Kurt** and co-director **Angie Heumann** performing a Black Velvet Line Dance. It was a great combination of humor and dancing talent, and a perfect way to get it started.

Angie later sang, as did **Michele** and **Vince Nicosia**, **David Bates**, **Marty Holland**, **Don Walsh**, **Fred Behm**, **Mabel Weigle** and **Faith Williams**. **Judith Giraud** and former resident **Judy Hewlitt** played the piano, **Pat Dineen** played the flute, and Vince played the guitar.

The event also featured two standout monologues. New resident **Jerry Sommer** delighted everyone with a light-hearted take on settling into life at Bethesda Orchard.

Then in a deeply moving moment, resident **Alice Flink** performed a monologue titled “I Was Home Schooled,” contributed a month before the event by longtime Follies participant and resident **Ann Cleeland**. Ann passed away just a week earlier, and the performance honored her legacy of humor and reflection.

Something new this year—members of the ensemble delivered Hee-Haw style puns throughout the show that left the crowd giggling and groaning.

A colorful new backdrop, generously donated by Commerce Color (whose mother **Marianne Croghan** is a resident), added flair to the performance.

“We get anxious the week before,” laughs Rosemary. “But when it’s showtime, we just have a good time.”

To see a video of the performance, scan here.



(Top photo) Director **Rosemary Kurt** (l) and co-director **Angie Heumann** get the 2025 Follies off to a toe-tapping start.

(Lower photo) Sonny (**Michele Nicosia**) and Cher (**Vince Nicosia**) return for an encore from the 2024 show.

## Bethesda Among Best Places to Work in St. Louis—Again!

For the 9th time in the last 13 years, Bethesda has attained the lofty achievement of being named one of the Best Places to Work in St. Louis.

And in 2025, Bethesda celebrated a third-place finish in its category (Giant Companies)—one of our highest finishes ever.

“They changed the criteria of our category to businesses and organizations with 750+ employees instead of 1000+, which made just finishing as a finalist that much more challenging,” says **Caprina Wakefield**, Senior V.P of Human Resources. “But once again, our team members were up to the task, as this honor reflects the passion and commitment they have for our residents and patients. We received this honor because of them.”

Congratulations to all Bethesda team members, for your part in making us consistently one of the Best Places to Work in St. Louis!



The team from Bethesda celebrates with our third-place award at the ceremony honoring the 2025 Best Places to Work category finalists and winners.



# Lights, Camera, Action: Bethesda Takes on TikTok

At Village North and Bethesda Terrace, the cameras are rolling—and the stars are residents with acting skills, spunk and surprisingly good dance moves. These two Bethesda communities have recently turned to an untraditional social media platform for this age group to engage their residents: TikTok.

What began as a lighthearted way to share glimpses of daily life with families has evolved into a powerful tool for challenging outdated assumptions about senior living. While Bethesda has long embraced other social media platforms, TikTok offers a fresh, creative way to showcase the reality of life in today's senior living communities.

"I meet a lot of people who don't really know the difference between nursing homes and independent living," says **Ashley Nelson**, Corporate Sales Counselor at Bethesda Terrace. "TikTok is a fun opportunity to show that our residents are living vibrant, meaningful lives—and that choosing a retirement community doesn't mean giving up your independence."

Very few residents have the TikTok app, but they love being part of the filming. In one recent video at Bethesda Terrace, Ashley and Life Enrichment Coordinator **Nikki Ross** invited residents to form a circle for a group dance. The result was joyful and unscripted.

"We showed them the inspiration video, and they all thought it was so funny," says Nikki. "We didn't have any music, so they were just dancing to their own beat. We filmed it right after happy hour, so a lot of them got involved, and



**Ashley Nelson** shows resident **Jo Manion** the latest Bethesda Terrace TikTok video—starring Jo Manion!

it became our most viral video yet with more than 250,000 views and 13,000 likes!"

At Village North, curiosity is growing. A few residents have started inquiring about the app and the process for making videos—and some have even started downloading TikTok themselves!

"We have two residents that absolutely love making the TikToks," says **Adrienne Loyd**, Life Enrichment Coordinator at Village North. "They're very interested in the process, always asking me how I edit videos and add voiceovers."

Adrienne has started hosting watch parties for the residents, complete with popcorn, where residents can gather to watch the posted videos from both communities and discover popular trends themselves.

And it's not just the residents who are enjoying the results—families are tuning in, too.

"I love when families see the videos, because it shows them that we're having fun here," says Adrienne. "It reassures them that their family member is in a place where they're supported, valued and enjoying life."

The TikTok accounts have also sparked interest beyond current residents and families. Both communities have seen an increasing number of followers and plenty of positive feedback. In some cases, touring families have mentioned seeing Bethesda on TikTok.

"One viewer even commented on a recent video, 'When I retire, I'm coming to Village North!'" says Adrienne.

Scan these codes to see more videos.

Bethesda Terrace



Village North



**Adrienne Loyd** films a quick TikTok video of the Village North residents doing the wave—in the middle of Bingo!



# Bethesda Gets Soaked and Steps Up for ALS

Bethesda's Clinical Reimbursement Department made a splash at several of the Bethesda communities this June by participating in the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge and joining the Walk to Defeat ALS at Forest Park.

The events were inspired in part by **Annie Kramer**, MDS Coordinator at Bethesda Southgate, whose family has twice been affected by ALS. The father of her children died just eight months after his diagnosis, and 13 years later, her fiancé, Greg, was also diagnosed.

"It nearly did me in," she says. "It was the hardest nursing job

(L-R) **Jennifer Francis**, **Tamara Lee** and **Annie Kramer** celebrate the end of the Bethesda Southgate Ice Bucket Challenge!



**Annie Kramer** (far right) laughs hysterically as **Jennifer Francis**, MDS Coordinator, gets drenched at the Bethesda Southgate Ice Bucket Challenge.

I've ever done in my life. But I had tremendous support here at Bethesda."

Bethesda Southgate, Bethesda Dilworth, Christian Extended Care & Rehabilitation, Alton Memorial Rehabilitation & Therapy and Memorial Care Center hosted Ice Bucket Challenge events with a fun twist. At each site, brave team members volunteered to be drenched in ice water. At Bethesda Southgate, the honor of dumping the bucket went to the person who

purchased the most tickets for each participant—earning bragging rights, a commemorative t-shirt, and the chance to pour a full 5-gallon bucket of icy water. All other ticket buyers were entered into drawings for themed gift baskets.

Annie had one good-natured request before getting soaked: "Just do it fast. Get it over with," she laughed. She came prepared to dry off in style—with a tea towel that read "Suck it up, buttercup" and a giant beach towel to keep her warm.

"It warms my heart to help my coworkers," says **Tamara Lee**, Annie's longtime friend and Director of Clinical Reimbursement. "We're all like family."

Thousands gathered at Forest Park on June 28, including Annie's Team "The Dirty Two-Timers," for the citywide ALS walk. Through both the walk and ice bucket challenge, Bethesda participants helped raise more than \$2,200 to support ALS research and care.

## Welcome to the Foundation, Marianna!



**Marianna Malecek** has joined the Bethesda Health Group Foundation as the Development Assistant. In this role, she will be supporting **Linda Sanders**, Corporate VP and Director of Development, and **Claire Luna**, Event Manager, with a number of BHG Foundation initiatives.



# Life at Bethesda!

Beautiful weather provided many opportunities for our residents to get out and enjoy St. Louis! To see more photos, please scan this QR code and access all our Facebook pages.



- 1 This group from Bethesda Barclay House was all smiles as they enjoyed a cruise down the Missouri River on Miss Augusta!
- 2 What can be better than a trip to the winery? Based on the smiling faces of the residents of the Oaks at Bethesda, there's nothing better than relaxing with friends at Defiance Ridge Vineyards.
- 3 **Bobbi and Bob Boley** are enjoying the party by Bethesda Barclay House pool...and the nice, cool watermelon!
- 4 Bethesda Orchard resident **Harry Beck** demonstrates the proper way to grill a hot dog—and thanks to Harry and other BBQ “masters,” many were enjoyed at the first Orchard barbecue of the season.
- 5 Look who was in the crowd at recent St. Louis Cardinals game! Village North residents **Marguerite Lee, Valery Lewis, Georgetta Stewart and Mary Wellington** took a second to pose for a photo before turning back around and rooting for the Redbirds.
- 6 Thanks to the Management team at Alton Memorial Rehabilitation & Therapy, who stopped by Alton Memorial Hospital to donate stuffed animals collected by staff for the hospital's Toy Drive.



## Did You Know...

... that Bethesda Hospice Care's annual Memorial Event will take place at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 13 at 1333 W. Lockwood Ave., across the street from Mary Queen of Peace?

The free event, which is replacing the Kayman 5K, will include a Memorial ceremony, the Remembrance Ribbon Wreath, and grief care activity stations. Call 314-373-7041 for more information.

... that two Bethesda employees have continued the organization's long history of winning awards at the LeadingAge Missouri Conference?

... that at least one Bethesda team member (and maybe more) will receive the Mary June King Scholarship, which is to be used to help the recipient pursue schooling to help further their Bethesda careers?

We'll share information on these stories and plenty of others in the Fall 2025 edition of the *Pulse*.

# BETHESDA

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## Hearts for Our Homes: A Way to Help Our Residents in Need

A long-time Bethesda tradition, the Hearts for Our Homes campaign raises vital funds so that Bethesda residents who have outlived their financial resources can remain living in their Bethesda home.

Every year, during the months of May and June, hundreds of

donations are received from Board members, residents and their families, Bethesda staff and individuals in the Greater St. Louis community.

Many Bethesda communities hold special fundraisers, such as bake sales and raffle basket sales,

block parties, happy hours and BBQs, specifically for this campaign.

"It's one of my favorite times of the year," says **Linda Sanders**, Corporate VP and Director of Development. "The entire Bethesda family comes together to help our most vulnerable residents. No gift is too small (or too big!), and every gift is appreciated."

Together, more than \$127,000 was raised for Bethesda residents in need. To learn more about Hearts for Our Homes, call 314-800-1916 or email [celuna@bethesdahealth.org](mailto:celuna@bethesdahealth.org)

And to everyone that supported Hearts for Our Homes this year, thank you!

*The residents at The Oaks never miss a chance to dance at the annual Hearts for Our Homes block party.*



For more information  
about the Bethesda  
Foundation, scan here.

