

# Pulse

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Fostering successful aging through  
compassion and innovation

## Bethesda Embraces Life's Special Moments



# Bethesda Hospice's "Annual Memorial" Proves to Be a Huge Success

It's safe to say there is some concern any time a transition takes place from an event like the Kayman 5K to a new, more reflective way to remember a loved one, but **Julie Strassman** and her Bethesda Hospice Care team members need not have worried.

More than 50 people attended the updated Bethesda Hospice Care "Annual Memorial," which featured a special memorial ceremony and interactive grief stations to remember loved ones who have passed away.

The grief stations included areas for meditation, journaling and a quote wall, where participants could share a memory of their loved one or a favorite quote. Trained grief support volunteers were available to listen and provide support. A self-care station offered do-it-yourself lavender sachets, hand pressure-point massage and chocolate.

Like in previous memorial events, participants wore ribbons featuring their loved ones' names and placed them on the Memorial Ribbon Wreath. During the ceremony, the names were read aloud by **Melissa Helmkamp**, Hospice Volunteer Coordinator.

"For a first effort, we were very pleased with the way the event turned out," says Julie, Bethesda Hospice Care's Manager of Support Services. "The feedback from the attendees was very positive, and we already have some ideas on what we should include for next year."



**Amanda Stutz** pins her ribbon onto the Memorial Ribbon Wreath at the first-ever Bethesda Hospice Care "Annual Memorial."

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# The “Thrilling” Life of Bill Hunt

Jumping out of airplanes, driving in race cars going nearly 200 miles per hour, or parasailing in Key West—just another average day for Village North Retirement Community resident **Bill Hunt**.

Bill’s self-proclaimed “need for speed” started at an early age. At 15, while other kids were shooting hoops or running bases, Bill was chasing the thrill of drag racing. After serving in the Army in the 1970s, he took his passion to the next level, buying his own sprint car and dominating races across the country.

When it came time to hang up his racing gloves, Bill didn’t slow down—he just shifted gears, working for well-known professional racing organizations Team Penske and John Force Racing, traveling the globe and getting paid to fuel his love for speed.

His adrenaline streak wasn’t limited to cars. Bill logged nearly 10,000 miles a year on his motorcycle. Riding was more than just a hobby for him. He also volunteered with the Patriot Guard Riders, escorting families of fallen soldiers to funeral services. This mix of excitement and service became a defining part of his life.

Then, at 73, two strokes occurring a month apart forced Bill to ease off the throttle.



**Bill Hunt**

“It was somebody’s way of telling me to slow down,” says Bill. “So, I just thought to myself, ‘OK, I’ll do cruises now.’”

But not just any cruise—one that was motorcycle-themed, complete with custom bikes on deck and events for enthusiasts, reigniting a new wave of adventure. While on that cruise, Bill tried parasailing. A year later, at 74, he went skydiving. At 75, he rode four laps around the Indianapolis 500 track as a passenger in a car clocking 190 mph.

Even in the midst of these fearless exploits, Bill is grateful for the balance that Village North provides.

“I am very content living here, due to the staff and people here. Every morning, I’m greeted by **Clarence [Deloch]** at the front desk with a smile and an enthusiastic ‘good morning!’ That kind of start sets the tone for my whole day.”

Looking ahead, Bill is eyeing life’s simpler quests: a train ride to Kansas City to enjoy some barbecue, or even a journey across Canada by rail.

But the thought of relaxation only lasts so long—at age 75, he has plans to go skydiving again.

“Out of all the adventures I’ve had, skydiving has been my favorite,” says Bill. “Just the thrill of it, the fun, it’s unlike anything else.”

“I am very content living [at Village North], due to the staff and people here. Every morning, I’m greeted by Clarence at the front desk with a smile and an enthusiastic ‘good morning!’ That kind of start sets the tone for my whole day.”

**Bill Hunt**

## Bethesda Southgate Celebrates at Baby Gender Reveal Party

"It's a girl!" The words rang out as pink balloons floated into the air and cheers erupted from residents and staff. The joyful announcement revealed that Activities Director **Amanda Schlueter** would soon be welcoming her second daughter, news she was thrilled to share with her Bethesda Southgate family.

While Amanda already knew the gender, this was the first time her fellow team members and residents learned her baby was a girl.

Amanda had enjoyed a gender-reveal party with her friends and family during her first pregnancy with her daughter, **Daisy**.

She wanted to bring that same excitement to Bethesda Southgate, a place where she and her daughter have formed close connections.

"I started working here when Daisy was just eight months old," says Amanda. "She wasn't walking or talking yet, so the residents really got to watch her grow up, and they just love her so much."

Everyone at the celebration enjoyed placing playful bets on the baby's gender. One staff member,



Bethesda Southgate residents **Marlene C.** (left) and **Norma E.** visit with **Amanda Schlueter** before the gender reveal took place.

"I feel so fortunate that Daisy is accepted and an important part of our intergenerational activity program."

**Amanda Schlueter**

**Shanel Davis**, even felt Amanda's stomach before making her guess, though she guessed incorrectly. Team Girl outnumbered Team Boy 26 to 17.

"I was surprised that a majority thought it was a girl," says Amanda. "Before I found out, I really thought it was a boy, so I thought maybe they would, too."

When Amanda and Daisy opened a wrapped box and pink balloons burst forth, the crowd's guesses were confirmed. Everyone cheered as they savored pink (and blue, just in case) cupcakes prepared by Bethesda Southgate's dining staff.

Fellow employee **Shanel Davis** touches **Amanda Schlueter's** stomach before logging her guess as to the gender of Amanda's baby.

Amanda is grateful for the family-friendly culture Bethesda provides for its staff and residents. This welcoming environment was one of the biggest draws when she first applied to work at Bethesda.

"I feel so fortunate that Daisy is accepted and an important part of our intergenerational activity program," she says. "Having that kind of support is so incredible."

She encourages others at Bethesda to treat their resident communities as an extension of their family, sharing personal milestones and letting residents join in on the excitement. She laughs that the residents love to share advice on motherhood when she brings Daisy around—some helpful and some a bit outdated.

Amanda is due in early January and can't wait to introduce her newest daughter to everyone at Bethesda Southgate. Congratulations, Amanda!





## A Century of Life... and an Abundance of Pie!

At Pacific Place, few celebrations have been sweeter than the 100th birthday of long-time resident **Carolyn Stotts**. Friends, neighbors and family filled the retirement community with laughter, music and Carolyn's famous Cherry Berry Pie—a recipe that has become nearly as legendary as the woman herself.

Carolyn has called Pacific Place home for the last two decades, but for most of her life she was quite the traveler. Originally born in southern Missouri, her family moved west in 1937, where she eventually married her first husband, a navy chaplain. They moved often up and down the U.S. west coast and even spent time living in Japan and the Philippines. After remarrying in the 1970s, she and her second husband spent summers at various locales throughout Europe. By her own count, Carolyn has lived in 29 different houses! However, she now treasures the consistency and comfort of Pacific Place.

When asked if she was excited about turning 100, she replied with a grin, "No, I have birthdays every year."

But that didn't keep Pacific Place from pulling out all the stops to celebrate her major milestone. The festivities began



*Pacific Place resident **Carolyn Stotts** waves to the camera in celebration of her 100th birthday.*

with a gathering in the lobby, where everyone enjoyed a piece of Cherry Berry Pie. This pie rose to fame 22 years ago, not long after she moved to Pacific Place. Her church group had given members \$100 each, challenging them to double the money. A seasoned baker, Carolyn decided to try selling her pies. The response was overwhelming, and she continued baking and selling her pies to Pacific Place residents and friends for years after.

"Selling the pies was never a side business for her," says Carolyn's son, **Ted Berger**. "It was always about raising money for her church. She never made a pie for herself; she always made them for other people."

Over the years, Carolyn estimates she has baked hundreds of pies, everything from pumpkin to pecan. But Cherry Berry was always the most popular.

"Growing up, the Cherry Berry pie was my birthday dessert every year," says Ted. "I never wanted a traditional birthday cake; I always wanted this pie."

Carolyn's weekend-long celebration continued a few days later with a barbecue hosted at The Gallery. Nearly 50 people attended, including friends, family and fellow Pacific Place residents—with many bringing gifts, cards and side dishes. Some even came early to help decorate to make things extra special for Carolyn.

Following plates of grilled brats and hot dogs, everyone indulged in ice cream and cake, as well as a lively performance by the ukulele band the "Funshine Strummers." Carolyn clapped along, smiling throughout the afternoon.

"Pacific Place is this incredibly tight knit community that shows up for one another," says **Jan Dolan**, Carolyn's caregiver. "It's a warm and happy place where the residents take care of each other. Carolyn is a very special, bright, gracious lady, and we were all honored to celebrate her."



***Carolyn Stotts** takes a break from her 100th birthday celebration to pose with her family.*



## Sanders Named CNA of the Year

**June Sanders**, a Restorative Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) at Christian Extended Care & Rehabilitation (CECR), has been named District 3's CNA of the Year by the Missouri Health Care Association (MHCA).

The award honors caregivers who exemplify extraordinary dedication, skills and compassion to long-term care.

June's efforts are known to extend far beyond her assigned duties. From organizing thoughtful parties for residents and staff to leading the community's Angel Tree program at Christmas, and most recently providing food for staff during the tornadoes that struck in May, June's kindness is not limited to her clinical role.

"June is the kind of caregiver every Director of Nursing and Administrator hopes to have on their team," says **Billy Hogan**, Executive Director of CECR and Village North Retirement Community. "She is reliable, selfless and wholeheartedly committed to the well-being of our residents and staff."

June accepted her award at the MHCA's Annual Convention in August—a well-deserved recognition for someone that consistently goes above and beyond for her community. Congratulations, June!



**June Sanders** celebrates her MHCA "CNA of the Year" award with **Billy Hogan**, Executive Director of Christian Extended Care & Rehabilitation.

## How Do You Celebrate National Assisted Living Week?

If you are the residents and team members at Bethesda Hawthorne Place, you have an unbelievably great time!

**1** *It's always a treat when Fredbird is around, pulling his crazy antics and making everyone laugh!*

**2** *Residents **Jim and Mary Ann Groetsch** are clearly enjoying themselves at the Hawaiian Luau—one of the many events held at Bethesda Hawthorne Place during the week.*

**3** *Those "wacky tourists" are really team members from Bethesda Hawthorne Place—how many can you recognize?*





# Life at Bethesda!

To see more photos, please scan this QR code and access all our Facebook pages.



**1** These Bethesda Barclay House residents were very smart—they visited the Lemp Mansion well before Halloween!



**2** (L-R) **Jen Popp**, **Katie Liszewski** and **Maren Valyo** had a great time representing Alton Memorial Rehabilitation & Therapy at Alton Memorial Hospital's annual "Duck Pluckers, Deer Skinners and Fish Hookers" fundraiser. Jen almost left the event with a new puppy!



**3** **Ashley Nelson** shares materials about Bethesda Terrace with one of the more than 200 people who attended the annual "Aging My Way" Senior Fair in South County. **Sarita Weldon** and **Lea Ann Coates** were also there, representing Bethesda Southgate and Assisted Living at Charless Village, respectively.



**4** These Village North residents found an unbelievably calm and soothing view of Creve Coeur Lake during a recent outing!



**5** So...do you think **Sharon Wersching** is eager to start enjoying her plate of food from a recent Pacific Place Happy Hour? The clear majority says yes!



Thanks to the efforts of the team members at Bethesda Terrace, the 5th-grade class at Arrowpoint Elementary in the Hazelwood School District had a great start to the school year. In addition to receiving these supplies, more than \$200 raised through fundraising allowed Life Enrichment Director **Nikki Ross** to provide even more supplies for those deserving students!

## Did You Know...

...that you can hear Bethesda advertised on KMOX (1120 AM and 104.1 FM) and KLOU (102.5 FM) until the week before Christmas? The commercials are voiced by KMOX radio personality and Bethesda Hospice Care/No One Dies Alone program volunteer **Dave Glover**.

... that a few Bethesda employees have been selected to participate in leadership programs coordinated through LeadingAge and LeadingAge Missouri, our industry's professional advocacy organizations?

... that Alton Memorial Rehabilitation & Therapy has again been named a finalist in the "Best Skilled Nursing Facility" contest, coordinated by the *Alton Telegraph* and *Edwardsville Intelligencer* newspapers?

We'll share information on these stories and plenty of others in the Winter 2026 edition of the *Pulse*.

# BETHESDA

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## BHG Foundation Unveils "Grateful Giving" Program

This holiday season, the Bethesda Health Group Foundation will launch "Grateful Giving," a new program giving residents, patients and families a meaningful way to recognize the incredible team members who make a difference every day.

Whether it's a CNA, nurse, therapist, housekeeper, activities team member, dining services staff or any other Bethesda employee, "Grateful Giving" offers a special opportunity to say "*thank you*" to those who go above and beyond to provide exceptional, personalized care.

No act of kindness is too small to be acknowledged. Every smile, every helping hand, every extra effort deserves to be celebrated.

While the amount of your gift remains confidential, your honoree will receive a personal note describing the impact they made,

along with a lapel pin they can wear with pride. Their supervisor will also receive an acknowledgment to post internally, celebrating their dedication and compassion.

Help us in honoring the people who embody the true spirit of care. Scan the code below to make your gift now.



For more information about the "Grateful Giving" program or any other fundraising opportunity at Bethesda, please scan the QR code or call the Foundation office at 314-373-7043.

