

**BETHESDA**

# Pulse

A publication of Bethesda Health Group, Inc. • Spring 2026

Fostering successful aging through  
compassion and innovation

## Caring Through Connections



# Bethesda Introduces John W. Rowe Heritage Society

**John Rowe** has been a dedicated leader and member of the Bethesda community for decades. He served as Bethesda President & CEO from 1998-2010, as well as multiple terms as Board Chair and on countless Board committees.

Therefore, when deciding whom to name the newly created Heritage Society after, the decision for **Joe Brinker**, President & CEO, and **Linda Sanders**, Corporate Vice President and Director of Development, was a simple one.

The John W. Rowe Heritage Society recognizes individuals who have made a lasting commitment to the well-being of our residents by including Bethesda in their estate plans. Through their generosity and foresight, they help ensure that Bethesda can continue serving seniors and enriching lives for generations to come.

“John has been an amazing leader to, and for, the Bethesda community,” Linda says. “Naming the society after him was such an obvious choice for us.”

For John, the recognition is deeply meaningful.

“I felt truly honored when I was asked to lend my name to the heritage society,” says John, who had previously named Bethesda as a beneficiary of his IRA. “I would highly encourage others to join me in being proactive about securing Bethesda’s future.”

Individuals can join the John W. Rowe Heritage Society by including Bethesda in their estate plan; as a beneficiary of an asset; a % or set amount in a will or trust; creating a Named Fund or, for Bethesda residents, gifting all or a portion of their refundable entrance fee.

“If Bethesda has ever touched your life, even in the smallest way, I



**John Rowe**

invite you to honor that connection by making a gift through your estate—a gift that will ensure comfort, dignity and care for those who will walk this path after you,” John says.

If you have questions about the John W. Rowe Heritage Society, or how to include Bethesda in your estate plans, please contact Linda



at [lsanders@bethesdahealth.org](mailto:lsanders@bethesdahealth.org) or scan the code.

## Bethesda Board Leadership

### Board of Directors

J. Dale Meier  
*Chair*

Patrick J. Rooney  
*Vice Chair*

Joseph J. Brinker  
*President and CEO*

Kevin J. Klingler\*  
*Treasurer*

Philip A. Hutchison  
*Secretary*

James H. Esther, M.D.  
Fred G. Falker  
J. Michael Keller  
Gary L. Mayes  
Veronica McDonnell  
John W. Rowe\*  
Samantha J. Teibel

### Advisory Board

Robert S. Barrett  
R. Kenneth Bass  
Sharon Burkhardt  
George W. Clements, Jr.\*  
Thomas R. Collins\*  
David M. Culver\*  
Kevin L. Curry  
David L. Fleisher\*  
Franc E. Flotron  
Earle H. Harbison, Jr.  
Juanita H. Hinshaw\*  
Katherine E. Joslin  
Patricia P. Kapsar  
Matthew J. Koch  
Peter B. Krombach  
Sally Lilly  
Susan G. Moore  
Fred H. Perabo  
Alphonse D. Poelker  
Mark W. Reifsteck

James F. Serti, M.D.  
Jacqueline R. Shillington  
Stephen W. Woodard  
Jackie Yoon\*

### Women's Board

Sara Arn  
Karen Bacon  
Laura Baumstark  
Bobbi Boley  
Susan Brinker  
Carla Britton  
Candice Brown  
Sharon Burkhardt,  
*Membership*  
Eileen Caffey  
Barbara Clements  
Chris Crouch  
Jeannie Curry  
Betty Diemer  
Susan Fagan

Laura Frame  
Margaret Ganyard  
Michelle Glass  
Shirley Graham  
Angie Heumann  
Susan Higgins  
Juanita Hinshaw\*  
Barbara Homeier  
Christy James  
Kathy Joslin  
Pat Kapsar  
Mary Kirschman  
Rosemary Kurt  
Mary Lou Martin  
Ann McCandless  
Lydia Meier  
Lisa Meyer, *President*  
Susan Moore  
Pam Mosca  
Mary Nielsen  
Penny Northern-Phanse  
Julie Okenfuss  
Rosemary Oliver

Ida Perabo  
Sharon Poe  
Julie Poelker  
Jen Popp  
Judy Portnoy  
Juliette Reed  
Anita Rooney  
Joyce Ross  
Audrey Rothbarth  
Ginny Rowe  
Linda Sanders  
Tammy Sengheiser  
Mary M. Serti  
Carol Szweda  
Carole Teubner  
Joan Tiemann  
Andrea Tripp  
Susan Turner  
Georgee Waldman  
Carrie Wetzel  
Gloria Wotka  
Jackie Yoon\*  
Lisa Zoia

\*Former Board Chair

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



Connect with us!



# Project Cupid Brings Valentine’s Day Joy to Bethesda Communities

Project Cupid is a partnership between Y98’s Bret Mega Show, heard weekday mornings on KYKY-FM, and VOYCE, a local nonprofit dedicated to quality long-term care advocacy for older adults.

In the program, the team from Y98 collects thousands of handmade Valentine’s Day cards from area school children to distribute to residents at senior living communities, fostering meaningful connections across generations.

This year, their distribution included visits to Bethesda Southgate and Bethesda Dilworth. At Bethesda Dilworth, the celebration was especially memorable as third-grade students from Concord Elementary School arrived to personally deliver their creations and read them aloud.

Resident **June Emde** shared with the young visitors that when she was their age, she too loved to draw.

“You are all very talented,” June says, admiring her pile of colorful valentines.

Similar scenes of appreciation unfolded at Bethesda Southgate.

**Janet Kuelker** ran her fingers over a valentine signed “Love, Maggie,” noting she had a niece by the same name.



**Janet Kuelker** (upper left, with **Bret Mega**), **Norma Emling** (upper right) and **Robin Simmons** (lower left) are enjoying their valentines!



(L-R) **Lottie Lemcke, Hadley Kerner, Sophia Mathew and Madelyn Zarilli**, representatives from Concord Elementary School, pose with members of Y98’s Bret Mega Show before handing out their valentines.

“She’s the best niece anyone could ever ask for,” Janet says with a smile. “This makes me think of her.”

For **Billie Jean Walker**, who was spending her first Valentine’s Day without her husband, the cards carried special meaning.

“I didn’t think I’d have a valentine this year,” she says. “And now, I have all of these.”

**Bret Mega** told the group at Bethesda Southgate that the valentines came from children ranging from 6 months to 16 years old. Now in its third year, Project Cupid has grown dramatically, collecting nearly 8,000 valentines this year, almost double the first year’s total.

The program’s origins are deeply personal for Bret, whose mother suffered from dementia.

“I just realized that the older generation could feel lonely or isolated during Valentine’s Day, and I wanted to find a way to make them feel special,” he explains.

What the program has revealed is unexpected common ground between generations.

“Love and kindness and sweetness and appreciation of family—those are things that are universal whether you’re 2 years old or 102 years old,” Bret says.

**Melody Fox**, Communications & Development Manager at VOYCE, sees Project Cupid as a natural extension of VOYCE’s mission.

“This program embodies what we believe in: building relationships that honor dignity and create meaningful moments for older adults,” she says.

## Student Volunteers Bring Compassion to Bethesda Hospice Care

A typical college student has numerous options when choosing how best to use their “free time”—time away from their classes and homework.

For more than 20 Washington University students, their primary choice is to spend time with hospice residents through Bethesda Hospice Care, offering companionship, conversation and support.

Resident **Jackie Whitworth**, a resident living at Bethesda Dilworth, sees the impact firsthand. She regularly visits with four students, offering advice on college and life away from home.

“They always get a tidbit of wisdom from me,” Jackie says. “I’m thankful they come share their days with us.”

Bethesda’s relationship with Washington University spans years, but Volunteer Coordinator **Melissa Helmkamp** says interest from students has never been stronger. Growth has happened almost entirely by word of mouth.

“Right now, I have a wait list,” Melissa says. “We have 20 volunteers from WashU on board, and another 10 who want to sign on.”

None of the students receive course credit. They volunteer because they want to be here.

Leading the effort is **Ethan Li**, who joined three years ago as a freshman after taking a course on aging in American society. He graduated in December 2025, and now serves as team leader for the student volunteers.

“Most of the time when you speak with a resident, they basically become your friend,” he says. “You’re just chatting, playing cards, watching TV. Social interactions just make everyone feel good.”



Front row (l-r): **Fia Lin, Isidor Stempfle, Jackie Whitworth, Anya Mathur**  
Back row (l-r): **Kanishk Satish, David Zhu, Jackie Zhang, Alex Zhang, Ethan Li, Marvin Zhang**

Other students are quick to say the experience gives back as much as it asks. For **Anya Mathur**, volunteering evokes thoughts of her grandparents in India. For **David Zhu**, it’s the ability to build a relationship with them.

“It’s reciprocal,” David says. “You focus on your resident, and you derive this very intimate human connection. It’s very gratifying.”

Many of the students are preparing for careers in health care, and they say the hospice volunteer experience offers them insight into holistic care that cannot be learned in a classroom.

“Being well-knowledgeable is only half of being a physician,” says **Kanishk Satish**, who has been volunteering for just over one year. “This is where I can focus on becoming person-centered, which improves the quality of care for any future patient.”

Some students have even taken on “No One Dies Alone” vigil

shifts, sitting with residents in their final hours when family cannot be present. **Alex Zhang** recalls a vigil when a resident’s son asked him to help perform a Peruvian spiritual ritual he had never heard of.

“This family is going through probably one of the darkest moments they’ll ever experience,” Alex says. “You set aside your own beliefs and commit to service.”

**Ketan Tamirisa** logged more than 100 volunteer hours last summer and spent his first vigil in a darkened room with an Elvis Presley record playing softly, sitting with a woman he had never met.

“There’s no right or wrong,” Ketan says. “As long as you’re doing the basic things to ensure they’re comfortable in their transition, that’s what matters. It’s a privilege to be there.”

Building on that experience, Ketan launched “Beyond the Charts,” modeled after the Veteran Administration’s “My Life, My Story”

*Continued on page 5*

## Marty Holland—Bethesda’s Cardinals Radio Voice is Back!

**Marty Holland** may not admit it, but many who know her recognize a valid reason why her beloved St. Louis Cardinals baseball team had such a challenging season last year.

“All I know is that people did ask me why I wasn’t on the commercials last year,” Marty says with a grin.

Was it a coincidence? Perhaps. But this year will hopefully be different, as Marty is once again serving as the voice on Bethesda’s radio commercials that air before, during and after the games.

“I really enjoy Cardinal baseball—and I really enjoy it on the radio,” says the 96-year-old Marty, who has lived at Bethesda Orchard in Webster Groves for nearly 20 years. “Now I watch the games on T.V., but I still listen on my little red radio like I have for years.



**Marty Holland** (left) reviews the script as **Steve Vagnino**, Bethesda’s photographer/videographer, gets ready to record Bethesda’s radio commercial.

“I’m always surprised when I hear my voice doing a commercial during the games, and so are my family and friends!” she says.

A former teacher, Marty feels as if her voice isn’t as strong as it once was. “But as long as they keep asking me to do it, I’m happy to do it,” she says with a big smile. “Go Cardinals!”

## Student Volunteers Bring Compassion to Bethesda Hospice Care

*Continued from page 4*

project. Ketan interviews residents about their upbringings, values and cherished memories, then compiles those stories into a document added to Bethesda’s care records so medical practitioners can see the human side of their patients.

“I want their legacies to live on,” Ketan says.

This level of commitment runs through the entire group. **Marvin Zhang**, an international student from Canada, spent months navigating the Social Security Administration process just to make sure he was cleared to volunteer.

“The day I got word that I was approved, I called to begin orientation,” he says. “I feel lucky to be here.”

“People don’t really understand the community that’s formed here and the bonds that you make,” Alex says. “I think we need to think of hospice as a celebration of life.”

Volunteers of all ages are always needed. For more information about volunteering, scan the



code or contact Melissa at 314-800-1992.



**Anya Mathur** and resident **Jackie Whitworth** spend some quality time together.

# Birdies for Bethesda—“Fore” Years of Success!

The annual “Birdies for Bethesda” Topgolf tournament raises funds to support Bethesda residents who have outlived their financial resources, through no fault of their own, ensuring they can continue to call Bethesda home.

Thanks to our generous sponsors, this year surpassed all expectations.

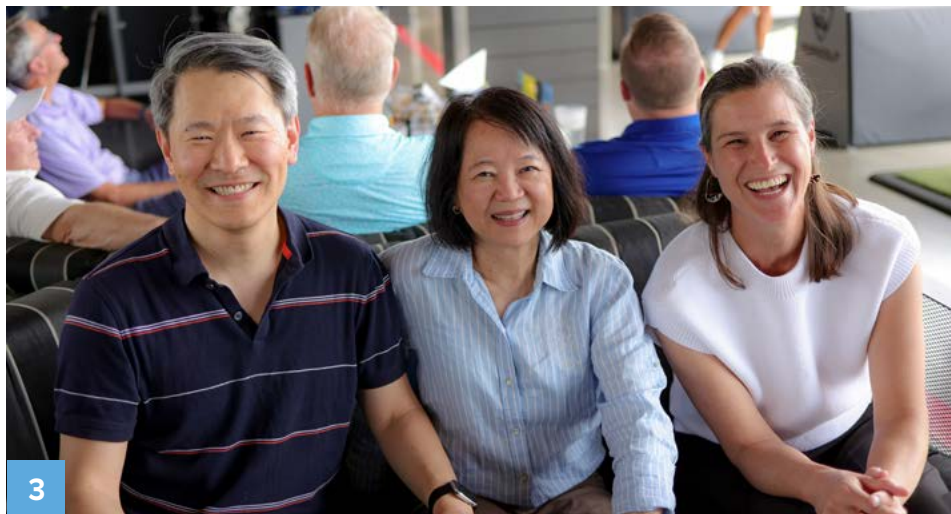
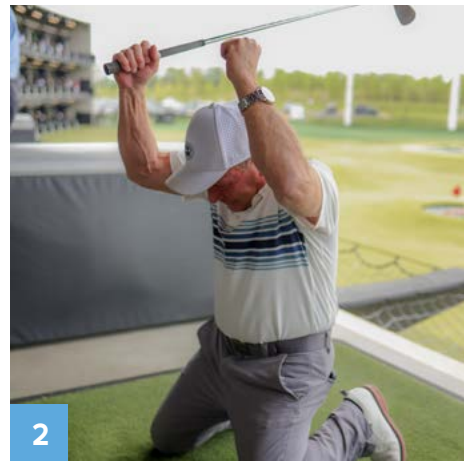
The 4th annual tournament sold-out in just 3 weeks and far surpassed this year’s goal of \$225,000 by raising more than \$232,000 to support Bethesda residents in need.

“We have so many people to thank for an extraordinary day filled with food, fun and fellowship, not to mention a great silent auction with some really unique items and 2 Booze Wagons (65 bottles in total),” says **Linda Sanders**, Corporate Vice President & Director of Development. “Congrats to **Tim McKittrick** from Slalom and **Ruben Guzman** from Paric, who were the lucky winners!”

A heartfelt thank you to our Title Sponsors, CCL Hospitality Group and Midwest Elevator, as well as the specialty sponsors and golfers. “Words are simply not enough to thank you for your generous support,” Linda says.

Golfers also enjoyed the challenge bays, thanks to PARIC, sponsor of the Hole-in-One Bay, and Bartels-Missey, sponsor of the Longest Drive Bay. Congratulations to **Adam Rockey** from EmpiRX for winning the longest drive with an impressive 287-yard drive!

We also extend special appreciation to Generation Clinical Partners, sponsor of this year’s Fund-



**1 Jennifer Meury**, wife of Bethesda Orchard Senior General Manager **Todd Meury**, is thrilled to have won the Cardinals basket at the Silent Auction, which includes a signed Kyle Leahy jersey (donation courtesy of **Veronica McDonnell**).

**2 Doug Bartels** of Bartels-Missey laments over a shot that didn’t go where he had intended it to go!

**3 (l-r) Dr. Walter Lin, Mae Lin and Dr. Sarah Davis** of Generation Clinical Partners enjoy themselves at Birdies for Bethesda.

A-Need Challenge. They matched every dollar donated, which raised an additional \$2,500 for Bethesda seniors-in-need.

Thanks again to everyone who supported this year’s “Birdies for Bethesda” tournament. Your generosity helps ensure that

Bethesda can continue to serve seniors, as they age, with respect, dignity and compassion...no matter their ability to pay.



Be sure to scan the QR code to view photos and highlights from this memorable day!

# Bethesda Celebrates Cardinals' Opening Day in Style!

In what is proving to be an Opening Day tradition throughout Bethesda, residents and staff gathered as the Cardinals took on the Tampa Bay Rays on March 26.

Dressed in red or their favorite Cardinals attire, they munched on hot dogs and popcorn and cheered on their beloved Redbirds, not even losing hope when they fell behind 7-1 in the 6th inning.

Because thanks to their trust in their team, the Cardinals came back and won 9-7!

Good friends, good food and Cardinal baseball—now that's a winner!



**Bethesda Barclay House**



**Christian Extended Care & Rehabilitation**



**Village North**



**Bethesda Orchard**



**Bethesda Corporate**



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



**Bethesda Gardens**

## Did You Know...

... that a former Bethesda Board member and long-time Bethesda Hospice Care volunteer have been chosen to receive the prestigious Norwood Award for 2025 and 2026?

... that the 2025 Report to the Community is now available in print and online? For a printed copy, email [marketing@bethesdahealth.org](mailto:marketing@bethesdahealth.org). To view online, visit [www.BethesdaHealth.org](http://www.BethesdaHealth.org) and click on Blogs and Publications.

... that our Activities and Life Enrichment staff members regularly share engaging content on our community Facebook pages? Scan the QR code for photos and videos from your community of choice. Also, explore content on Bethesda Terrace and Village North TikTok accounts.



# BETHESDA

12101 Woodcrest Executive Drive, Suite 200  
St. Louis, Missouri 63141  
(314) 800-1900  
[www.BethesdaHealth.org](http://www.BethesdaHealth.org)

**Change service requested**

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
St. Louis, MO  
Permit No. 1617

## Bethesda Among Best Places to Work in St. Louis

For the 10th time in the last 14 years, Bethesda has attained the lofty achievement of being named one of the Best Places to Work in St. Louis.

The contest, coordinated by Quantum Workplace and the *St. Louis Business Journal*, attracted more than 150 St. Louis-area businesses and organizations, all of which were yearning for one of the coveted finalist spots. In March, the announcement was delivered that only 78 were taken forward as category finalists—and Bethesda was one of those to be chosen.

In fact, Bethesda was one of only three finalists in the Giant Employers (750+ employees) category, with CarShield and Clayco as the others.

“We had more than 270 team members voluntarily complete the survey this year, which is more than Bethesda has ever completed in all of the years that we have qualified as a category finalist,” says **Caprina Wakefield**, Senior V.P of Human Resources. “I truly believe that we couldn’t continue qualifying at this consistent rate if our team members don’t believe that they are working for an organization that is striving every



*Bethesda team members celebrate our third-place finish at the 2025 Best Places to Work awards ceremony.*

day to do the right things for our residents and patients—this achievement is a tribute to them.”

The winners of each category will be announced at an event in mid-May; a full report on how Bethesda fared this year will be upcoming in the Summer 2026 edition of the Pulse.