

A photograph of four women standing on a stone staircase in front of a brick building. The woman on the far right is wearing a striped long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, standing with her hand on her hip. The woman in the center foreground is wearing a purple patterned short-sleeved shirt and dark pants, also with her hand on her hip. Two other women are visible behind them on the stairs. The building has a brick pillar and a ceiling fan is visible above.

*Investing
in People*

soaring

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Investing in Our Most Valuable Asset: People

Mennonite Home Communities (MHC) employees are special people. They dedicate their working hours to caring for others, whether it is through direct care in skilled nursing or personal care, or behind the scenes in housekeeping, grounds and dining (to name but a few!). With multiple continuing care communities throughout the Lancaster County region and beyond, attracting and retaining the best of the best can be competitive as prospective employees have several options to choose from.

Determined to rise to this challenge, the MHC executive team and board members took a bold move this spring by increasing the minimum wage for all employees to \$15 an hour. The previous minimum was \$10 an hour. Recognizing the importance of finding and keeping skilled and compassionate staff members, they evaluated all positions to determine if the pay rate should be raised and by how much.

Another major investment was in boosting the hourly rate for certified nursing assistants (CNA) from \$15 to \$18 an hour.

In addition to being a cause for celebration among existing staff members, the Human Resources team said they saw an immediate increase in job applications once news of the \$15 minimum wage became public.

“We were so grateful to WGAL-TV8 and *Lancaster Newspapers* for their positive coverage of our new minimum wage,” said Kimberly Blessing, Vice President of Human Resources and Staff Development. “Almost overnight our job applications tripled and we were able to hire almost 30 people in 4 weeks. Our hope is that once people join our team, they realize what a terrific place this is to work!”

*“Our most valuable asset is our team.”
–Kimberly Blessing.*

“Our most valuable asset is our team,” Kimberly said. “We want them to know that we truly value them and this decision was a vital way to remind them of that. We are

in the business of caring for people, so it only makes sense to care just as strongly about our employees as we do about the people we serve.” MHC desires to be among the leading organizations in providing a high-quality, supportive work environment and a livable wage for all staff.

Photo Captions : (Previous page) WGAL TV8’s Barbara Barr spoke with Vice President of Health Services Jennifer Eslinger regarding the minimum wage announcement in May. (Below, left to right) Long-term staff members Briana Davidson, Cynthia Acosta-Torres, Gina Rodriguez and Celia Morales are proud to work for an organization that is investing in its people.



Little by Little, A Little Becomes A Lot!

Stewart Leeder is one of the newest members of the 1903 Legacy Society at Mennonite Home Communities (MHC). The 1903 Legacy Society honors donors who achieve lifetime giving of \$10,000 or more to MHC, as well as persons who make a gift in their will.

When he first began giving in 2012, Stewart never dreamed he would achieve a level of giving that would grant him membership in the 1903 Legacy Society. How did he do it?

Stewart joined the Woodcrest Villa community in October 2009, shortly after his wife passed away. He enjoys living at Woodcrest Villa and has stayed actively involved with the Life Writers Group and serves on Resident Council. He always has been interested in finding ways to make a positive impact however he can.

“It’s a way to give that blesses friends and neighbors who have gone over to Mennonite Home.”

It was during a visit with members of the MHC Development team when he was introduced to the history and original purpose of MHC: “building

a home to care for the elderly, widows, widowers, orphans and other needy persons.” He knew some members of the MHC community outlived their resources, and benevolent care funds were needed to help pay for their care.

Although inspired to help, he did not have a large sum of cash available to give.

He felt that giving a monthly contribution could be his way of tithing. Stewart explained, “It’s a way to help; it’s very minimal, but it’s something I can do now. It’s a way to give that blesses friends and neighbors who have gone over to Mennonite Home.”

Despite what he characterizes as a “very minimal,” monthly gift, the impact of his faithful giving, has been tremendous. His giving to date has accumulated to more than \$10,000, making him a member of the 1903 Legacy Society.

Stewart considers himself to be a man of modest means. Even so, he is thankful that God has enabled him to live at Woodcrest Villa and make regular contributions to benevolent care. These gifts are especially meaningful because he knows he is making a difference in the lives of other residents.

To learn more about how you can support Benevolent Care at Mennonite Home or become a member of the 1903 Legacy Society, contact Kim Peters, director of development, at 717-390-4105.



Volunteers Joyfully Return to Action

When in-person visits resumed at Mennonite Home (MH), residents and families were excited and so were Woodcrest Villa (WCV) volunteers. After more than a year of being unable to help because of COVID-19 restrictions, volunteers were able to return to help with greeting family members and friends to visit MH residents this spring.

Family members wanting to visit a MH resident are asked to schedule a time. This helps with tracking the number of people in the building. It also ensures that the resident will be available and that the visit does not conflict with a pre-scheduled appointment. The day of their visit, visitors check in at the MH lobby with the WCV volunteer.

About a dozen dedicated helpers have offered to give of their time to greet and screen guests for COVID-19

and then assist them with completing the necessary paperwork.

These volunteers consistently say this is the best job in the world!

“It is pure joy to see such happiness in the families faces as they enter our doors,” says Beulah Jones.

Beulah was pleasantly surprised when she started talking to MH resident, Dee O’Connor. Dee was eagerly waiting for her daughter to come visit. As they chatted, the two realized that they knew each other, but had never met in person. Last March, Beulah was one of the many Woodcrest Villa residents who volunteered to call and check in on MH residents when visitation was not allowed. It was one way WCV volunteers could remind MH residents that people were thinking about them.

As it turns out, Dee was one of the residents whom Beulah had been calling. What a wonderful reunion because, through all those phone calls, the two of them became very close friends. Finally meeting each other in person was simply delightful.

When asked why they love helping in this way, one volunteer said, “I do it for God’s glory...Other people have been there for me when it was needed, and now I simply want to give something back.”

Each volunteer who is assisting with connecting families to their loved ones said they feel it is a great honor to be able to do so.

As volunteer Peggy Hanzelman said, “It is the most incredible volunteer work I’ve ever done. Thank you, God, that I have this opportunity.”

Caption: WCV Volunteers Beulah Jones (left) and Peggy Hanzelman (right) consider it a privilege to assist with family and friend visits with MH residents such as Dee O’Conner (center).





MHC Makes Strategic Moves to Position for the Future

The long-term care landscape is changing, and Mennonite Home Communities is adapting along with it. As increasing numbers of people opt to remain in independent living as long as possible, the demand for personal care and skilled nursing has changed. Nursing homes across the nation are experiencing the same trend. The Board of Mennonite Home Communities (MHC) chose to reposition the Mennonite Home (MH) campus to reflect these changes in consumer preference. RLPS Architects, a leader in senior living design, worked with MHC leaders to re-envision the new and improved spaces.

One of the redesigned areas involves transforming Goods Run from skilled nursing to personal care. This project began in June and will take about four months to complete. At that time, personal care residents in the Juniata Building will move into the Goods Run

household. Serving as general contractor is Benchmark Construction. MHC recently worked with Benchmark to renovate Boyers Run and Coopers Run, two highly successful and beautiful personal care floors.

Another key element of the project is turning Anderson Run (on the first floor of the Susquehanna building) into a personal care memory support household to replace Landis Run. The project will increase the number of memory care beds from 15 to 17 and

include innovative new features such as circadian lighting that mimics the tone and brightness of sunlight as it changes during the day. Also, a new wellness/exercise room will be installed on the first floor of the Susquehanna building. This portion of the project is expected to begin in October and also will take four months to finish. When the floor is completed, Landis Run residents

will transfer to these beautiful new rooms. Other improvements include a new beauty salon, renovation of Conestoga Gathering Place and new meeting room. Each of these projects has a different starting date, but all should be finished by late January 2022.

The final piece of the project will be the one most visible from outside. After the Juniata building is vacated, it will be removed and replaced with a staff parking lot. Because of space limitations, many staff members currently park at Woodcrest Villa and take the employee shuttle to MH. Team members who ride the shuttle are eagerly awaiting the convenience of parking in the new lot.

The strategic decision to reposition the MH campus ensures that MHC will continue to provide the high-quality services it is known for.

Other improvements slated include a new beauty salon, renovation of Conestoga Gathering Place and new meeting room.

Splish, Splash! Water Walkers Travel to Hershey

This spring, 55 Woodcrest Villa (WCV) staff members and residents walked from Lancaster to Chocolate World in Hershey. Not literally, of course, but figuratively, as they walked the same distance—25 miles in the WCV swimming pool. After every water walk, they would move their name tag along the “road to Chocolate World” bulletin board to track their progress.

Throughout the 6-week program, participants water walked 676.5 miles as part of the Spring Fitness Challenge. Kristin Manser, wellness manager, said that the program exceeded her team’s expectations. She was especially excited at how many people came to use the pool for the first time.

At the end of the challenge in June, every participant received a certificate and a bag of candy. WCV resident Janet Sweigart walked the furthest—39 miles.

Photo Caption: Nothing fishy about it—WCV residents had a whale of a good time logging their water walking miles in the pool.



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Featured on the cover: MH team members (left to right) Gina Rodriguez, Celia Morales, Briana Davidson and Cynthia Acosta-Torres are just a few of the employees who are excited about the decision to raise the minimum wage at MHC from \$10 to \$15 an hour.

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PLEASE NOTE: Soaring is published three times a year.

If you would like to receive information about **Residential Living at Woodcrest Villa**, call Amy at 717-390-4103

If you would like to receive information about **Personal Care or Health Care** at Mennonite Home, call 717-390-7979

If you wish to have your name removed from our mailing list, call Kris at 717-735-2647

Keeping Residents Cool

This past spring, Woodcrest Villa (WCV) residents watched with interest as an old water tower was replaced. With a 180,000-ton crane, the old tower was disconnected from the cooling loop, making way for the placement of the new one. Haller Enterprises, Lapp Electric, Siemens, Houck and WCV staff members teamed up to work on various aspects of this major undertaking.

... residents watched with interest as an old water tower was replaced.

The new tower works in conjunction with another tower to cool the water that the HVAC units use to heat and cool Eagle Wing, Meadowlark, Hummingbird, Robin Ridge, Cardinal Wing and VIVA Centre. Large pumps move the water through increasingly smaller

pipes that connect to cooling tubes. As the water flows through the tubes, internally stored and treated water is pumped over the outside of these tubes. A fan simultaneously draws air from around the tower house through vents in the tower sides. This process releases the heat from the building water into the atmosphere, keeping the water between 72 and 79 degrees. On very humid days, a cloud of water vapor can be seen coming from the top of the tower, which looks like a hole in the roof of the tower house. Thanks to the new cooling tower, HVAC units do not have to work as hard to heat and cool, thus extending the life of these units and using energy more efficiently.

