



The Jenkins Senior Living Community Serves Seniors with Compassion, Excellence and Integrity

Abram's Avenue

The Neighborhoods at St. Elizabeth Rehabilitation and Nursing Center

A life lived for others is a life worthwhile. — Albert Einstein

Bernadine Colley

Bernadine Colley came to Abram's Avenue at St. Elizabeth Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in February of 2010. She is in long-term care after a stay at St. Agnes Hospital. Bernadine uses a wheelchair; however, there is one other restriction that affects her participation in the life on Abram's Avenue even more than her mobility limitations. Bernadine is deaf and has been since a childhood bout with meningitis. She is bi-lingual in that she uses American Sign Language and can read lips. She therefore has some basic means of communicating her needs to those around her. She can also communicate by use of written notes with her Neighborhood guide John McLoughlin.

As effective as these means of communication might be, they still pose limitations on Bernadine's participation in community life. Those casual everyday conversations that we all enjoy are limited for her by the fact that other members of the Abram's Avenue staff and elders do not have sign language. The impact of this was discovered by her daughter Linda, when she visited Bernadine this summer. She found her mother depressed and disinterested in participating in the life around her. And even though she could make her basic needs known, the nuances so important to her wellbeing could be missed. That was Linda's diagnosis. Her remedy was to spend lots of time with her mother with lots of catching-up conversation—and it worked.



Bernadine came out of her depression and started to get more involved in the life on the Avenue. But what to do when Linda returned to Colorado? Technology supplied an answer. Before leaving, Linda and John set up a Skype program and trained the staff in its use. The newly renovated living room on the Avenue is equipped with a computer and internet hook-up for the elders' use, and the Skype program provided the perfect vehicle for Bernadine and Linda to continue their conversation on a weekly basis. Skype also keeps Bernadine in touch with her Colorado grandchildren, Linda's children. Linda can literally see the difference that this makes. John sees the Skype technology as a great tool not only for Bernadine to keep in touch with her family, but also for her daughter Linda to keep in touch with us about any changes in Bernadine's life that Bernadine might not be easily able to communicate.

continued



Abram's Avenue

Bernadine Colley *continued*

Linda is proud of her parents, both of whom were deaf. Growing up, Linda and her brother Jerry's first language was American Sign. They both learned to speak from their grandparents. This early experience influenced Linda in her career choice. After receiving her undergraduate degree from Towson University in Speech and Language Pathology and Audiology, she received her Master's in Deaf Education from Gallaudet University. Linda now works full time as a Special Education teacher for children from kindergarten to 6th grade at Deaf Plus—a program for children

with multiple disabilities. She is motivated to help children with disabilities live full lives, as her parents were able to do. Her father, who passed away last year, raised a family and had a career as a printer-pressman with John Smith & Sons, and Bernadine worked as a proof-reader for a check printing company in Baltimore. Linda looks forward to her weekly conversations with Bernadine and is reassured that she can keep up with her care and pass along to John any changes she picks up in their weekly Skypes!



John McLoughlin



John McLoughlin came to Abram's Avenue as the Neighborhood Guide, also in February of 2010. John hails from County Wicklow in the east of Ireland, south of Dublin. He is the second youngest of five brothers and sisters. He is the self-described gypsy of the family, all of whom are still back

in Ireland. His American adventures began in 1990 when he was recruited by the Sisters of Mercy, Philadelphia Province, to join the Mercy Corps, and subsequently spent a year in the Navaho Indian Reservation in Arizona working with special needs children.

Upon returning to Ireland, John worked with people with physical and mental disabilities for Chevertown Homes and Cheshire Homes. At this point in his life, he thought that his American adventures were over—that is till he got the itch. And in 1998 it was again the Sisters of Mercy who recruited him to come to the States to work as a volunteer at Stella Maris in Timonium. This time his volunteer experience lasted for two years, and

it would change the course of his life and career. With the help of the Sisters, he received a green card, and was able to accept the position of Director of Volunteer Services with Stella Maris, a position that he held for eight years. Throughout his ten years at Stella Maris, he immersed himself in the experience working with elders and found it very fulfilling, particularly in his work with elders in the Hospice program.

John became aware of the position of Neighborhood Guide through Nate Sweeney, Administrator in Training for St. Elizabeth. It looked like an exciting opportunity, since the philosophy at St. Elizabeth was consistent with his beliefs that the life of elder communities should center on the elder. He thought that St. Elizabeth was a place where elders could find a home while in rehabilitation prior to returning to their own home, or while they were at St. Elizabeth for long-term care. After one year on the job, John has found that his expectation has been fulfilled. In his view, the St. Elizabeth community creates an important environment of trust. He feels fulfilled in his role as Neighborhood Guide, and that to be entrusted with the lives of the elders with whom he works is a phenomenal gift.

Jim Hillmann

Sunshine Lane

Caritas House Assisted Living

Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.

— James M. Barrie

Fatou Kargbo

The name of “Sunshine Lane” has been given to the first floor household of Caritas House Assisted Living. The new name was selected by the fourteen elders who live there with input from staff and families, according to Fatou Kargbo, the Household Coordinator for Sunshine Lane. She has been on the job since September 2010 and has been part of the culture change that has Caritas House “moving in the right direction, where we design our work schedules around the residents’ wants and needs.”

Fatou knows for certain whether things are working, because she convenes the monthly Residents’ Council and hears what elders have to say about community life. Food is usually at the top of the list, and Fatou takes their suggestions back to the Chef, Leamon Turner, whom they all love. One of the suggestions that the residents recently made was the establishment of the Morning Coffee Break, which now takes place each morning at 10:00 or 11:00, depending on the Mass schedule for the day. Another suggestion was to have their monthly Nail Spa by household rather than with all three households together. Fatou says that change makes it a more intimate experience for the ladies.

Many aspects of daily living at Caritas House have been reorganized around the three individual households. Each staff person is now assigned to one of the households. This allows staff to interact more consistently with each elder, and be more effective in supporting all aspects of their daily activities. This arrangement has also improved communication among staff, as well as with elders’ families, who appreciate being kept up-to-date on their loved ones.



Caritas Resident Mary Traver and Household Coordinator Fatou Kargbo

Fatou is motivated to learn as much as she can about whatever she is doing, and she has a particular interest in Memory and Alzheimer’s care. She began her studies towards a Bachelor’s Degree in International Relations and Sociology at the University of Gambia and completed them at St. Mary’s College. There is always more to learn, so she is pursuing a Master’s Degree and will keep going till she gets her Doctorate. For the present, however, she is excited to be engaged advocating for elders and helping them be at home at Caritas House.

Sunshine Lane

Tazaa Sweeney

Tazaa has been working at Caritas House since its opening in January, 2003. She was working in a nursing home in the area and one day drove by the Jenkins campus. She saw the construction site and decided to inquire about a job. Tazaa took a part-time job at St. Ann Adult Day Services just so she could be part of the new program, and stepped up to full-time when Caritas House opened. Her current position is Lead Household Assistant for Sunshine Lane, where she has worked closely with Fatou on the changes that have taken place over the last year. Tazaa has a unique perspective on the culture changes, having been part of Caritas House from the beginning. She has been in elder care for 12 years and likes it because of the opportunity to establish close relationships with the elders and to become part of their family. She says that her goal is “to be sure that their needs are met.” Tazaa has some personal experiences working with elders in her own family. She came to Baltimore from York, Pennsylvania to help out her Aunt Virginia, who was in her 90s and living alone.

When Tazaa first heard about culture change, she was somewhat apprehensive, but was pleased when she saw how well things worked out. Now she has more time to spend with each elder and

can go into detail about their lives and how they want to spend their time. This works because she and her team now focus exclusively on the fourteen elders in Sunshine Lane and are no longer scheduled to work in the other two households. As a result, each household is becoming more of a close-knit family. Tazaa is absorbed in her new household; however, she also has some very definite ideas and goals for the future. She is currently taking pre-nursing courses at CCBC and plans to pursue a career in nursing. One of her dreams is that someday she would like to start a foundation for treatment and cure of Lupus. Her fifteen-year-old daughter Samyria has this condition, and Tazaa wants help her daughter, as well as work with children who also have Lupus.

Tazaa is pleased to be working at Caritas House and is grateful for that. She says that when she walks into the Dining Room after being off, the elders will say, “Hey Sweeney—we missed you; where’ve you been?” This gives her the feeling that they appreciate her and lets her know that she “must be doing something right.”

Jim Hillmann



St. Joachim & DePaul House Food Distribution

A house is not a home unless it contains food and fire for the mind as well as the body.
— Benjamin Franklin

Bright and early on a recent Friday morning, a Maryland Food Bank truck pulled up to the front of St. Joachim House and quietly unloaded more than 4600 lbs of canned goods. Close to 150 residents of St. Joachim House and DePaul House senior apartments and participants in the St. Ann Adult Day program benefited from the canned goods drop. Funded by a grant from the state, the Food Bank provided 179 cases of food items—corn, green beans, mixed vegetables, pork and beans, peaches, and applesauce; packages of macaroni and cheese and spaghetti; and jars of spaghetti sauce.

Volunteers from United Way and the Combined Federal Campaign were on hand to welcome residents to the food event, and students from Mt. St. Joseph High School helped with set-up and served as personal shoppers. The students unpacked cans, arranged food displays, assisted the residents in making their selections, and accompanied them back to their apartments with their bags.

Several residents also benefited from the SNAP Outreach that took place at the same time as the food distribution and applied for Food Stamps through the Maryland Food Bank. The SNAP Outreach program is aimed at individuals over the age of 54 in Baltimore City who may be eligible for food stamps. Funded by a grant from Feeding America, it is run in coordination with the Baltimore City Department of Social Services. Armed with a laptop and portable printer, the Maryland Food Bank SNAP coordinator took residents step-by-step through the application process. In a few weeks, residents who qualify will receive an Independence Card loaded with Food Stamp dollars. The SNAP Outreach held in conjunction with the canned foods drop was the fourth such outreach in the St. Joachim and DePaul apartments in recent months. Nearly 40 residents are now receiving Food Stamps as a direct result of the Maryland Food Bank's initiative.

Maryellen McHenry





**The Jenkins Senior
Living Community**

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