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DISTINCTIVE SENIOR LIVING WITH BUCKNER

Betty Nellius receives prestigious “Volunteer of the Year” award

Just a few weeks before her 90th birthday, Betty Nellius was awarded the prestigious “Volunteer of the Year” award at Buckner Calder Woods’ annual Volunteer Breakfast. Nellius’ positive attitude and willingness to spend countless hours inspiring other residents in her weekly art class were factors that contributed to her receiving the award.

“We’re so thrilled to give Betty this much-deserved honor from all

of us at the community,” said David Long, marketing director at Calder Woods. “Her ability to make others feel comfortable learning a new skill while having fun is something remarkable; she is truly one-of-a-kind and one of the many reasons our community is so special.”

Nellius is a retired art teacher and has lived at the Beaumont, Texas community for five years. About four years ago, she decided to use her talent in art to help other residents. Many of the residents had never painted before.

“My favorite thing about teaching art classes to the residents is the bond we form as we’re enjoying our time together,” Nellius said. “It brings me such joy to see my fellow residents so proud of what they’ve created, and I also like helping them realize their potential as artists.”

A life-long artist, Nellius earned her

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Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Texas and pursued a teaching certificate in her mid 40s after her husband, a dentist, retired early. She taught acrylics, watercolor, drawing and pastel high school classes for 12 years before retiring.

Last year, Nellius took second place in the drawing category of LeadingAge

Texas "Art is Ageless" competition. The contest receives more than 200 entries every year and is judged by experts in the field, such as professors, artists and authors.

Her ink drawings depicting the architecture and landscapes of Calder Woods proudly represent how seniors are continuing to contribute to their communities regardless of their age. ■

NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

Ventana by Buckner highlights our upward direction

Over the last couple of decades, Buckner has built on our solid reputation for providing unique senior living experiences for Buckner residents. It's what we call "the distinctive senior lifestyle of Buckner Retirement Services."

Nowhere is that distinctive brand of senior living more evident than the newly planned Ventana by Buckner in Dallas. The twin 12-story high-rise buildings will encompass about 450,000 square feet and sit on nearly three acres in Dallas. Ventana will feature 189 independent living

residences, 36 assisted living apartments, 24 memory care apartments, 48 skilled nursing private suites and 24 short-term rehabilitation suites.

In addition to the residences, the community includes three dining venues – formal, casual and a café-bistro; a wellness center featuring a fitness room with weights and cardio machines; and a host of other amenities, including an indoor, heated pool, aerobics room, multi-purpose rooms, movie theater, roof terraces with gardens, business center, library, day spa, concierge, valet and underground parking.

Ventana will be a Life Care Continuing Care Retirement Community. Life Care defines the

arrangement under which future care, such as assisted living, memory support, skilled nursing and rehabilitation services, is provided on the same campus at a reduced cost from what those in the public would pay for the same services. And, delivered by an organization with a successful track record of providing that care.

There's a lot to love about Ventana and it's the community that is setting our direction in senior living.

To learn more about the risk-free priority membership program or for more information about Ventana by Buckner, please visit www.VentanaByBuckner.com or call our Ventana by Buckner information center at 214-234-1035. ■

Assembling with joy

Buckner Westminster Place volunteers for after-school program

Once a month on a Tuesday morning, about a dozen employees and residents of Buckner Westminster Place in Longview, Texas gather together to assemble snack packs for children in the Buckner Children and Family Services (BCFS) after-school program to take home for the weekends.

“Many of the parents of these children are struggling to pay rent and provide healthy food for their kids,” said Wes Wells, executive director of Westminster Place. “By assembling bags of nutritious food, we’re ensuring that every child has what they need each day.”

The volunteers form an assembly line, efficiently and joyfully placing the food they bought earlier in the week into bags for each child.

“The spirit is in this room,” Wells said about the Tuesday morning packing. “They are the happiest assembly line and are upset when it is finished.”

In addition to the snacks, the volunteers also make sure to include a special item. One month, they included a children’s Bible donated by Gideons International. Another month, they included a bookmark with a Bible verse, and at Easter, knitted bunnies made their way into the packs.

“It’s become a really meaningful time as we partner with our staff, residents and BCFS. It’s a true blessing, and we enjoy it,” Wells said. “It reminds us that we serve seniors and children and are a part of Buckner’s broad outreach. It feels good to be part of Buckner.”

On Thursday afternoon after they deliver the packs to the school for distribution, they stay to spend time with the children in the library. They sit with the children, encouraging them, talking to them and reading stories to them or listening

to stories read by the children.

While the nutritional part of the packs is important, Wells feels as though the time the volunteers spend with the children is just as important.

“I think it breaks down some of the stereotypes that older people are scary or unapproachable,” he said.

But Wells admitted that his favorite part of the day is when they all gather on the bus afterward to go home and share about their experiences with the children. The spirit of camaraderie is apparent.

“We all just have that warm feeling because we know that we have done something good,” Wells said. “It’s like when you won a baseball game as a kid and that feeling of accomplishment. I love hearing everyone sharing about the day.” ■



A legacy of liberty

Bill Wood was 22 years old when he became company commander of the 9th American Army during World War II. The 9th Army consisted of 175 men, and 34 lost their lives on the battlefield.

Each Memorial Day and Independence Day, Wood, now a resident of Buckner Villas in Austin, Texas, remembers the men who served under him, the hardships they faced during war, the battles they fought together and those who were killed in combat.

“After somewhere between three to five weeks, you get used to being shot at and facing enemy fire,” Wood said. “Even if people around you are dying or crying out in pain, you learn to keep going and do what you can to stay alive.”

As a company commander of an infantry, Wood was consistently on the front lines and in danger of being hit. He led a rifle company of 175 men, 105 of whom received Purple Hearts after being attacked by snipers, enemy artillery or other forms of brutal combat. Thirty-four of the men in Wood’s company were killed and others sustained lifelong injuries.

“It was difficult moving forward under heavy fire and overcoming strong resistance as my buddies died around me,” Wood remembered. “They showcased great bravery, and I am extremely proud of their courage and trust in me as their leader.”

Joe Griffin, a fellow resident of Buckner Villas, served in World War II in the 4th Marine Division, which was formed in January of 1944 and set several outstanding records during the war. Like Wood, Griffin recalls with difficulty the pain of losing some of his fellow Marines while serving the U.S.

Griffin agrees that there are moments when every soldier believes he might lose his life on the battlefield.

“Many ask me if I was scared during the battles I fought, but I was not; I was just concerned about the odds of dying,” Griffin said. “You are facing a reality

that you may die. You may not make it to the next day, and you may not see your family again. When you are landing and there are large artillery shells hitting boats next to yours, your eyes grow wide as you think the next one might hit us, but you have to keep fighting. All you can do is keep fighting. The will of God is the only hope you have for staying alive.”

On May 29, 1944, Griffin and the rest of the 4th Division sailed for Saipan, stronghold of the Marianas Islands. During this battle, Griffin suffered wounds from rounds of rifle fire as they took cover in a self-dug foxhole.

After 24 days of fighting, Saipan was secured but with a cost of 5,981 Americans killed, wounded or missing. Griffin spent the rest of his days recovering in Pearl Harbor, Oakland Bay and Corpus Christi and was discharged when he was well enough to return to his home in Texas.

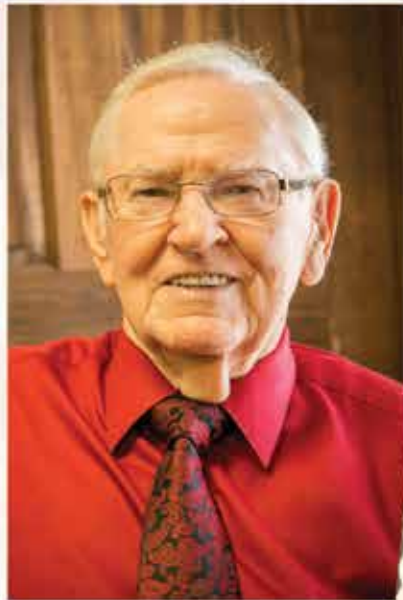
In 1984, forty years after the battle, Griffin went back to Saipan and found the place where he was shot and wounded in the foxhole.

“America has never been as unified as it was during the time that I served,” Griffin said. “I was extremely proud of my country then, as we had come together as a people to defend and protect the very rights and values we held closest to our hearts. We cannot live in the past, but we can certainly learn from it.”

There are 39 veterans at Buckner Villas, and the staff enjoy hearing their memories of adventures as soldiers.

“We feel privileged to hear about their experiences and learn more about the wars, battles and people that forever changed the country we live in,” said Doyle Antle, executive director of Buckner Villas. “Hearing their stories and seeing their memorabilia bestows on us a great pride and appreciation for everything they fought for during their service and everything they still believe in today.” ■

Joe Griffin (right) served in the 4th Marine Division during World War II. Bill Wood (below) also served during World War II in the 9th American Army. During Memorial Day and Independence Day, both men often think about the hardships they faced in war and remember those who sacrificed their lives.



Healthy lives, joyful hearts



Houston seniors hit the pavement in May to promote wellness. On the last Wednesday each May, seniors across the U.S. participate in the largest health promotion for older adults, National Senior Health and Fitness Day. Residents and staff of Buckner Parkway Place in Houston joined for a community-wide half-mile walk to support the cause on May 27, walking around the independent living area, through the community's gardens and around the skilled nursing building.

Two residents of Parkway Place know the importance of incorporating fitness into their daily routines. Bob Burchard, 77, and Wava Hayes, 85, exercise multiple days each week to insure they can continue to enjoy and celebrate all life has to offer.

Nearly a year ago, Burchard came to Parkway Place after suffering a heart attack. He was active in adulthood – training for marathons and playing tennis – but he had a genetic predisposition to heart problems. After the heart attack, Burchard went through rehab and began to understand the importance of continuing a regular exercise program.

“What I learned through the rehabilitation process is that it is essential for seniors to

continue physical activity of some kind as we age,” Burchard said. “Parkway Place has a wonderful wellness center which has every piece of equipment I need to keep my heart healthy, and the staff is always willing to help if I have a question.”

Hayes continues to break a sweat by attending exercise classes five days a week. She knows her body well enough to understand that staying active and social helps her feel better over all.

“I fell in love with Wii bowling when I moved here two years ago and have 13 perfect games so far,” Hayes said. “I also try to walk a lot around the community and keep a pedometer on me to track my steps.”

Parkway Place residents and staff are focused on the long-term effects fitness has on seniors. The community devoted the entire month of May to help residents stay active and mindful of their health.

“We truly want the residents to get the most out of their lives, and physical fitness is one of the ways to help maintain independence for as long as possible,” said Rachel Ramirez, wellness director at Parkway Place. “Encouraging this behavior while making it accessible and fun is just as important.” ■

Eye-opening experience

86-year-old shares about living with Alzheimer's

John Dierker, an 86-year-old resident of Sagecrest Alzheimer's Care Center at Baptist Retirement Community in San Angelo, Texas, had a wonderful life when everything changed.

Dierker practiced law for 30 years, achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, was married to a beautiful wife and had two daughters and a son. Then, he lost his wife to a battle with leukemia and underwent major surgeries due to his own health problems. Later, Dierker ended up in an unimaginable situation when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

"I honestly never thought I would be diagnosed with something like this," Dierker said. "Hopefully, I can use these experiences to help others in a similar situation. They are doing experiments all over the world and some seem to be yielding really positive outcomes. That gives me hope. If ever given the chance to participate in one of the more promising studies, I will gladly do so. Perhaps I can help bring them one step closer to treating Alzheimer's."

At first, Dierker and his son didn't realize he was experiencing symptoms of Alzheimer's. Little

things like forgetting someone's name showed the early onset of the disease. Once Dierker was diagnosed, his son thought it would be best to move him into Sagecrest Alzheimer's Care.

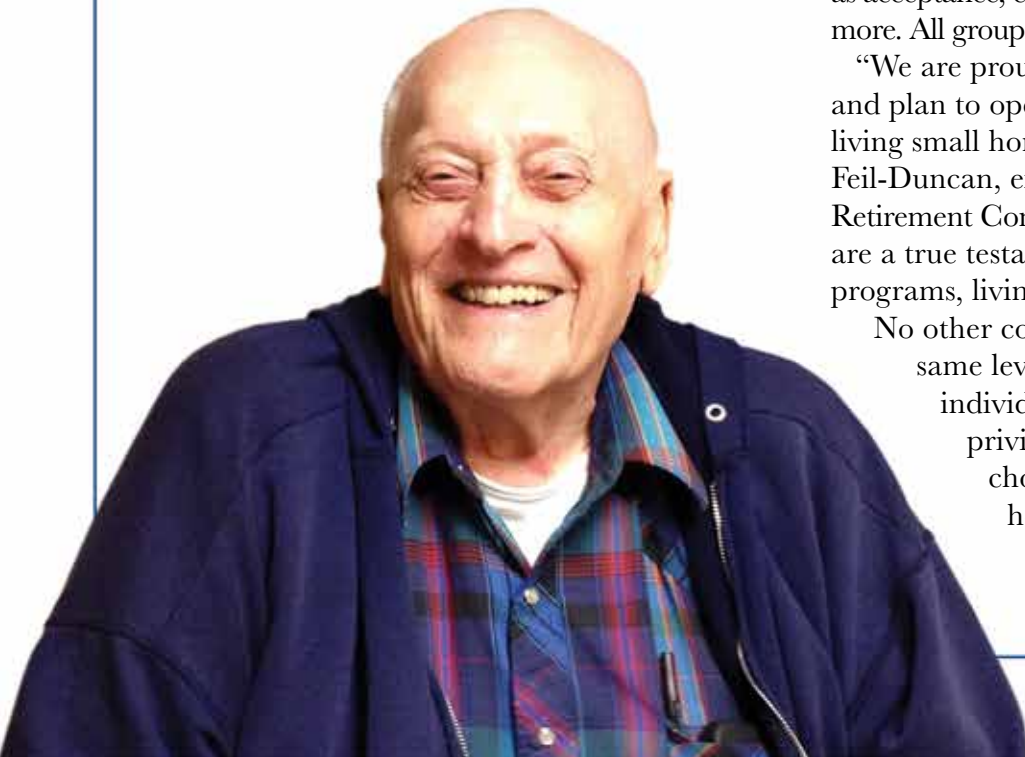
Dierker feels at peace living at Sagecrest, an innovative, nationally recognized memory care home at Baptist Retirement Community. He likes his new home and enjoys the regularly scheduled musical performances and various entertainers who come to visit. He feels the community's team members are extremely supportive and knowledgeable.

"The hardest part for me has been losing my independence," Dierker said. "Alzheimer's can be really dangerous for someone living alone or without the right kind of care. If you find yourself in a position where you do require people to care for you, treating them with kindness goes a long way. Nurses and caregivers deserve great recognition for their work."

Baptist Retirement Community hosts several support groups for the loved ones of family members who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. The groups cover a myriad of topics, such as acceptance, caregiving, stages of grief and more. All groups are free and open to the public.

"We are proud of our work in memory care and plan to open two memory care assisted living small homes this fall," said Quinda Feil-Duncan, executive director of Baptist Retirement Community. "John's experiences are a true testament to the design of our programs, living space and care delivered.

No other community in the area offers the same level of care that caters to each individual's changing needs. We feel privileged that residents like John chose our community as their home and are pleased with the care they are receiving." ■



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Featuring 189 spacious independent living apartments and a full complement of services, programs and amenities, Ventana will not be just an exclusive address in a desirable setting. It will be an inclusive community of neighbors who share an appreciation for living well, and a passion for doing good.

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