Bright Days Ahead at Vincentian’s Memory Lane

Life feels turned upside down for people with memory impairment, dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. After decades of life a certain way, their world fades into something completely different. Familiar routines become confusing and difficult. Friends and family seem no different than strangers. Words, objects and images are foreign and hard to understand which leads to frustration, and at times, fear and anger.

Letting the world know that he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, Ronald Reagan said, “I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life.” Our former president understood the challenging road ahead for him and his family.

Vincentian is pioneering a new approach to memory care that helps turn the world right-side up for our residents. Much has been learned as we progress in our understanding of how this affliction affects both mind and body. For example, we know that memory impaired people are less confused when they’re immersed in an environment that reminds them of their early adulthood — that special time in their lives when they first fell in love.

Vincentian Home’s newest community, Memory Lane, does just that — with furniture, artwork and music from the 1930s and 40s. Beyond decor, the entire community is open and liberating. Private rooms with private bathrooms feature an enclosed porch so residents can go inside or outside while remaining safe.

Open features and familiar surroundings are vital in caring for the memory impaired. Vincentian is committed to maximizing quality of life for these residents, recognizing that they are not sick patients in need of treatment — they are people that need a special type of care and the proper environment to ensure their safety and brighten their days.

Boy Scouts Share Memories at Vincentian Home

Local boy scouts Andrew and Stephen Turzai recently visited Vincentian Home as part of a merit badge project. The boys read two stories to a group of residents and shared memories of movie stars, first jobs, recreation and other topics. Their father, PA State Rep. Mike Turzai also joined the discussion.
The President’s Corner

Pittsburgh prides itself on being a city of neighborhoods. The Steel City’s communities are varied and distinctive. Consider the Strip District’s open marketplace, the trendy rebirth of Lawrenceville and the vibrant nightlife on the South Side, to name a few. So, too, are blossoming communities at the Vincentian ministries.

Just like in the City of Pittsburgh, our communities have character. Residents enjoy their neighborhoods and visiting others. There’s something for everyone.

The Cultural District at Vincentian Home takes on a personality of its own, with spirited Wii Bowling games and lively chats with Duquesne University students. Meanwhile, at Marian Manor, the Artist-in-Residence program delights our residents who share a love for art. Residents also enjoy an intergenerational book club and yoga designed for seniors.

Vincentian is making great strides with physical transformations, innovative staffing models and new technologies—all to meet the needs of a diverse and changing society.

Guided by the pioneer spirit of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, we’re designing new approaches to senior care. We’re focusing on our residents’ abilities, not their limitations. We’re maximizing quality of life and providing environments that promote successes and inspire joy. When you visit one of our ministries, I believe you will see our Mission in action.

Yours in Service,

Raymond E. Washburn
President and CEO
Vincentian Collaborative System

First-ever MLK Day Multi-Cultural Fair at Vincentian Home

More than 100 volunteers brought the world to the residents of Vincentian Home at the first-ever multi-cultural fair on Monday, Jan. 20. Residents, families and friends enjoyed arts, culture, food and entertainment from around the world throughout the day. Activities included live Chinese and Japanese music, international cuisine, a program on the cultural history of the African American church in America, origami demonstrations as well as arts and crafts from Central America, the Middle East and Asia.

Vincentian de Marillac resident shares wit and knowledge with Pitt pharmacy students

Dolores Kubiak was a curious child, for whom the bottles behind the pharmacy counter held as much fascination as the five-cent ice cream cones she bought there. That curiosity, combined with hard work, a desire to help others, and a talent for chemistry, led to a long career as a pharmacist and educator in four states.

During her recent rehab stay at Vincentian de Marillac, Dolores shared an afternoon with pharmacy students, where she dispensed sound advice with a dose of wit. This semester, five University of Pittsburgh students will spend time learning communications skills that will enhance their ability to serve elder customers. When they met Dolores, a retired pharmacist who has maintained an active license since 1951, they quickly scheduled a coffee klatch to learn more.

“Prepare for and embrace change, because pharmacy is a dynamic profession,” proffered Dolores. Gone are the days when pharmacists would concoct their own ointments and rely on paper manuals, she said. Today, pharmacists can access electronic records, research thousands of drugs and interactions at the touch of a button, and must understand many different insurance plans. Customers are more educated, but one group remains difficult: Men who are looking for something to make their hair grow are the most challenging customers!

As Dolores and the students discussed everything from how to spot phony prescriptions to memories of difficult customers, they shared life lessons that can’t be culled from textbooks. Kaitlin Zeis, one of the students, said that she didn’t have much experience with the elderly before coming to de Marillac, but now realizes that “everyone is different and so you connect with them in different ways.”

Thanks to residents such as Dolores, who share their skills and talents every day, our Vincentian communities are rich centers of intergenerational learning. In parting, Dolores left the students with these wise words: “Never stop learning.” 🙏
Affair of the Heart 2014 raised more than $120,000 for residents at Vincentian de Marillac and Marian Manor! With the city of Pittsburgh as the backdrop, guests enjoyed fabulous food and wine, favorite tunes crooned by Nick Fiasco, dancing and exciting auction packages. Thank you to our gold sponsors, Graziano Construction and Blumling and Guskey, and thanks to all of our sponsors, donors and guests who made the event such a success! 😊

Artists-In-Residence Program a Hit at Marian Manor

As the Polar Vortex sent a chill through the city this winter, more than a dozen residents at Marian Manor were transported to a sandy beach, courtesy of the Artists-in-Residence program. Right before the women’s eyes, skilled painter Catherine Brown transformed a blank canvas into a serene landscape featuring a shoreline sunset. The painting was a group effort, with Catherine asking audience members to suggest colors and design ideas as she worked.

The Artist-in-Residence program features a different artist each month. Recently, Catherine demonstrated painting techniques and talked to the women who gathered around a glowing fireplace while classical music played softly in the background.

Resident Mary Cerchiara is a fan. She has attended almost all of Catherine’s painting sessions, declaring them “very relaxing.” Chatting amiably with her friends, Mary said that she’s an artist herself and that when she was fifteen years old, one of her paintings was displayed in an exhibit in Oakland.

The artists love it, too. “I’ve really had fun meeting new people,” said Catherine. With seven years’ experience teaching the Urban League Charter School, she seized the opportunity to share her talents with a new audience.

With upcoming visits from artists in painting, ceramics and textiles, in addition to regular literary groups and musical guests, Marian Manor offers abundant cultural activities. Artists-in-Residence helps residents discover their talents, build camaraderie and enjoy the rich talent available in our city — all from the comfort of home. 😊
Mission Statement:
Compelled by the love of Christ, Vincentian Collaborative System nurtures and sustains a ministry of compassionate care that preserves the human dignity of persons within a diverse and changing society.

Learn more about how you can help. For more information, call 412-548-4056.