



Community

The Culpeper's bridge club provides social connections, mental fitness

Jean Isaacson was disappointed there wasn't a bridge club at The Culpeper, the LifeSpire of Virginia continuing care retirement community where she's lived since 2013. An accountant who had started her own business in 1980, Isaacson learned to play bridge as a teen and taught the game when she lived in Chicago from 1972-1975.

Then she met Lila Bunt, another avid bridge player who has lived at The Culpeper since 2011.

"Lila and I were walking from 'the big house' (the building that houses the dining room and community center) to our cottages," Isaacson recalls. "I told her how I wished we had a bridge club. 'Let's start one!' Lila said. So we did."

Bunt laughs. "Two heads plus a need equals a bridge club," she says.

The two women started the club with one table in 2013. Then, they asked Pat Ballard, The Culpeper's director of resident services, to add it to The Culpeper's activities' calendar each month. Soon Bunt and Isaacson were offering weekly classes to those interested in learning the game. Eight

players joined a cruise the group took in early 2015, and today the group has grown to 14.

"We need two more players to have four tables," Isaacson says.

'MENTAL GYMNASTICS'

Bridge evolved from the British card game whist and dates back to the 1700s. In 1925 railroad heir Harold Stirling Vanderbilt created the modern version of contract bridge, the version The Culpeper club plays. According to David Owen of The New Yorker, Vanderbilt "had been annoyed by what he felt were deficiencies in the previous version, auction bridge." Contract

bridge caught on quickly, especially as the Great Depression set in, and by the 1940s, 44 percent of American families played the game.

Today, an estimated 25 million Americans enjoy bridge, including such notables as Warren Buffet and Bill Gates, who often play as a team. The majority of bridge players are over age 50, says Jon Saraceno in an article for AARP.

"Bridge's intricacies make it particularly appealing for those who want to sharpen acuity with mental gymnastics," Saraceno

Continued on Page 8



Jean Isaacson (left) and Lila Bunt (right) discuss the bridge club the two started at The Culpeper

Community Matters

A LifeSpire of Virginia Publication
Jan.,Feb.,Mar. 2017 - Vol. 3, No. 1

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Design Services provided by

Anstey Hodge Advertising Group
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Community Matters is published four times per year by LifeSpire of Virginia. Editorial submissions are welcome. Please send queries to Ann Lovell. Submissions may be edited for length, style, content, and clarity.

LifeSpire of Virginia operates four continuing care retirement communities throughout Virginia: The Culpeper in Culpeper; The Glebe in Daleville; The Chesapeake in Newport News and Lakewood in Richmond.

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Contents

- 1 The Culpeper's bridge club provides social connections, mental fitness
- 3 From the Editor
- 4 Focus on Community
The Chesapeake's Funny Farm offers community vegetables, butterflies and education.
- 5 Book Review:
Missing Mary: A crash course in Alzheimer's Dementia by J. Keith McMullin
- 5 The Glebe: A financial success story
- 6 Spirit of Giving
- 6 Employee Education Fund
- 7 Staff Spotlight:
Walter Gil is grateful and giving back

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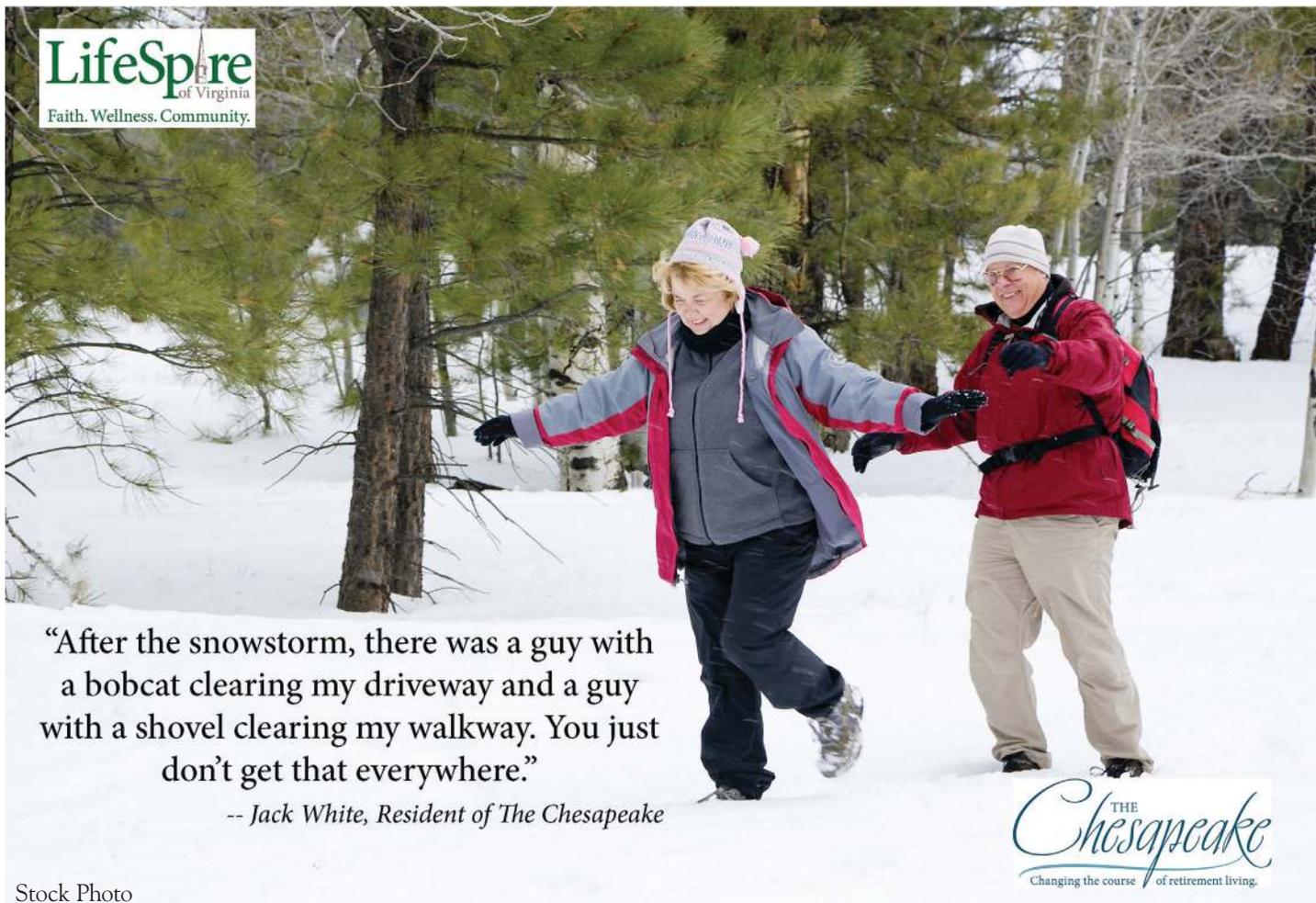
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There's a lot of talk about the need for "community" these days. Ear buds, iPods and social media apps have made it easier than ever for young people to disengage from real face-to-face conversations in favor of staring at a screen. But it isn't just young people who need community. As we grow older, staying socially engaged is important not only for our mental well-being but for our physical health as well. At LifeSpire, community is foundational to our identity, and Jean Isaacson, Lila Bunt, Jim Johnston, Cliff Francis, and Walter Gil each exemplify what it means to take an active role in their communities. We think you'll enjoy their stories.

— Ann Lovell, Editor-in-Chief



“After the snowstorm, there was a guy with a bobcat clearing my driveway and a guy with a shovel clearing my walkway. You just don’t get that everywhere.”

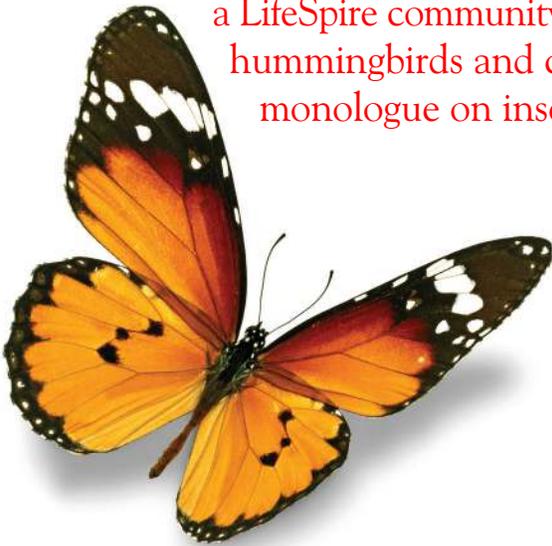
-- Jack White, Resident of The Chesapeake

Stock Photo

THE Chesapeake
Changing the course of retirement living.

The Chesapeake's 'Funny Farm' offers community vegetables, butterflies and education

Jim Johnston knows a lot about butterflies and the plants that support them. Walking through the resident-run and managed vegetable and flower garden at The Chesapeake, a LifeSpire community in Newport News, the active sights and sounds of butterflies, hummingbirds and cicadas provide a rhythmic harmony to Johnston's monologue on insect life in the garden.



"This is milkweed from South Africa, which the caterpillars just seem to really love," Johnston says, pointing out a particular plant. "For me it's been an annual. I just can't seem to winter it over."

As a master gardener, Johnston uses his skills not only to provide conditions for butterflies to flourish; he also educates area students on the importance of butterflies, bees, and other pollinators to the life cycle of plants.

"Caterpillars will hide in here. It's hard to find them," Johnston says, pointing out some of the plants. "When I do these talks with kids, I always have one of these things with me – a caterpillar or two – and say, 'Who can find the caterpillar?' And even the teachers normally can't find them. You really have to look."

Johnston began growing butterflies in earnest in 1995 when he helped elementary school science teachers raise their own butterflies instead

of ordering them from a biological supply house.

"Three teachers had ordered what they thought were Monarch butterflies," Johnston explains. "Instead, they got Painted Lady. I suggested they grow their own Black Swallowtail, since they are native to the area and fly from mid-April to mid-October, which is much more conducive to the school year than the Monarch life cycle. One of the teachers already had dill and parsley growing on her back porch, so we started there. Then I planted fennel in the garden."

the wide variety of vegetables growing in the community space — Johnston has planted milkweed, fennel and parsley. Although Johnston started the butterfly work at the farm, residents at The Chesapeake have been raising vegetables much longer. Cliff Francis, who oversees the vegetable garden with a team of other residents, started helping with the farm the spring after he moved to The Chesapeake in 2003. In 2016, Francis says, the gardeners planted 110 tomato plants that yielded more than 1,200 tomatoes—plenty to share with the community.

Continued on Page 8

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— Jim Johnston

Each caterpillar is plant-specific for food, Johnston explains. "The Black Swallowtail lays its eggs on parsley, dill, fennel, rue, Queen Anne's lace, carrot greens and Golden Alexander. The Monarch only lays its eggs on milkweed plants."

Since beginning his work at the "Funny Farm" — named by a resident after the original group of farmers joked about



Jim Johnston discusses butterflies at The Chesapeake.

The Glebe: A financial success story

Fully occupied, strong financial health, solid relationships among residents and staff, and a deep-seated sense of community—these results are worth celebrating, says Helen Burnett, The Glebe’s marketing director.

“The Glebe has that ‘special something’ that people want to buy into,” Burnett says. “It’s especially exciting given the financial difficulties we experienced a few years ago.”

The Glebe’s road to financial success was paved with challenges, but their success story is one of a community that persevered and came out strong. The Glebe incorporated in 1998, but a myriad of challenges, including local flooding and construction delays, put the community behind schedule from the outset, frustrating progress of the state-of-the-art continuing care retirement community.

The Glebe opened in 2005, and in 2008, Botetourt County challenged The Glebe’s not-for-profit status. The Virginia Supreme Court heard the case and ruled in The Glebe’s favor. Later, in a 2009 interview, Botetourt County district supervisor Terry Austin identified suing The Glebe as “the worst decision Botetourt county made” during his term. “The Glebe is truly a great asset to Botetourt County,” Austin said. “I regret we created a bump in the road for both them and us along the way, and I wish them all of the success they deserve.”

Unfortunately, this “bump in the road” coupled with the other challenges led to ensuing financial struggles, and financial restructuring became necessary. However, with the support of The Glebe’s parent company (now LifeSpire of Virginia) as well as The Glebe’s



leadership and residents, the community persevered. Today, The Glebe’s future is “as bright as it’s ever been,” says Joy McNabb, a Glebe resident since 2006. “We are comfortable we’ll be taken care of, and the residents here have something very, very special.”

The Glebe’s Executive Director Ben Burks agrees, “Our occupancy is at 95 percent and growing. We’ve put in place a number of management practices designed to help us listen, watch and improve. ... We know the quality of life of our residents hinges on the culture of our work. To us, that is very significant.”

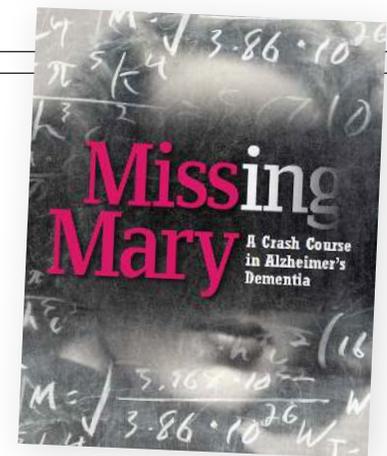
Book Review: ‘Missing Mary: A crash course in Alzheimer’s Dementia’ by J. Keith McMullin

Alzheimer’s disease is an irreversible, progressive brain disease that afflicts more than 5.3 million people in the United States and is the sixth leading cause of death for Americans. Behind the numbers and definitions, Alzheimer’s robs its victims of the ability to carry out the most basic daily tasks, and families often use words like “brutal” and “unrelenting” to describe its effects. At this point, there is no cure for Alzheimer’s disease. It claims 100 percent of its victims.

In “Missing Mary: A crash course in Alzheimer’s Dementia”, J. Keith McMullin, shares the struggle of Alzheimer’s from the perspective of a caregiver. McMullin’s mother, Mary Compton McMullin, a former mathematics professor with a genius I.Q.,

succumbed to the disease in 2013. With insight and humor, McMullin describes the twists and turns a family experiences resulting from an Alzheimer’s diagnosis. He also offers practical guidance for managing the disease and candidly discusses the challenges associated with selecting an assisted living facility that would provide the highest quality care for his mother.

Narrowing the list of options from the more than 100 senior care facilities in Richmond, Virginia, could have been an arduous task, McMullin writes. But for Miss Mary, the community that best met her needs was Lakewood, a LifeSpire community in Richmond’s West End. Lakewood provided the care McMullin’s mother would need until the end of her life, including hospice care.



“There was no way my mother could play musical chairs and manage changing facilities and care teams every time her care needs increased,” McMullin writes. Her preference for a faith-based community narrowed the list of options even further.

Missing Mary—available for purchase on Amazon—is more than an easy, well-written read about the struggle with Alzheimer’s dementia. Ultimately, the book is a tribute to a remarkable woman—and a son who loved her.

Spirit of Giving

Nothing speaks more to the value of family than the 2016 Spirit of Giving Award, which was presented to Jim Jacobsen, executive director of The Culpeper, in an awards banquet in October. The award recognizes the LifeSpire community with the highest percentage of staff who give regularly to the Employee Crisis Fund (ECF). Funded through payroll deductions, the ECF provides financial support in times of crisis for an employee, such as a family illness.

“The ‘Spirit of Giving’ award truly tells the ‘Family Story’ displayed at The Culpeper,” Jacobsen said. “Our staff care so much for one another. It is truly a blessing to have such a family atmosphere within our great community. I am so proud of my team and appreciate their dedication to the residents and to each other.”

Twinkle Moore, an employee for 29 years who now works in The Culpeper’s

administration office, has been giving to benevolence since 1994 and to the ECF since it began in 2014. Vicky McClung, a nursing employee for 23 years, says she and her co-workers have grown up together. She contributes to the Fund knowing that the money raised supports her friends. Jackie Gordon, a housekeeping employee for six years, already understands the importance of the ECF as she has seen staff assisted by the funds. Janet Caplinger, who works in assisted living, says it this way: “I am more blessed to be able to give.”

In addition to the ECF, LifeSpire and the VBH Foundation have also created a new Employee Education Fund (EEF), which will provide financial support to staff in the form of college scholarships and tuition reimbursement. The EEF is funded through both employee and donor gifts.

The comfort and assurance that our founder Dr. J.T. Edwards promised to



Culpeper Staff display the “Spirit of Giving” award the community received in Oct. 2016. Left to right: Janet Caplinger, Jackie Gordon, Vicky McClung, Twinkle Moore.

Virginia’s seniors will always be at the forefront of LifeSpire’s values. But it is the commitment that every employee has to one another that enables our communities to feel like home for everyone.

Jodi Leonard is the annual fund manager for the VBH Foundation. She can be reached at jleonard@vbh.org or 804-521-9213

Employee Education Fund

The LifeSpire of Virginia mantra—“Faith. Wellness. Community.”—represents an unwavering commitment to residents’ well-being and health, contentment and engagement, and independence and safety. The Employee Education Fund (EEF) is one way LifeSpire is extending these principles to its employees. The EEF provides financial assistance to deserving staff through:

- Tuition reimbursement toward a degree, continuing education, or certification
- College scholarships for college-aged staff and staff’s children and grandchildren.

To make a gift to the EEF, please visit the Employee Education Fund tab on the VBH Foundation’s website: lifespireliving.org/foundation/employee-education



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Walter Gil *is grateful and giving back*

When Walter Gil isn't on duty at The Culpeper, you can find him spending his evenings at The Lollipop Station. Walter, who serves as The Culpeper's director of maintenance, opened the candy and toy shop in downtown Culpeper with his wife, Faith, in 2014. Located in a historic building on Davis Street, the business is quickly becoming a popular fixture in downtown Culpeper: The Culpeper Chamber of Commerce named the couple Entrepreneur of the Year in 2015.

Although neither of the Gils has a business background, they did extensive research on the types of businesses that thrive in towns like Culpeper. As they considered the types of products they would offer, Walter said manufacturers offered them merchandise on credit because they were impressed with the business model and plan.

"There was adult shopping and entertainment, but really nothing for kids," Walter said in an interview with The Culpeper Star Exponent in 2015. "Our original idea was for a candy store, but we saw communities with specialty toy stores and found a niche that was missing there."

The Gils consider the toy store a "labor of love," and they consistently look for creative ways to support the community. They purposely price their educational toys to bring families of all economic levels into downtown. A stage in the shop offers Saturday morning story time and puppet shows, and a party room hosts birthdays and other special events.

"Giving back to the community is important to me and my family," said Walter, who immigrated from Guatemala City to northern Virginia in 1999.



Walter and Faith Gil show off some of the products they offer at their store, The Lollipop Station in Culpeper.

His grandparents were naturalized citizens, Walter says, and he never doubted that he would follow their path. Walter became a U.S. citizen in 2009 to provide a better life for his two sons, who also became citizens in 2012 and 2013.

Neither Walter, who joined the staff at The Culpeper in 2016, nor Faith is a stranger to hard work. Walter previously worked as the maintenance director at Culpeper Health and Rehabilitation Center. Faith, a social worker, is a regional coordinator for Easter Seals. Both manage the store after their regular working hours.

At The Culpeper, Walter and his team are heavily involved with the expansion project, working with architects and designers on construction details for the new facility. Meeting the daily challenges of a 70-year old building isn't always easy, Walter says, but he loves the people—both residents and staff.

"The staff come and do their jobs every day with smiles on their faces, and that's very motivating for everybody," Walter said. "We've got a great team, and that's what I love the most."

LifeSpire
Of Virginia
Faith. Wellness. Community.

LifeSpire of Virginia operates four exceptional communities that welcome people from all faiths and share the steadfast mission of providing Dignity in Living.

VBH Foundation
Faithfully supporting LifeSpire's benevolent mission

The VBH Foundation raises funds to help LifeSpire's life care residents who outlive their financial resources remain in their homes. In 2016, we provided roughly \$1,100,000 in benevolence to 59 residents across all four communities.

THE CULPEPER

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The Culpeper's bridge club provides social connections, mental fitness | *Continued from Page 1*

“I told her how I wished we had a bridge club. ‘Let’s start one!’ Lila said. So we did.”

— Jean Isaacson

writes. “A study in 2000 at the University of California Berkeley, found strong evidence that an area in the brain used in playing bridge stimulates the immune system. Researchers suggest that is because players must use memory, visualization and sequencing.”

Additional research by Dr. Claudia Kawas of the University of California Irvine, seems to indicate bridge, with its added social element, may have a slight edge over other mental games in staving off dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

“We think, for example, that it’s very important to use your brain, to keep challenging your mind, but all mental activities may not be equal,” Kawas says. “We’re seeing some evidence that a social component may be crucial.”

A REWARDING PURSUIT

Isaacson and Bunt carve out lots of time each week for bridge. The two women teach bridge on Wednesdays, developing lessons based on the book, “The Fun Way to Advanced Bridge” by Harry Lampert.

“Many of those who come last played in college,” Bunt says. “It’s a great way to welcome new residents to the community.”

The group plays together at The Culpeper on Fridays. Isaacson plays with a group at her home on Saturdays,

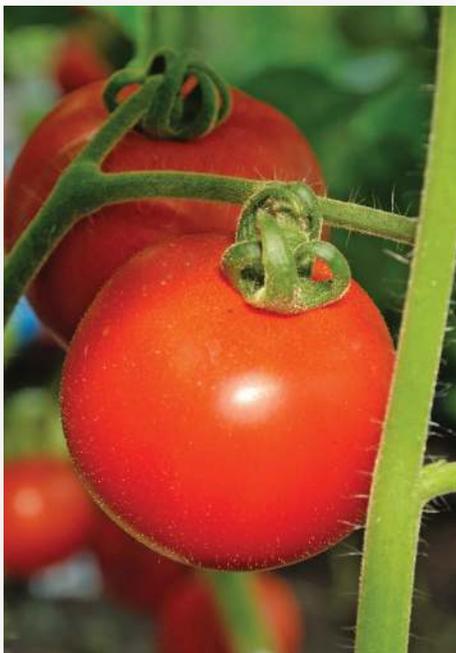
and Bunt and her husband, John, play Tuesday evenings at the local country club with people from the greater Culpeper community.

When they aren’t playing bridge, the two women are also involved in other activities in their community. Bunt and her husband regularly work in the food pantry at their local church, St. Stephens Episcopal in downtown Culpeper. Isaacson reads to an older friend, plays rummy with older residents, and enjoys caring for her granddaughter one day a week.

Still, bridge has provided a strong bond between the two women and allowed them to forge friendships with other residents as well.

“It’s very rewarding,” Bunt says. “It keeps us busy and provides a lot of good laughs.”

The Chesapeake’s ‘Funny Farm’ offers community vegetables, butterflies and education | *Continued from Page 4*



“A lot of people don’t realize that it takes right much work,” says Francis, a retired Navy captain who learned to farm as a boy growing up in the Great Depression. “They think you can plant tomatoes today and have them tomorrow, but it doesn’t work that way.”

Anyone who has done any kind of farming—or even tried to plant a backyard vegetable garden—knows Francis speaks the truth. Raising vegetables and flowers takes hours of work, but the effort is worth it, he says.

“These farmers derive great pleasure growing produce to share with residents and staff,” Francis says. “The work is satisfying, even on hot summer days.”



Everyone loves a good story. LifeSpire residents, their families, and staff especially enjoy hearing each other’s family stories: the traditions and events, life lessons and humor that shaped our lives.

Record YOUR family story and photo, to be saved and treasured for all time. Visit <http://lifespireliving.org/foundation/story-bank/>, click on the “Story Bank Logo” and follow the prompts.