

Fans Create Football Frenzy

Indian River Estates, Vero Beach, Fla.

Contact: Wendy Bushong, resident services director, wendyb@actslife.org or (772) 562-7400.

Vero Beach High School's Fighting Indians players and cheerleaders got ready for some football last fall at the Indian River Estates (IRE) retirement community. The students staged a pep rally with spirited cheer routines in the community's lobby, which had been transformed into tailgate party central, complete with chicken wings and all the fixins. A busload of IRE residents has been going to the games for years. Peg Friedrichs has been taking the bus and tailgating at the games since 1987 and celebrated her 99th birthday in November cheering the Fighting Indians on to victory.

The 2008 season was a big one for residents with four tailgate party cookouts for ticket-holders in the stadium lot before games. "We even have a tent ... decorated with Indian River Estates says Go Fighting Indians' banners," says Wendy Bushong, resident services director. "Coach [Gary] Coggins is very supportive of the IRE fans and even allows the bus to park directly under the stadium so residents can have easy access."

What made the season even more fun, says Bushong, is that "some of the players and cheerleaders are wait staff servers at IRE, and one of the team's quarterbacks is [IRE East] Executive Director George Bryan's son."

Senior-Living IT Staff Find Support Among Peers

Anabaptist Providers Group, Lancaster, Pa.

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Much like the Maytag repairman, information technology (IT) workers in senior-living settings can get lonely, not for lack of work but because there are few technology workers around with whom to share ideas and troubleshoot problems.

Members of the Anabaptist Providers Group have collaborated for several years to overcome such professional isolation. Twice each year, IT staff from the alliance's member organizations meet to share best practices, talk about innovative projects and stay current on technology trends. They've shared information about their organization's technology goals, operations and security challenges, experiences with vendors and the effect of culture change on technology services and processes.

The IT professionals who participate in these discussions find that the benefits have extended well beyond their semi-annual meetings, as they now have a peer resource network to call on any time they need feedback or advice. The group also has formed a Yahoo group for virtual knowledge-sharing.

Conversation Partners Practice English Skills

ACTS Retirement-Life Communities, Inc., West Point, Pa.

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Indian River Estates

Peg Friedrichs, 99, a resident at Indian River Estates, has been tailgating at Vero Beach High School football games for more than 20 years. Indian River Estates welcomed the team for a pep rally in the community's lobby.

Recognizing the growing diversity of its staff, ACTS Retirement-Life Communities has begun a program called "Conversation Partners" at many of its sites. Employees and resident volunteers pair up to engage in social conversation to help the employees practice their English skills and feel at ease in daily conversation.

For those whose primary language is not English, practicing English in a nonthreatening environment has meant increased confidence in speaking and interacting on the job and in other aspects of their lives, says Michael Smith, ACTS corporate director of public relations.



ACTS Retirement-Life Communities, Inc.

Lizbet Sanchez (left) and Reemberto Smith (right), housekeepers at ACTS' Southampton Estates community, with resident Cornelia Curran, who helps with English language instruction for employees.

“Genuine friendships have developed,” says Smith. “We’ve also noticed employee retention and satisfaction that we attribute to the program.”

Mentors Help Students Learn Philanthropic ‘Habits of the Heart’

Laurel Lake Retirement Community, Hudson, Ohio

Contact: Barbara Boyce, project coordinator, barbara_boyce@hmis.org or (330) 655-1435.

Laurel Lake Retirement Community has partnered with Seton Catholic School to bring a national youth philanthropy education program, “Habits of the Heart,” to Northeastern Ohio. Supported by a grant from the Burton D. Morgan Foundation, this intergenerational project engages and prepares young people to carry on the American philanthropic tradition.

Seton’s seventh and eighth grade students complete the Habits of the Heart curriculum and apply their knowledge by serving on an intergenerational philanthropy board with Laurel Lake mentors to learn the grant-making process. The experience culminates with the opportunity to distribute \$10,000 in grants to the greater community.

The students experience the rewards of serving, caring and giving as they establish grant guidelines, accept and review proposals, interview applicants and make funding decisions. Their older-adult mentors bring a wealth of knowledge to equip students with the skills and motivation required to develop the habit of giving. The classroom experience makes a clear connection between the program’s “heart habits” and the principles of social justice infused in the school’s curriculum.

The Morgan Foundation has extended funding for a second year. Seton Catholic School, Laurel Lake’s partner in “Habits of the Heart,” received a 2008 Catholic Schools for Tomorrow Award for innovation in education.

Sensor Technology Studied at Masonicare

Masonicare, Wallingford, Conn.

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A two-year study by researchers at Quinnipiac University will attempt to determine whether seniors monitored by Healthsense, Inc.’s wireless senior technology at Masonicare in Wallingford, Conn., are able to remain independent longer, delay hospital and nursing home admission, and attend better to their own basic needs.

Researchers will study two groups of 34 residents housed in independent living and assisted living residences on the Masonicare campus. One group has the monitoring technology in their homes; the other group does not.

The study’s first goal is to see if there are any differences between the two groups over the next two years in hospital and

nursing home admissions. Second, researchers will compare how the two groups function—for instance, whether residents with access to the sensor technology are able to maintain their activities of daily living longer.

The study employs a wide range of sensors to monitor residents’ daily activities and detect unexplained changes in behavior that may indicate a need for assistance. These include tilt sensors on medicine boxes to monitor medication usage; motion detectors on walls to detect movement within rooms; contact sensors on kitchen cupboards and refrigerator doors to monitor whether the resident is eating regularly; sensors to monitor toilet usage; pressure sensors on beds to detect when a resident gets in or out of bed; and home-or-away sensors that can detect when the resident leaves and returns to the residence. Using algorithms to predict residents’ behavior based on their individual habits, the technology’s operating system analyzes correlated data from the sensors and issues an alert when results indicate help is needed.

“The benefits of the technology are potentially enormous, not just in improving the health and quality of life of seniors, but also in reducing the cost of aging services,” says Jim Albert, Masonicare’s chief information officer and vice president of information services.