



AFRH-WASHINGTON

Catharine Deitch turns the BIG 100!

By Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy

Photos by Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy & Carolyn Haug | Public Affairs

Tuesday, December 3, 2019 was a special day for AFRH-W resident Catharine Deitch, she turned a spry 100! The day started with her attending a morning performance by the Old Guard's "Old Fife" in the Scott Community Center. The Old Fife were honored to play happy birthday for her and had everyone in the room singing. That afternoon family and friends started arriving for various activities being held to include a birthday party in the afternoon with a beautiful 100th birthday cake for all to enjoy. During the party fellow residents, staff, and family members spoke expressing stories of Catharine and her escapades. She is the first to tell you she has traveled the world to include her time spent in India. Catharine loves to stay active and attends recreation therapy and recreation programs daily. She checks her calendar and journal daily! One of her favorite activities is the YMCA Cardio Lite program on Mondays and Wednesdays. She also likes to go on off-station trips to museums, restaurants, shopping, and Nationals Baseball games! The Home held it's held its Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony that evening with entertainment and getting it started was a pre-event birthday rendition by the Home's AFRH-W Chorus. Catharine was thankful and happy to receive all the well wishes and plans on keeping active and staying busy!



AFRH-GULFPORT

Mr. and Mrs. Claus & Rudolph visit Tower D at AFRH-G

Story & Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Residents in Allegiance, Valor and Loyalty Halls were very surprised when Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus and Rudolph showed up with Christmas cheer. The residents were super excited with their gifts that Santa had created specifically for each resident and were happy to take photos with Santa. It was also super special because our Chief Operating Officer Jim Branham and our Administrator Jeff Eads also went along for the ride. After all the gifts were delivered everyone attended the monthly cook-in in Tower D. Thank you to our awesome recreation team and the dining hall for providing such an outstanding luncheon. It was such a fantastic and enjoyable day.



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AFRH COMMUNICATOR



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The AFRH Communicator is an authorized publication of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Residents and employees are encouraged to submit photos, art, news items, and features. Materials will be edited by the *AFRH Communicator* staff for journalistic style and length. The articles included in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the management, staff, or residents of the AFRH.

Serving America's Veterans

AFRH is not just a place to live but a place to live more. Our model retirement communities are designed for residents to maintain an independent lifestyle in an environment designed for safety, comfort and personal enrichment.

Eligibility: Military veterans from each service branch can live at AFRH. The following persons who served as members of the Armed Forces, at least one-half of whose service was not active commissioned service other than as a warrant officer or limited-duty officer, are eligible to become residents of the Retirement Home:

- who are 60 years of age or over; and were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions after 20 or more years of active service.
- who are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to have a service-connected disability incurred in the line of duty in the Armed Forces.
- who served in a war theater during a time of war declared by Congress or were eligible for hostile fire special pay were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions; and are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to be suffering from injuries, disease, or disability.
- who served in a women's component of the Armed Forces before June 12, 1948; and are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to be eligible for admission because of compelling personal circumstances.

****To receive an informational brochure please contact the AFRH Marketing Office at 1-800-422-9988, or write to: AFRH, PAO/Marketing, #584 3700 N. Capitol St. NW, Washington, DC 20011-8400**

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AFRH-G Resident Highlight – William “Bill” Robert Jossendal

By Lori Kerns | Librarian



William “Bill” Jossendal was born to Norwegian immigrants on March 9, 1926. His parents arrived through Ellis Island and headed to Chicago. They began the naturalization process while finding work in farming communities. The couple settled in Illinois on a leased farm where they began to raise a family, four daughters and three sons. The children helped out on the farm as they grew and also attended the local schoolhouse, where the grade school was on the ground floor and the high school on the second. Bill attended and finished the eighth grade before he decided to work on a local farm.

Once WWII began, Bill started thinking about joining the military. At age 17, he went to a local recruiter and learned that he was underage and needed his father’s signature to enlist. His father refused so his older sister, who had a hand in raising Bill, signed for him to join the Navy.

He boarded a train and headed for Camp Waldron in Farragut, Idaho. Bill endured about seven weeks of training before his whole company got orders for Port Hueneme, California. He trained at different bases in California then received his first sea duty orders aboard the destroyer escort, USS Shelton. The ship set out for Pearl Harbor and then made its way to the Marshall Islands to escort destroyers. They didn’t stay long before the ship was sent out for patrol around Morotai Island.

On October 3, 1944 the USS Shelton was torpedoed by the Japanese. The explosion killed 13 men and wounded 22 others. It took several hours of battling to keep the ship afloat. Thankfully, the USS Rowell was close by to weather bad seas and rescue over 210 of the Shelton’s survivors, including Bill.

He eventually made it back to the States as the war was winding down. He went back home to work for about 30 days before receiving orders for Salsalitos, California to

work on a tanker. He had several different jobs before winding up working on a tugboat. In 1947, he went back home for a couple of weeks until he received orders for Norfolk, Virginia. This is when he began the rest of his Navy career aboard destroyers, five altogether. On June 30, 1964, Bill retired after serving 21 years in the U.S. Navy.

Back when he had been in the military and stationed in Corpus Christi, Texas, Bill met a young lady named Winnie. The two courted for about six months before getting married. After his retirement, the couple decided to settle down in Corpus Christi where he began repairing Huey helicopters. In 1967, Hurricane Beulah hit and destroyed their home. They decided to move to Winnie’s parents’ house in Fort Worth, Texas. Bill found a job with General Dynamics working on the F-111 until he was laid off. He worked a couple different jobs until he decided to use the GI Bill and attend a vo-tech school in Arkansas where he learned to work on small engines.

With his new skills in tow, Bill and Winnie moved back to Corpus Christi where he began his own business repairing lawn mowers. Sadly, Winnie got sick so he decided to retire and take care of her until her passing. After losing Winnie, Bill began volunteering at the local senior citizen center. He took care of the center’s grounds until he made the decision to move to AFRH. He originally put his name on the waiting list for AFRH-W but decided to tour the newly rebuilt AFRH-G campus. He moved into AFRH-G in 2012 and has since enjoyed each and every day in his home. He says, “This is the place for me.” He has continued his generosity by assisting with the Home’s new residents. He also gives his time working at the airport’s USO Gulf Coast.



AFRH-W Resident Highlight - Catharine Deitch

By Christine Baldwin | Librarian



Catharine Deitch was born in Pennsylvania on December 3, 1919 and vividly remembers the day in 1929 when the banks closed and the Depression started. Commercial feeds such as Purina Chicken Feed made their bags out of material, which was a yard square piece of printed flower designs. It was folded in the middle and sewed on a loop stitch machine, in which if you pulled the first stitch, it automatically unraveled and you had one square yard of pretty material from which her

grandmother made underwear, blouses and dresses for the family.

Catharine was married on December 3, 1941. She and her husband were on their honeymoon in Daytona Beach, Florida, when the news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was broadcast on the radio. Her husband picked up a broom, put it over his shoulder, started marching around and said to her “America is going to war.” They returned to Pennsylvania, rented an apartment in Harrisburg and started to get their affairs in order. Since Catharine’s husband was about to be drafted, she decided to enlist! Her active duty date began at the end of December 1942 and she traveled on a troop train to Daytona Beach, Florida, arriving just as the whistles were blowing to welcome the New Year in 1943. Since her husband’s date to report for duty was later in January, he was able to stand on the train platform and wave “goodbye” to his wife. He joked about that for many years.

Catharine served first in the WAAC until August 1943, then served in the WAC to the end of November 1945. After basic training, she was assigned to Boston, Mass., where she

worked in the orderly room. From Boston, she was sent to Bradley Field, Connecticut and later Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia from there on a troop train to Riverside, California to prepare for an overseas assignment. One of the women who sailed with her was Miriam Rivkin, who also lives at AFRH-W. They had not seen or heard from each other until Catharine arrived at AFRH in 2007 – almost 75 years ago! Great reunion!

After zigzagging across the Pacific Ocean to avoid being sunk by enemy submarines, Catherine arrived at Bombay, India in October 1944. They then flew to Calcutta, India on C-47s and sat in bucket seats. They were driven up a branch of the Ganges River and lived in a huge jute mill, which the Army had converted for their headquarters.

The women were clerical workers, telephone operators, trainer specialists, cooks, medical staff, etc. They were offered the opportunity to see India and Catharine visited the Taj Mahal, Mt. Everest and Darjeeling in West Bengal, among other sites. She returned to the states in November 1945 and was discharged. It was Thanksgiving Day and Fort Dix, New Jersey served them a feast! Her Army service afforded Catharine the opportunity to sail all the way around the world and she has always been thankful for this opportunity!

Catharine and her husband reunited in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where they raised a family and became a part of that historical place. Her husband loved taking people on the Battlefield and giving them tours. Some of the people that Catherine was able to meet there were Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, (with Jackie and Caroline) and David Brinkley. Catharine came to AFRH in 2007 and just celebrated her 100th birthday! She is happy and thankful for all the opportunities life has offered her!



Members of Congress visit AFRH-W

Story & Photos by Chris Kelly | Public Affairs Officer

On Tuesday December 10, 2019, members of the Bipartisan U.S. House of Representatives Army Caucus visited AFRH-W to have breakfast with our veteran residents and learn more about the Home. Rep. C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger (Maryland), co-chair of the caucus, joined Rep. Glenn Thompson (Pennsylvania) and Rep. Aumaua Amata Wadewagen (American Samoa) for the event, which included a tour and briefing from AFRH CEO Stephen Rippe. We appreciate the Caucus's continued interest in the Home, and look forward to hosting them again in the future!



Sergeant Major visits AFRH-W

By Susan Bryhan | Administrator

The 16th Sergeant Major of the Army, Michael Grinston, was sworn in 9 August and shortly thereafter visited the Washington D.C. campus. He was accompanied by other senior enlisted leaders from various DC area commands. They were given the Command Brief by General Rippe, ate lunch with many Army veteran residents and toured inside the Home and around the campus. As the Sergeant Major of the Army, Grinston is the Army Chief of Staff's personal adviser on matters affecting the enlisted force. He devotes the majority of his time traveling throughout the Army observing training and interacting with soldiers and their families. He sits on a variety of councils and boards who make decisions and is routinely invited to testify before Congress. Grinston is the public face of the U.S. Army's Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Corps, representing them to the American people. We look forward to many more visits in the coming years.



Remembering Ray Anderson and the Grand Forks Central High School School Song

By Steven Briefs, CTRS | Supervisory Recreation Specialist
Story courtesy of WDAZ – Grand Forks, ND



Raymond Rudolph Anderson was born October 8, 1922 in Longville, Minnesota. He lived at AFRH-W since 1996 and recently passed away at the age of 97. The following is a story published on May 24, 2011 in The Grand Forks Herald about the impact Ray had on students at his alma mater, Grand Forks Central High School.

The Grand Forks Central high school band met the man who wrote a song they play all the time. 88-year-old Raymond Anderson wrote the school's song more than 60 years ago. Using the Internet video calling service Skype, more than 50 band members met Raymond Anderson from his retirement community in Washington, D.C. "We play it so often, all the time," Central senior Shane Harlow said. "We pep rally it at all the sporting events, so it's really interesting to see where it all started," senior Jacy Thibert said.

It all started with Ray Anderson. He was hearing Central's band play the fight song via Skype from a Washington, D.C. nursing home. He wrote the music and lyrics while attending Central in the 1930's. It was part of a contest to find a school song. "I just came up with the song and I didn't dream I would win. There must have been hundreds of entries," Anderson said. Anderson said he won \$10 for the song, but the song is priceless now as it is part of a Central tradition.

Anderson talked with students about his memories of Central and how he would later make a career in the military. But at 88 years old it's the music that stayed with him. "Learn your music and use them instruments. A lot of people need to hear some music. Music make their hearts warm," Anderson said.

Anderson's visit may have never have happened if not for Central's band teacher Christie Aleshire. She set the meeting up after she received a letter from Anderson. "I thought, 'I need the kids to see this. I need the kids to know who this person is,' because you don't know how long people are around," Aleshire said. Band student Shane Harlow says this is something he won't forget. "He's a really cool guy. He's sweet and he was laughing. I hope I'm that cool when I'm older," Harlow said. The band played a couple of versions of the school song Ray wrote some 60 years ago. And while he might be a few thousand miles away, he is a little closer to the historic mark he left at Central high school. "It's a nice band there, you know. I'm proud of you all," Anderson said.

Book on residents a big hit!

By Christine Baldwin | Librarian
Photo by Jack Beck | Resident

On December 5, a very special book was revealed to the Home. It was written by Glenna Orr and titled Remembering with the Heart: Stories by America's Finest. Glenna writes intergenerational books, mostly with military themes. In this case, she told the stories of nine residents; Catharine Deitch, Robert Webb, Bill Opferman, Norma Rambow, George Johnson, Frank Lawrence, Barbara Dannaher, Edward Davis and Martin Cody. With colorful drawings and actual photographs, each true story tells a unique tale. A reception followed the event, where everyone socialized with one another.



Wow - The Piatigorsky Foundation Concert

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC, | Recreation Therapy Services
Photo by James Savage | Resident

On December 6, 2019, residents gathered in the community center for a special afternoon of hors d'oeuvres, wine, and classical music. Evan Drachman, cellist and Wan-Chi Su, pianist, thrilled the audience with the music of France including selections from composers Faure' and Franck. The pianist, Wan-Chi began her musical training at the early age of four whereas the cellist, Evan began somewhat later at the age of 11. Mr. Drachman shared the story of his 248 year old Stradivarius cello of which only 60 were made and his is now only one of five left in playable condition. He recalled sitting next to his famous grandfather, Gregor Piatigorsky and listening to him play this same cello. He also reminisced about his grandfather Piatigorsky's larger than life personality and trips of taking him out for ice cream, sneaking him a \$10 bill, and telling him not to tell his mother. After the concert, the musicians met with residents individually and autographed CD's. The Piatigorsky Foundation presents over 220 concerts in 18 states in retirement communities, churches, schools, prisons, libraries, and "wherever people gather" with the mission to bring live performances to those who could not otherwise attend. Piatigorsky once said, "Music makes life better. Music is neither a luxury nor a frill – it is a necessity! It is rich. It is imaginative. And it is for everyone." Wow!



AFRH-G residents film holiday greetings for WLOX

Story & Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs



On December 5 local Gulf Coast TV station WLOX came to AFRH-G to film holiday greetings from our residents. This is the third year that our veterans

have been highlighted during the holidays. These greetings started airing on local WLOX channel 13 this month and will continue through the New Year. Thank you to Mike Kommersmith, WLOX Director of Marketing, for filming our residents. And, thank you to the thirteen residents who did such a fantastic job with their greetings for the Mississippi Gulf Coast to see. It's really been fun seeing AFRH-G veterans pop-up on TV every day. Stay tuned for the videos which will also be posted on the AFRH Facebook page.



AFRH-G remembers Pearl Harbor 78 years later

By Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs
Photos by James Savage | Resident

Residents and employees gathered in the Hall of Honors at AFRH-G for a memorial ceremony marking the 78th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. On December 7, 1941 this attack plunged the United States into World War II and left more than 2,300 service people dead.

After a moment of silence Music Therapist Susan Bergman played "Amazing Grace" on the bag pipes. Resident Services Chief Christopher Alexander was the master of ceremonies and he spoke about that significant Sunday morning on December 7, 1941. He spoke on how America's naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii was attacked by aircraft and submarines of the Imperial Japanese Navy, killing 2,403 American military personnel and civilians and injuring 1,178 others. The attack sank four U.S. Navy battleships and damaged four more. It also damaged or sank three cruisers, three destroyers, and one minelayer. 188 aircraft were destroyed and 159 were damaged.

The day after the attack, the United States declared war on Japan and entered World War II. Following Mr. Alexander's welcome speech, Pastor Gibson presented the invocation. AFRH-G resident Roger Schulrud presented the commemorative wreath honoring those lost on December 7, 1941. It was a somber ceremony for residents and it was a day to remember and honor the lives lost so their sacrifices are not in vein.

"No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory." - Franklin D. Roosevelt



From the AFRH-W Administrator



The holidays are upon us! What a blessing to have so many events put on by our staff and generous volunteers to get us all in the holiday spirit. As usual, we started off the month with the AFRH-W Tree Lighting Ceremony, co-hosted by Friends of the Soldiers Home. As we did last year, a special choir composed of residents sang carols, we listened to a singer and had treats. Later in the month we started the daily lighting of the menorah to celebrate Hanukkah.

We are so blessed to have so many volunteer groups donate time and wonderful gifts. A local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution has been here for 30 years to co-host our Recreation Therapy Holiday party including live music, food, gifts and of course, Santa! This was the 15th year that Costco employees donned their elf hats, and provided generous gifts to the Home and residents. The Korean Embassy again hosted a delicious luncheon of traditional foods to show their appreciation to our Korean War veterans and staff. Dozens of volunteers turned out to put wreaths at the graves in the Old Soldiers Home cemetery as part of Wreaths Across America. Many thanks to these and other groups for their

support through the years!

Musical performances included the DC City Singers, Victory Church choir, a military choir, among many others. And a group of us (staff and residents) spent an afternoon roving around singing carols. We also had a traditional performance by the Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps to start the birthday celebrations for resident Catharine Deitch's 100th birthday. Her big day was filled with many wonderful events. Happy birthday, Mrs Deitch! And finally, the Holiday Dance was held for residents and staff and was a good time for all.

And a month never goes by without a VIP visit or in the case of December, two of them. We were honored to host members of Congress for a breakfast with residents and a tour of the Home. And later in the month, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness, the Honorable Veronica Daigle, and her staff came by to decorate a tree that they donated as well as many gifts. All who participated thoroughly enjoyed the time spent with them and we look forward to future visits.

The Combined Federal Campaign is in full swing and we have already far surpassed our monetary goal. Thanks for the generous support of this worthy program and the volunteers! Even though we have surpassed our monetary goal, there is still time to donate. I am happy to announce the Washington Campus Employee of the Year, Bill Striegel, who serves as the Administrative Officer. Congrats, Bill! And to the other nominees.

And, yes....there was the Army Navy Game! This year was much more fun to watch as the Navy Midshipmen blew out the West Point Cadets. I have to wonder if the day the team spent here working and eating fried chicken and everything else in the dining room, helped to give them the strength to play so well. Hopefully the tide has turned and we will begin a new streak of Navy wins!

To close, I would like to wish everyone a joyous holiday season and good health and inspirations in the New Year!

Susan Bryhan



Congratulations to the AFRH Washington Employee of the Year Billy Striegel. Pictured from left to right: Adminstrator Susan Bryhan, Billy Striegel, and Chief Human Capital Officer Donna M. Smith.

Army Navy Game brings friendly rivalry to AFRH-W

By Linda Bailey, CTRS | Recreation Specialist



Go Army, Beat Navy! Go Navy, Beat Army! The friendly rivalry that came with the Army Navy game on Saturday, December 14 was alive and well here at AFRH-Washington. The watch party is quite an event, even if you are neither a football fan nor a veteran of the Army or the Navy. Buchanan – Edwards, our major sponsor, makes sure there is plenty of pizza on hand. Samantha Young and her daughter Shayla contacted Costco and Harris Teeter in Alexandria, who provided additional food for the party. Shayla, a dedicated volunteer at AFRH, although only 14 years old, also collected a variety of door prizes for the event. Samantha and Shayla, who you may know if you play bingo on Saturdays, are the driving force behind making this event so successful. They really leave little for the recreation staff to accomplish.

The Defenders Inn was open for the event, giving resident manager Sheldon Shorthouse a chance to show off the new sound system for the TV donated by Costco. There is no problem hearing that TV now.

The big group that filled the community center enjoyed the game, left full, and many with door prizes in hand.

Dancing to the music of our times at the Holiday Dance

By Linda Bailey, CTRS | Recreation Specialist

Photos by Mike Hoth | Resident

One gift of the holiday season is the chance to get together with friends and spend time listening and dancing to music, enjoying good food and good company, and just having fun. This year's Holiday Dance featured the music of Mike Surratt and the Eclectic Coalition Band. Mike and his band make the rounds of all of the senior dances in the area, and knew every request made. The four piece band, consisting of a keyboard, guitar, drums and horn (saxophone, clarinet or trumpet), depending on what the song needed, was perfect in getting people up and dancing. One of our residents, John Baker, also a regular at dances all over the area, brought a group of ladies as his guests. These ladies are all members of The Banneker Ballroom Dance Club, and were happy to dance with anyone who wanted to get up on the dance floor. Tangos, rumbas, cha-chas and at least one waltz were played at the request of the crowd.

In addition to music and dancing, the Defenders Inn was open for drinks. The holiday buffet, including shrimp salad, hot crab dip, sweet and sour meat balls, and barbecued chicken wings, along with a variety of desserts, was offered. It was a fun and festive night.



Notes from the AFRH-W Resident Advisory Committee Chairman



Always give thanks in everything at Thanksgiving and throughout the year as we pray for peace on the earth, goodwill to all men. Got to travel to Wilson, North Carolina to spend a great time with family and friends during the Thanksgiving holiday, home of the best BBQ in the world. In the last thirty days it has been nothing but joy all around us at the Armed Forces Retirement Home, with storytelling by some of our great residents. The AFRH-W Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on December 3 was a hit with a big surprise visit by Santa and Mrs. Claus. John Hughes, the President of Friends of the Soldiers Home, gave big thanks to Santa for making sure our big Christmas gift got to AFRH before the 25th of December. Also, we celebrated the 100th birthday of one the sweetest young ladies at the Armed Forces Retirement Home, Catharine Deitch. How many people can say I took a Thanksgiving dinner cruise on the Odyssey of Washington DC with a 100-year-young sweetie pie like Catharine Deitch. It was a cruise to remember with lots of fun watching everyone get into the holiday spirit and have so much fun. A great big welcome at Fort Belvoir to their Christmas tree lighting and party with good food and lots of Christmas joy. This trip is always one of the best trips of the year. Twelve of AFRH-W's finest residents got to go on this trip. Ward 4 had their Christmas dinner celebration on the 12th of December at the V.I.P. room 3rd Street NW, Washington DC. Fort Foote Baptist Church had their Christmas dinner celebration on December 13th at Bowling Air Force Base. On December 19th I was invited to the Mayor's Senior Christmas Party at the DC Armory where I brought some literature to hand out on the Armed Forces Retirement Home. It's been a great month. We are all looking forward to the New Year!

Billy Ray White

From the AFRH-G Administrator



On December 5 AFRH-G started off the holiday season with our annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. Santa arrived to light the tree and greet the residents. He even stayed to sing Christmas carols and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. Thank you to all the residents who donated lots of toys, stuffed animals and bicycles to Toys for Tots. This is a program run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve which distributes toys to children whose parents cannot afford to buy gifts for Christmas. Thank you so much for your generosity.

On December 6 residents and employees gathered in the Hall of Honors for a memorial ceremony marking the 78th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. On December 17 we had our monthly birthday dinner and Santa, Mrs. Claus and Rudolph were also in attendance to take photos with the residents born in the month of December. On December 20 we held an Egg Nog Social and Christmas party and on Christmas day the dining hall served up a fantastic Christmas meal. There have been so many fulfilling activities going on this month and I hope everyone had the opportunity to participate.

Our COO Jim Branham was in Gulfport this month. The main reason he visited us was to announce the Armed Forces Retirement Home's employee of the year. I am proud to say that Mr. Roy Deemes, transportation and grounds contracting officer rep (COR) in Campus Operations, was selected by headquarters as the Employee of the Year for both campuses.

Roy can always be seen helping residents and staff in kind ways. During this quarter, and many times previously, he arrived early to the monthly cook-ins to visit with the residents on Loyalty Hall and serve them lunch. He knows the residents well and routinely visits residents in the upper levels of care. This means the world to the residents. Roy has voluntarily tilled the garden plots, and assists resident gardeners when they are not physically able to accomplish their gardening tasks. Roy volunteered to order the material needed and repaired the pool lounge chairs. Mr. Deemes' dedication is commendable and reflects great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

When Roy gets the notice a resident needs to transfer to a different level of care he handles the transfer without hesitation. He has set up many new rooms for residents identical to their previous room so the transition is less stressful for the residents. One resident said, "Roy made this room better than what I had and he gave me a patio instead of a balcony. Now I can grow more flowers!" Roy demonstrates "Person-Centered Care" (PCC) continuously as well as the remainder of the Armed Forces Retirement Home's guiding principles.

The contracts Roy controls provide the government with the best value and he manages the contracts flawlessly. Campus Operations has been down one COR for many months and Roy has assisted his chief in a number of ways to pick up the slack and ensure campus ops runs smoothly.

Roy Deemes, is a veteran and served his country proudly. He is still serving our country by serving the residents of the AFRH-Gulfport. Mr. Deemes' dedication is commendable and reflects great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Congratulations to you Roy! This is a very well-deserved award.

It's hard to believe that 2019 over. I have to say that I am honored that I get to spend my days working for you, our residents. I wish each and every one of you and your loved ones a joyous and wonderful New Year. I hope 2020 brings you all peace and happiness always. Thank you to all our veterans and employees for another great year at AFRH-G. I am honored to be your Administrator.

Jeff Eads



Congratulations to the overall Employee of the Year Roy Deemes. Pictured from left to right: Chief of Campus Ops John Cage, COO Jim Branham, Roy Deemes and Adminstrator Jeff Eads.

Football and traditions

Story & Photos by Carol Davis | Recreation Assistant

On December 14, the 120th meeting of the Army and Navy football teams took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at Lincoln Financial Field. Between the "prisoner exchange" and the singing of each team's Alma Maters, this game is one of the most traditional and enduring rivalries in college football. Since the first meeting in 1890, Navy leads the series 61-52-7.

Residents Katrina and Bill Bradley are a "house divided" during the Army-Navy game, but they managed to have fun even though the Navy Midshipmen won big over the Army Black Knights by a score of 31-7.

No matter the score, everyone enjoyed the food and camaraderie. Hooters catered hot wings and provided door prizes, pizza was delivered, and other snacks were available for the perfect game-day necessities. Thanks to everyone who came out to make this an awesome game-day experience!



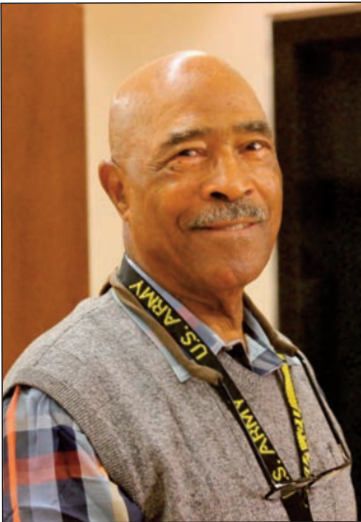
AFRH-G Ice Cream Social & Crazy Christmas Sweater Social

Story & Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Didn't think anything could be more fun than ice cream, but mix that with the crazy Christmas sweaters and it was double the fun. Some of the sweaters were priceless; especially the one created by AFRH-G resident "Chip" who put our administrator's photo on the back of his "ugly" sweater.



Notes from the AFRH-G Resident Advisory Committee Chairman



December was a very busy month. As we move towards the end of the year we are also celebrating one of the most significant holidays, Christmas. At the same time we are preparing for the New Year. On the surface this would appear to be a dichotomy of effort in that we are happy one year is about over and thrilled to begin anew. Looking back not just at December, but the entire year, we have experienced a very turbulent 12 months of emotional highs and lows. Yet, here we are. The Christmas spirit is upon us, the Christmas trees are up and lit, girl scouts caroling, yuletide concerts, egg nog parties and Christmas portraits all signify the holiday season is upon us.

One gift we all can give to ourselves is REFLECTION; Reflection about who I am and what have I accomplished during the year. What could I have done to lift up/help my brothers and sisters bond together and raise the quality of life here in our Home. We are working together for the benefit of all. Many are traveling during this time to spend the holidays with family and friends. To them I wish Merry Christmas and a blessed trip. To those who decided to stay at home, I say there is still time: Engage your neighbor, the people you dine with and those you meet in the hallways with the gift of friendship and a hearty Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Arthur "Art" W. Jones



RAC Chair Art Jones films a holiday greeting for local TV station WLOX.



Santa, Art Jones and Rudolph at the Tower D Cook-In.

AFRH-Washington

There is no place like Home for the holidays

By Linda Bailey, CTRS | Recreation Specialist
Photos by Jack Beck | Resident



The tradition that opens the holiday season at AFRH-Washington is the lighting of the Christmas tree that is placed in the courtyard of the Scott building. While the building sprouts trees everywhere seemingly overnight, this one is special as it is the one official genuine pine tree that is decorated for all to see. Much larger than any of the artificial trees in the building, it stands in the middle of the courtyard, and can be viewed from inside through the floor to ceiling windows in the lobby.

Prior to the lighting of the tree, we gather in the community center on the first Tuesday in December, this year the 3rd of the month, to sing and celebrate the season. The program is led by AFRH-W Administrator Susan Bryham. She welcomes residents, staff, and guests. Many of the guests are from the Friends of the Soldiers Home (FOSH), who support us year-round with monthly parties, volunteer efforts, and, on the evening of the tree lighting, with wine and entertainment.

The AFRH-W Resident Holiday Choir was on hand, with volunteer Liz Gould Leger leading us on the piano. The choir sang "Here Comes Santa Claus" as Santa and Mrs. Claus entered the room. An invocation was offered by Father Carlos, followed by more music by the choir. Entertainer Geneva Ranae sang some popular and modern holiday songs. Susan introduced John Hughes, president of the FOSH organization, who let the group know that

FOSH had donated a flat screen TV and stand, which was already being put into use in the lobby. Then, before we headed out to light the tree, a chorus of "Happy Birthday to You" was sung by the whole room to Catharine Deitch, who was celebrating her 100th birthday that day. With the group gathered in the hallway next to the courtyard, Catherine gave the word, and the official Christmas tree was lit.



RT Winter Wonderland holiday scenes

By Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy
Photos by Carolyn Haug | Public Affairs & Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy

The Annual Recreation Therapy Winter Wonderland made a move to the Scott 2 Long Term Care house to showcase the holiday scenes on the outdoor terrace. The program also provided live entertainment in the Scott 2 leisure lobby area. The event kicked off on Thursday, December 5th with a Christmas song sing-a-long. Residents then bundled up and strolled outside to view the sites. The event took place on the first three Thursdays in December and included performances by the AFRH-W Chorus, Petworth Kids - cards & song, Friends of the Soldiers Home Carolers, and Renee & Lee Flute Duo. Each night residents were also treated to hot chocolate, sparkling cider, cookies, cake, and other delicious desserts. Special thanks to Jeff Cordes, Eric Barcelo and fellow volunteers from Joint Base Andrews for setting up the scenes and making it a sight to behold for all residents of AFRH-W! Merry Christmas and have a Happy New Year!



Pie tasting moments

By Marla J. McGuinness | Recreation Specialist
Photos by Carolyn Haug | Public Affairs



AFRH-W had a pie tasting experience. Each person was given one plate of four different flavors of pies: cherry, blueberry, pumpkin, and peach. They were asked to choose their favorite pie first and really taste the flavor of the pie. Not just eat it, really smell and taste the flavors of the pies. We talked about what really stood out in the pies. The tartness of the cherries, cinnamon in the pumpkin, the sweetness of the peaches, and how the blueberries burst inside your mouth.

As we were enjoying the pies, everyone's first choice was different and then the stories began about how they spent their holidays of yesteryear. One talked about the peach trees her family grew on the farm, and they had freshly baked peach cobbler every

Thanksgiving. Another recalled as a little girl it was her job during Thanksgiving to make the pies with her mother to bring over to the relatives houses. We spoke about fluting the pies and how everyone had different ways of doing this. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon reminiscing about what they were thankful for and the taste of the different pie flavors. Sitting talking amongst friends was very calming and enjoyable.



Have your elf a Merry Little Christmas

By Marine Robbins | Recreation Therapy Assistant
Photos by Annemarie Wilson | Recreation Therapy Supervisor



Why does Santa Claus get all the attention when the elves do most of the work? A big shout out to our holiday elves: Bill Jentarra, Bert Spangler, Fred Layman, and Chuck Felder who laid the groundwork for another successful Christmas event. Working tirelessly on the third floor of the Scott building, they toiled away organizing and wrapping gifts for all of the residents to receive at the Recreation Therapy (RT) Holiday Party on December 18. The gifts were a generous donation from the Daughters of the American Revolution who join AFRH every year and co-host the annual Holiday Party with the RT team. The ladies of Lincoln's Cottage also helped decorate Santa's gift bins and turned a few laundry carts into a caravan of Christmas cheer. Following their example, let's all put in a little effort to spread more cheer and positivity into the New Year.



Anacostia-Bolling Air Force Base homeschooled Children's Choir

Story & Photo by Marla J. McGuinness | Recreation Specialist

AFRH-W had little visitors from the Anacostia Homeschool Children's Choir. Abigail Corbett was the leader of the children's choir and instrumental performance. They sang Christmas carols with the residents for an hour. They also performed a piano recital along with an instrumental recital with a trombone, clarinet, and horn. When "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" was sung, all of the children put on their red noses. When the "Twelve Days of Christmas" was sung, twelve of the children had solos making the song very precious.

After the presentation the children went around passing out Christmas ornaments to all of the residents, wishing them a very Merry Christmas. They even helped decorate the tree in the Community Center. Cookies and drinks were shared by all at the end of the concert.



AFRH-Gulfport

Christmas tree lighting ceremony

Story & Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

On December 5 AFRH-G started the holiday season off with the annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. While our Music Therapist Susan Bergman played the guitar, Lynn Meadows Discovery Center WINGS Performing Arts performed Christmas carols in the front lobby to a packed house. Meanwhile, everyone anticipated Santa's arrival. Once Santa arrived he greeted the residents and visitors with plenty of "HO HO HOs" then asked for assistance with the tree lighting. Two students from Lynn Meadows quickly stepped in to help Santa flip the switch. Santa graciously stayed and sang carols before he had to get back to work. The students then traveled upstairs to the Loyalty Hall dining room and onto the Valor Hall dining room for more caroling.



A different Christmas poem

Submitted by Woody Hilliker | Resident

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,
I gazed round the room and cherished the sight.
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
beside me, angelic in rest.
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
transforming the yard to a winter delight.
The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.
The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
but I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,
Then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
and I crept to the door just to see who was near.
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
a lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.
A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
perhaps an older soldier, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.
"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,
you should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"
For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts.
To the window that danced with a warm fire's light,
Then he sighed and he said "it's really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night.
"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
that separates you from the darkest of times.
No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before.
My Gramps died at Pearl on a day in December,"
Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas Gram always remembers."
My dad stood his watch in the jungles of Nam,
and now it's my turn and so, here I am.
I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
but my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got a smile.
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
the red, white, and blue ... an American flag.
I can live through the cold and the being alone,
away from my family, my house and my home.
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.
I can carry the weight of killing another,
or lay down my life with my sister and brother...
who stand at the front against any and all,
to ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."
"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,
your family is waiting and I'll be all right."
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,
Give you money, I asked, or prepare you a feast?
It all seems to little for all that you've done,
for being away from your wife and your son."
Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.
To fight for our rights back home while we're gone,
to stand your own watch, no matter how long.
For when we come home, either standing or dead,
to know you remember we fought and we bled.
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,
that we mattered to you as you mattered to us!"

Decking the halls at AFRH-G

By Lee Corban | Recreation Supervisor & Taylor Chamberlain | Volunteer Coordinator



With the holiday season upon us, the recreation team began to deck the halls at AFRH-G. As the community center filled with boxes upon boxes of ornaments, decorations and garland we were quickly in the holiday spirit. Sharing our personal holiday memories and traditions while singing along to our favorite holiday tunes was a fantastic demonstration of teamwork, collaboration and creativity. AFRH-G recreation services, resident services and healthcare employees along with CMI, Ability Works and food services contractors had a great time decorating the Home inside and outside for the outstanding veterans who call AFRH-G home. As you can imagine we had a lot of great resident supervisors during the process!! Many commented that they were glad not to decorate trees or fight tangled lights anymore!

Recreation employees always make such a task fun, with lots of conversations and clowning around. Twenty-three trees (maybe more) are ready for the holidays! This year additional decorations were added to the dining room, with a happy response from the residents. Thanks to all who joined in with creative ideas. A special thank you to Jen Biernacki for her many trips to the stores to purchase more garland, wreaths and ribbons every time we extended the plans! Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

The songs of Christmas

Story and Photo by Jen Biernacki | Recreation Therapy Assistant

On December 6, The Gulf Coast Messiah Chorus shared their talents with the residents of AFRH-G. The Messiah sang songs that filled the air with beautiful words and music that we all love during the Christmas season. As I sat in the back, I watched rows and rows of residents singing along to the carols of Christmas. As the songs continued, I remembered the days when Mom told me I must attend the Messiah at church.... I would roll my eyes but would show up at church as this truly began the Christmas season. Now, as an adult, I think how lucky I am to be here sharing these moments with our veterans, our residents. I watched them enjoying the music and wondering what memories, they too, are thinking. For me, my Mom has since passed but her memory and the Messiah will continue always. I thank the chorus for sharing their best for our residents and me...as your songs give us the true feelings of Christmas and many happy memories.



Girl Scouts sing Christmas carols at AFRH-G

Story & Photo by Susan Bergman, MT-BC | Recreation Therapy Services

On December 11, 2019 close to 40 Girl Scouts including Daisy, Brownie, Junior, Cadet, Ambassadors, and Seniors from Troop 6346 & 3402 sang Christmas carols around the front lobby Christmas tree, traveled through the halls to sing on Loyalty Hall, Valor Hall, and Allegiance Hall. This is an annual event in which they sing, deliver cards, and hand-out homemade ornaments.



AFRH-G Fall Festival - Year two and too much fun!

Story and Photos by Jen Biernacki | Recreation Therapy Assistant

At the end of November the healthcare residents participated in the second year of the annual Fall Festival. The residents participated in games such as the pie crust roll race, find the bell in the hay stack, gourd squirt, pick a pumpkin and the popcorn goals. Cheers, Yeah's, Wahoos, "no no that's cheating" and "keep looking, it's in there" was heard throughout the event. The specialty of the day was apple pie a la mode and apple cider. YUM YUM!! Many smiles were seen that day for a gathering of fun and togetherness.



GULFPORT

WINGS, Girl Scouts, KAFB, Vectrus, USM History & More Bring Festive Cheer!

Story & Photos by Susan Bergman, MT-BC | Recreation Therapy Services

On Thursday, December 5, Lynn Meadows Discovery Center WINGS Performing Arts sang carols around the front lobby tree for the AFRH-G Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony. After Santa arrived, residents, performers, and guests could be heard counting down to light up the tree. Once visits, refreshments, and pictures were completed, the group traveled up to Loyalty & Valor Dining Halls to bring joy and peace with their beautiful harmonies.

On Wednesday, December 11, Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus and Rudolph along with several key AFRH staff members delivered Christmas gifts to each healthcare resident before the Holiday Cookout. Residents' faces lit up with each visit and Becki Zschiedrich in public affairs was right there to capture some amazing photographs. Upon opening their holiday gift, Red Friday Veteran shirts became quite the hit!

Now in its 10th year, on Wednesday afternoon before the main dining hall opened, close to 40 Girl Scouts from St. James Troop 3402 & 6346 caroled around the front lobby Christmas tree with residents. Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors continued the cheer by singing as they strolled through the hallways on their way to Loyalty and Valor dining halls. Photographs were requested and the Girl Scouts quickly surrounded each resident bringing smiles and joy.

For the past eight years, the University of Southern Mississippi Phi Alpha Theta (History Honors Society) members have been visiting AFRH-Gulfport to chat with residents and decorate their holiday stockings. On Friday, December 13, 2019, the history students and professors reminisced with residents while adding personalized hand painted designs to each stocking. After the paint dried, KAFB 81st Communication Squadron secretly filled the person centered stockings on December 18. Vectrus at KAFB with Michael Wilkes from their human resources and Kathyline McDermott coordinated a donation drive for extra stocking stuffer items, too. The stockings were handed out to healthcare residents on Christmas Day along with hot chocolate, cookies, and special guests.

On December 19 during the morning music time group, residents gathered for the annual Christmas service with AFRH-G Chaplains, Father Uko and Pastor Gibson. In the afternoon, festivities continued with Ruth Surratt tinkling the ivories on the piano at the Valor Lounge Piano Social. Singing on the radio since the age of four, it is always a treat to hear Ruth (and Susan) sing duets. Now known as the "Everly Sisters," it is a treat to hear the harmonies each month.

We overwhelmingly thank our amazing community partners, staff members, families, volunteers, and the countless individuals for their enormous generosity and assistance during this holiday season. The resulting memories and smiles truly bring a festive cheer to all!



WASHINGTON

RT Annual Holiday Celebration with D.A.R.

By Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy
Photos by Mike Hoth | Resident

Wednesday, December 18 was a night to remember! Recreation Therapy hosted the Annual Holiday Celebration with the Virginia Chapter District 5 Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.). Planning and preparation for the event is a major undertaking involving staff, residents, and volunteers. The date for the event is scheduled a year in advance with the dedicated ladies of D.A.R. These special ladies have been donating gifts for the healthcare residents for 30 years! The event is so well received that all levels of care at AFRH-W now enjoy attending. The Ladies of D.A.R. donation coordinator this year was Regent, Christina Mumm, of the John Alexander Chapter, who did a terrific job. Once the gifts arrived at the Home...Head Elf Resident Bill Jentarra and his junior resident elf assistants "Fred, Bert, and Chuck" assisted in unloading and setting up the "Elf Workshop." As the gifts were wrapped they were placed in large carts decorated by the Lincoln Cottage staff. The gifts were then ready to be distributed to all residents in attendance on the day of the celebration by resident Santa Joe Grant.

Residents arriving at the event were greeted by D.A.R. ladies with a cheerful "Merry Christmas" and a candy cane or two. As the residents walked further into the Scott Community Center they had photos taken in their fine festive attire with Michelle Misook Won, an ongoing awesome volunteer wearing a gorgeous gown. Residents were then escorted to holiday decorated tables with lighted poinsettia's compliments of the Children of the American Revolution. Residents enjoyed an evening of hors d'oeuvres to include shrimp cocktail, seasoned meatballs, fresh fruit, deviled eggs, assorted cheese & crackers, BBQ chicken wings, and vegetable skewers! AFRH-W food service outdid themselves, to top it off one of the cooks, Ebony Campbell created a delicious cake designed like... an "Ugly Holiday Sweater." The D.A.R. chapters also provided some very tasty desserts for the "D.A.R. dessert bar" which had every imaginable dessert available. The "Roving Holiday Cart of Cheer" kept a happy smile on many faces and was filled with wine, beer, sparkling cider, sodas and water. The dance floor was jumping throughout the night to the tunes of "Melanie & Rick" who have been playing for this event for over 15 years.

Special thanks to the Corp Men & Women from Walter Reed, Bernarda and Michelle from the Washington Navy Yard, and community volunteers for also coming out in joyful force to volunteer. Also, providing much needed support were the CNA and Nursing staff at AFRH-W who assisted residents in looking super sharp for this holiday affair to remember.

Everyone from the residents to the staff, and to the dedicated volunteers provided heartfelt fun and fellowship all around. Plans are in the works already for next year!

