New Resident Fees Effective October 1, 2018

On April 9, AFRH leaders announced a new resident fee structure to take effect October 1, 2018. This action is one of a number of steps being taken to address AFRH’s long-term solvency.

While the steep decline in fines and forfeitures income had the greatest impact on AFRH finances, no particular event is the singular cause of our financial woes. Construction projects depleted the trust fund, legal issues prevented action on developing the Washington campus, and healthcare costs continue to rise well above inflation. Some were the result of management decisions while others were beyond anyone’s ability to control or predict. We can’t change history; we can try to set AFRH on solid footing for the long run.

Rightly or wrongly, the current resident fee structure contributes to AFRH’s financial difficulties. Residents pay a maximum rate or a percentage of their gross income, whichever is less. Over 75 percent of AFRH residents are in independent living where fees today are capped at less than $1,500 per month, although AFRH’s cost exceeds $3,000 per month. This means AFRH subsidizes every independent living resident no less than $1,500 per month and over $1,800 on average. The difference between cost and what residents pay in fees must be raised elsewhere, whether from the pay of active duty enlisted members, from operations, or in recent years from taxpayers. Over 25 percent of residents have gross incomes of $500 or more per month, well above AFRH’s $3,500 cost, yet fees are capped below $1,500. That is one, but not the only, factor which has kept DOD from increasing the active duty withhold.

AFRH’s mission is to care for our veteran residents regardless of their ability to pay. That is not changing. If a resident’s income is $10 per month or $10,000, today or in the future, AFRH will cover the difference between the cost of its services and a reasonable proportion of resident income. By tying maximum fees to cost, it ensures AFRH is still non-profit—no resident will pay more than cost—and it creates incentives for all stakeholders to keep costs down.

It is difficult to compare AFRH with other homes since every home has different service offerings and fee structures. AFRH is distinct from typical private sector homes by subsidizing far more residents, including many more services in a single fee, and not charging entry or termination fees. We are distinct from most V.A. and Medicare/Medicaid homes by offering lower levels of care, allowing longer stays in upper levels, and not requiring divestment of personal assets.

An important point: the levels of care are separate financially. Independent living residents are not financing the upper levels. This means long-term care insurance is essentially included for free in independent living fees. With the new fee structure in October, the difference in fees for residents who need to move to upper levels will be much lower than under the current fee schedule. If a resident leaves AFRH and later desires to return, they may face a waiting list and will have to qualify for admission to independent living.

AFRH leaders know this change is tough for residents. Each person is affected differently: while the average fee increases 36 percent, individual changes range from a 100 percent decrease to a 127 percent increase. Many residents are comparing options to live at other communities or with family members. Most will continue to live at AFRH but are facing difficult money management decisions. Suggestions have been made to grandfather current residents on the existing fee structure. It’s a well-meaning idea, but the new fee structure will benefit many residents. A better path is to understand each resident’s personal situation by making sure their income calculation is as accurate as possible and that individual circumstances are considered. The business centers and managers at each campus stand ready to work with each resident as October approaches.

AFRH-GULFPORT

NASCAR personalities sign autographs for residents at AFRH-G

By Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Photos by Tom Peeks | Resident Photographer

Retired race car driver Harry Gant, better known as “Handsome Harry”, and Jeff Hammond, an American NASCAR personality signed autographs on March 30 for the Gulfport residents. Harry is best known for driving the No. 33 Skoal Bandit car on the NASCAR Winston Cup (now Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series) circuit during the 1980s and 1990s and his 4-race win streak in 1991. Jeff Hammond is a commentator for NASCAR’s coverage on Fox Sports, as well as a partial owner of Red Horse Racing. The residents were thrilled to meet them both and some brought their own items for Harry and Jeff to sign. Handsome Harry and Jeff Hammond also enjoyed a tour given by resident Jay Johnson.

AFRH-WASHINGTON

Beauty pageant queens show up, show out for military veterans

By Robert W. Mitchell | Volunteer Coordinator

Photos by Jack Beck | Resident Photographer

Residents and staff at the Armed Forces Retirement Home, Washington, D.C. (AFRH-W), were visited by several beauty pageant women who stopped by recently to give back to the military veteran community. Ladies from the Miss America Organization, including the reigning 2017 Miss District of Columbia Briana Kessler, showed up in white tee-shirts and jeans to rehearse their singing and dance routines before a modest audience in the Scott Theater. Many sang well-known songs and danced across the stage with style and grace. There was also a masterful performance by a violinist within the talented group.

Visiting AFRH-W is part the annual Miss America Serves Day where local contestants competing for the 2018 Miss DC crown volunteer their time and talent throughout the District. Their service starts at the Children’s National Medical Center and then onto the VA Medical Center and concludes at AFRH-W.

Prior to the arrival of the Miss America Organization, a smaller contingent of their married counterparts, led by the reigning Mrs. DC America 2017 Julie Cangiolisi, socialized and performed for residents in the Scott lobby and theater.

Residents, staff and volunteers from the Roosevelt High School JROTC group applauded the pageant “queens” for their dedication, time and service to our military veteran community.
When he returned to California, Bill was discharged and tried various jobs, but he didn’t care for them. So he reenlisted and was assigned to air rescue MOS at Travis AFB, California. He then went to technical school in Panama, where one of the tests was to leave him in the jungle for three days. All he had were the clothes on his back and a knife. Bill felt that he had learned from his years in Brooklyn on how to survive and indeed, he passed this test. One of the toughest air rescues Bill helped with was a plane that went down in the jungles of Bolivia. The plane had been located and coordinates had been charted, but going through the jungle with all the strange sounds, was eerie to say the very least. They located the plane and the pilot was sitting in the cockpit, smoking a cigarette, waiting for their rescue. Other tours included South Dakota, Guam, Kwajalein and the Philippines. Bill always put in for Europe, since he is of Irish descent, but was never sent there.

Bill retired in 1971 from New Jersey and traveled for several years. He then returned to California for a permanent retirement. But he was bored. So in 2005, a friend asked him, “Why don’t you go to the Old Soldiers’ Home?” Bill thought that he would go and see if he would like it. When he got to the gate, Bill said “This is home!” He has been at AFRH-W ever since. Another thing Bill says is that everyone should enlist in the military, even for just one tour. “It will make you grow up,” he said.

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Employee shares artistic talents

By Michael Bayles | Chief Healthcare Services

Ms. Mae McQueen, who works at the front desk in the Wellness Center, continues to shine by providing assistance cheerfully to residents. She has been nominated for employee of the quarter a few times, and genuinely loves her residents. For Black History Month, she assembled a display featuring many of our residents who have served honorably, to include the Tuskegee Airmen, and the Montford Point Marines. During World War II alone, over 2.5 million African-American men registered for the draft; African-American women also volunteered in large numbers. While serving in the Army, Army Air Forces, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, they experienced discrimination and segregation but met the challenge and persevered. Among the residents whose stories are displayed, for Montford Point Marines, are Messrs. Gillis, Ferguson, Montgomery, and both Mathews (Mark and Clifton). For the Tuskegee Airmen, there are articles on Messrs. Palmer, Melton, Dryden, and Custis. Ms. McQueen donated her own time and resources for this effort, something she has done before. Mae is quite talented with needlepoint and shared her artistic talent at the workplace that she loves by working diligently with the public affairs team to develop a banner that could be used for marketing purposes. Thank you Mae for your dedication to the residents and the AFRH.

Spring into action

By Corinn Burton | BSN, RN Supervisory Clinical Nurse Manager

The Valor Hall Staff in Gulfport presented their Performance Improvement (PI) boards to the Defense Health Agency (DHA) team during the DHA visit on April 4. The PI board is labeled “Spring into Action for Patient Centered Care!” The board focuses on the areas we are monitoring which are: recognizing pain, discomfort, and desire to move; call lights within reach; providing hydration; offer toileting; proper working wheelchairs with proper seating; updated closet care plans; using proper protective gear; promote exercise; addressing syncope; clean use spills immediately; use visual and environment factors; and, safety rounds (R-Respond/React, O-Observe, U-Understand, N-Needs/Negotiate, D-Delegate/Designate, S-Satisfy/Solution).

AFRH thanks Maurice Swinton and Shaun Servais for their leadership and service to our Veterans

Story & Photos by Carolyn Haug | Public Affairs Specialist

The Armed Forces Retirement Home bid a fond farewell this month to Maurice Swinton and Shaun Servais who served as a part of the Home’s leadership over the years. Maurice Swinton has been the agency’s Chief Information Officer and Chief Compliance Officer since 2008. Most recently, Mr. Swinton served as Acting Chief Operating Officer from September 2017 to February 2018. Mr. Swinton retired after 30 years of federal service and was presented with the Office of the Secretary of Defense Award for Excellence for his leadership and dedication to the Home, its residents and staff.

Shaun Servais served as AFRH-W’s Administrator since October 2014. During his tenure, he led the Home through Joint Commission, CARF Accreditation and most recent DOD Inspection. As the Administrator, Shaun Servais represented the Home during a number of VIP visits including President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, Prince Charles of Wales and Camilla Duchess of Cornwall and the Korean Delegation as well as supported a number of volunteer landscaping projects that have taken root on the grounds at AFRH-W.

We thank Maurice Swinton and Shaun Servais for their leadership and dedicated service to our nation’s veterans at the Armed Forces Retirement Home!
Greetings, the tremendous amount of transition and change continues to occur here at the Washington campus. Mr. Servias has moved on to his next challenge, providing needed leadership at Thrive at Home, a home health agency in northern Virginia. He will be sorely missed, and we wish him the best.

We continue to welcome new residents and staff at the Washington campus. Now that winter seems to be moving on, and the cherry blossoms are blooming, we want to offer you a chance to binge on the beauty that nature has to offer.

On Thursday, April 19, it was announced that the Washington campus’ Employee of the Quarter is Mr. Robert Mitchell, our volunteer services coordinator. As a result of his efforts, a wide variety of people from the community (both AFRH and the surrounding community) have provided a tremendous number of volunteer hours in a wide variety of activities. They have helped the Home approximately $43,000 for this quarter alone. Robert has even worked on his days off to ensure that the Home’s needs were met. As a result of his efforts, the first-ever dragon boat performance was held here in conjunction with our annual Chinese New Year luncheon. He recruited a crew of technical support volunteers to assist our residents and guests in need of their dedication and service. Thank you, Robert!

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Christine Baldwin, our librarian, who continues to provide a tremendous variety of materials. Her support of the resident book club (with Glenna Orr) has been wonderful. We have approximately a dozen residents who participate, and each month they select a new book. The theme is always a broad format and open to any genre, so that all can participate. They have just finished the great depression (the book was The Forgotten Man, by Amiti Shlaas), and are now moving on to The Associate by John Grisham. This is a resident-driven activity; the residents are the ones who pick the theme. On April 25th residents Emmy Lu Dale and Joe Nesnow did a live theater performance for the book “Love Letters” by A.R. Gurney.

Healthcare Services continues to promote national health observances, and for April, it is Alcohol Awareness Month. The misuse and abuse of alcohol in older adults present unique challenges for recognizing the problem and determining the appropriate responses. Alcohol use problems in this age group often go unrecognized and, if they are recognized, are generally underestimated. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has recommended levels of alcohol consumption to minimize risky or problem drinking and to prevent alcohol-related consequences, not to increase the risk of any alcohol-related problems. Any decrease in alcohol consumption may be an appropriate goal. • Are taking certain prescription medications, especially psychoactive prescription medications (e.g., opioid analgesics and benzodiazepines). • Have an ear infection that he was made worse by alcohol (e.g., diabetes, heart disease). • Are planning to drive a car or engage in other activities requiring alertness and skill. • Are recovering from alcohol dependence.

The NIAAA offers a website (www.niaaa.nih.gov) with information about alcohol and alcoholism, as well as tips for those who want to cut down or stop drinking.

Any who would like to speak with a healthcare professional about their alcohol use are encouraged to come to the wellness center and make an appointment.

Michael Bayles

From the AFRH-W Resident Advisory Committee Chairman

Congratulations to the Washington campus’ Employee of the Quarter Robert Mitchell (pictured in the middle).

This Month in History

May 1, 1869 - The newly constructed tracks of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railways were first linked in the Berlin airlift. For 462 days—from June 26, 1948, until September 30, 1949, American and British planes flew about 278,000 flights, delivering 2.3 million tons of food, coal and medical supplies to two million isolated West Berliners. A plane landed in Berlin every minute from 11 Allied staging areas in West Germany. The planes were nicknamed “candy bombers” after pilots began tossing sweets to children. They also flew out millions of dollars of products, structured in Meat, and of course, so that all can participate. They have just finished the great depression (the book was The Forgotten Man, by Amiti Shlaas), and are now moving on to The Associate by John Grisham. This is a resident-driven activity; the residents are the ones who pick the theme. On April 25th residents Emmy Lu Dale and Joe Nesnow did a live theater performance for the book “Love Letters” by A.R. Gurney.

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Michael Bayles

From the RAC Chairman!

Greetings from the RAC Chairman!

This month at AFRH-W, we started off April with a White Elephant Sale and Auction. The 110 resident committee members of the resident advisory committee had a chance to browse the tables and later bid on items such as a pair of pajamas to a flat screen TV. All items were donated by the residents and outside organizations. Thank you to all who participated.

Next was the U.S. Navy Submarine Service Birthday with a cake-cutting ceremony by Commodore John M. Roberts, U.S.N. During the ceremony, Navy veterans Charles Holmes, Ron Karrt, Ken Falker, Warren Possl and Bob Lewis who served on submarines were honored. The last group of 60 volunteers from the National Building Trade Unions came onboard in September as another step in our goal of expanding our fishing ponds. I would like to thank all the volunteers who give their time and effort in such a critical area of our Armed Forces Retirement Home in Washington D.C. Thank you for a job well done, and keep up the good work!

May 4, 1886 - The Haymarket Square Riot occurred in Chicago after 190 police officers advanced on 1,300 persons gathered in the square to protest working conditions and anarchism. A bomb was thrown. Seven policemen were killed and over 50 wounded. Four anarchists were then charged with conspiracy to kill, convicted and hanged while another committed suicide in jail. Three others were given lengthy jail terms.

May 5, 1863 - The Battle of Gettysburg began on May 12 when an American force of around 100,000 men confronted a similar force under the command of General Robert E. Lee. The battle lasted for three days and resulted in the Union victory. A total of 51,000 casualties were suffered in the battle, which lasted until May 15. The Union victory at Gettysburg is considered a turning point in the American Civil War.

May 5, 1864 - General William T. Sherman set out on his March to the Sea, a military campaign that would eventually end in the capture of Savannah, Georgia. The campaign was aimed at weakening the Confederacy's ability to supply its troops and forcing the evacuation of Georgia by Union forces.

May 5, 2005 - In San Francisco, 200,000 people celebrated the grand opening of the Golden Gate Bridge. The bridge, which was completed in 1937, spans the Golden Gate Strait and connects San Francisco and Marin County. It is one of the world's most famous landmarks.

May 5, 2015 - The British newspaper The Guardian published an article about the death of Princess Diana. The article revealed that the princess had been offered a bribe by the newspaper, which she had refused. The newspaper was later found guilty of criminal contempt of court.

May 5, 2017 - The American Red Cross was founded by Clara Barton. The organization today provides volunteer disaster relief in the U.S. and abroad. Community services include collecting and distributing donated blood, and teaching first aid and other classes.

May 6, 1937 - The German airship Hindenburg burst into flames at 7:20 p.m. as it neared the mooring mast at Lakehurst, New Jersey. The explosion killed 36 people and injured 134 others. The accident effectively ended commercial airship traffic.

May 10, 1869 - The first official transcontinental telegraph message was sent from the west coast to the east coast of the United States. The message was sent by Samuel Morse and read: “What hath God wrought.”

May 11, 1944 - General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, landed on the beach at Normandy, in the Normandy invasion (D-Day) attempt to win a $25,000 prize for the first solo nonstop flight between New York and Paris. The flight was made by Charles Lindbergh.

May 12, 1949 - Soviet Russia flighted its third rocket. The rocket was launched from P. S. Burakovskaya in the Krimskaia region of the Ukraine.

May 13, 1946 - At the request of President James C. Polk, Congress declared war on Mexico. The controversy over the meaning of the phrase “assumption of the territory” that was the subject of much of the debate that led to the war.

May 16, 1982 - The United States and the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, also known as the INF Treaty, which eliminated all intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Europe.

May 18, 1998 - Mount St. Helens erupted in southwestern Washington State spewing ash and over 11 miles into the sky. This was the first major eruption since 1980.

May 21, 1875 - The American Federation of Labor was founded by Samuel Gompers. The organization today provides volunteer disaster relief in the U.S. and abroad. Community services include collecting and distributing donated blood, and teaching first aid and other classes.

May 21, 1881 - The American Red Cross was founded by Clara Barton. The organization today provides volunteer disaster relief in the U.S. and abroad. Community services include collecting and distributing donated blood, and teaching first aid and other classes.

May 22, 1932 - Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. She departed Newfoundland, Canada, at 7:14 p.m. and landed near Londonderry, Ireland, completing a 2,100-mile flight in about 13 hours.

May 24, 1844 - Telegraph inventor Samuel Morse sent the first official telegraph message, “What hath God wrought.”

May 26, 1940 - The Dunkirk evacuation began in order to save the British Expeditionary Force trapped by advancing German forces on the north coast of France. Boats and vessels of all sizes and sizes ferried over 338,000 British and French soldiers and British and French soldiers across the English Channel by June 2nd.

May 27, 1937 - In San Francisco, 200,000 people celebrated the grand opening of the Golden Gate Bridge.

May 30, 1922 - The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated. The memorial was designed by architect Henry Bacon and features a compelling statue of “Seated Lincoln” by sculptor Daniel Chester Barber.

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May 31, 1862 - During the American Civil War, the Battle of Seven Pines occurred as Confeder-
From the AFRH-G Administrator

Henry Ford once said, “When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.” I know many of you are upset about the increase in cost. I understand. However, in order for the Armed Forces Retirement Home to survive, changes have to be made. Keep in mind that the user of this place is still here based on a percentage of your income. I ask all residents to remember why you decided to become a resident of the Home before making a quick decision to move out because of the increase. Why are we here? We are here because we are committed to excellence, fostering independence, vitality and wellness for our veterans making it easier for them to live and thrive. Our core mission is to be able to continue serving eligible veterans. Residents will not pay more than the cost for their given care level, and most likely will pay less. AFRH will still maintain a workable value. This has been a difficult month for all of us and it is not an action we take lightly. It is one of a number of steps we are taking to address recent funding shortfalls, which have threatened the future of the Home. The combination of leadership, revenue, expense, legislative, and other changes being pursued by AFRH and OD are all necessary to put AFRH on solid footing. We would like to continue our conversations with residents by providing a bi-annual Resident Advisory Committee presentation to an audience of exceptional residential care and extensive support services. Keep your head up. Remember God gives his hardest battles to the strongest soldiers.

I would like to congratulate Recreation Therapy Assistant Jen Biernacki for the Employee of the Quarter award for her exceptional service to the AFRH-G during January, February and March 2018. Jennifer ‘Jen’ Biernacki personifies the AFRH mission and vision statement: Excellence, wellness for residents, exceptional care and extensive support services. To help upper level of care residents maintain a sense of independence and allow them to maintain friendships, she takes a resident from Loyalty Hall down to the main dining hall to eat. While keeping an eye on the resident, and being there to assist if needed, this resident gets to dine with close friends. This simple and generous act has a big effect allowing the resident to acclimate to their new home and still feel connected with friends. Jen’s actions demonstrate how much she cares about the resident’s quality of life and her caring demeanor and goodness of heart shows us all she sees the vision and lives the mission of the home. Her dedication is commendable and reflects great credit upon herself and the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Thank you so much Jen for everything you do.

Jeff Eads

AFRH is wild at heart

By Lori Kerns | Librarian

Story & Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Wild at Heart Rescue provided residents with information about how their program rescues and rehabilitates Mississippi wildlife that have been injured or orphaned. Missy Dubullos, the group’s Founder, Director, and self-proclaimed ‘Possum Queen,’ used pictures and visual aids to educate residents and staff about the different species of animals they rehabilitate to release back into the wild. She also explained how important all animals, including the snakes and possums, have an important role in our ecosystem. The residents were most excited about the various ambassador animals they were able to pet, as they were wandered around the room for residents to get a close look at or touch, if they preferred. Then, Domino, the raccoon, was introduced and taken around for everyone to pet. Throughout the program, residents and staff were encouraged to ask questions. Wild at Heart gave a fun-filled, yet informative presentation! Those who were present were able to pet some of the exotic animals, including the two turtles and one gopher tortoise, a protected species, and possums. The wolves, bobcats, foxes, and coyotes were a part of our community with exceptional residential care and extensive support services. Keep your head up. Remember God gives his hardest battles to the strongest soldiers.

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Notes from the AFRH-G Resident Advisory Committee Chairman

Greetings,

I have received a fair amount of support from many different sources as I go about representing you to the AFRH management regarding your recommendations for the improvement of our health and safety, especially in light of the All Hallows' Eve (and remember) re sponsible for the raising of the “State” flag each week and purchasing/caring for the POW/MIA flag.

The branch started with 35 members, was at 83 when we went to D.C. and are now at 102. They meet in the theater on the second Thursday of each month at 1400, all residents are welcome to attend. The branch thanks all the residents for their support of our fund raising activities. (Contact “Pete” Petersen, President or Bob Rutherford, Secretary if you’d like to become a member, or have any questions about the FRA.) Hang on as I switch gears.

Having received several topics or questions to answer, I have decided I would be of interest if I listed the two that have actually been posed to me the most, during the past four years, the branch has made annual donations to the MCJROTC Gulfport/AFJROTC students. One such source is the:

6. Past November the branch presented a check to the Harrison County Sheriff’s K-9 unit to purchase an “armored” vest for one of their K-9’s. The branch has been (and remains) re duced by $3,054 per month from a maximum of $1,458 per month. In my personal (and probably most everyone else’s) opinion this is draconian. I have expressed that for current residents it should be phased in over a period of two, three or more years. For applicants it is reason able to tell them what to expect so they can make an informed decision whether to even become a resident. Yes, it would be a two-tiered system for a few years as it gets phased in for current residents. To me, reasonable advice from your RAC Chairman. I do not disagree with anything said by management (agency) regarding the fact it is still one of the best deals for veterans. I do wholeheartedly feel one of the best options for people to con sider to live here now becomes just something to be put into the plus or minus column as they decide where to spend their retirement years. Yes, a magnificent deal for the money is going to become a decent deal for the money.

As for what I am going to do about it. I will stand by my advice to phase it in over a period of years and have a two tiered fee system; one for current residents as of the date of the announcement (April 9, 2018) and one for residents moving in after knowing what they should expect to occur come October 1, 2018. The other I am going to do is what is best for everyone currently a resident should be doing. Carefully analyze your personal financial situation (or present needs or wants, and future needs and wants) and decide what it would be to be a resident or relocate. For some they may choose relocation now and reap the benefit. For those who decide to reside here for many years, I hope they keep in mind, as I am, to seriously consider that option as you will (as of now) have to be able to live independently to be granted readmission. With an average age of 83 as of April 1, 2018 for an AFRH-G resident, in my humble opinion, it is an absolute serious question to ponder as you make your personal decision.

As always, I am open to any suggestions of topics you would like me to discuss, or answer to questions in this column that may be of importance to you. If it is on your mind it must be important to you, and chances are it is also of importance, or at least informative, to other residents to know the answer. The next month I wish you all the best.

Phil Ford

***This month’s Meeting Highlights will be sent to anyone upon request. Space limitations do not allow for inclusion. (another REASONABLE deci sion).***

Phil Ford wishes Frederick “Pete” Petersen a Happy 97th Birthday on April 17th.

Jeff Eads

Congratulations to the Gulfport campus’ Employee of the Quarter Jen Biernacki.
Recreation Therapy Basilica trip
By Carol Mitchell & Amanda Jensema | Recreation Therapy
Photos by Recreation Therapy Staff

It was a blustery but beautiful day for the Recreation Therapy off-station resident trip to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The shrine is magnificent in its beauty. It is a prominent Roman Catholic basilica and national shrine. Bishop Thomas J. Shahan, rector of The Catholic University of America presented his plan to Pope Pius X in 1913 suggesting a National Shrine to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. The groundbreaking of the basilica was held in 1920 and in 2017 the completion of the Treasury Home completed the building. The shrine is the largest Catholic Church in the United States and the second largest in North America. The basilica contains more than 70 chapels and oratories. We were honored to have our AFRH-W Catholic priest Father Carlos Roman join us in touring the basilica. He was able to provide some insight about the basilica and the different saints of the chapels we visited. Following the tour we all enjoyed lunch and fellowship in the shrine’s cafeteria. Special thanks to our resident volunteers, Dave and John, for coming along and assisting to the trips success.

Building Trades Unions give back to veterans at AFRH-W

With several veterans among their ranks, workers from the building trades industry gathered at the Armed Forces Retirement Home here in Washington, D.C. to donate their time, skills, energy and effort to improving the quality of life for our distinguished veteran population.

“We are here helping out at the veterans’ home, it’s a great organization that takes care of our old soldiers, sailors and airmen (marines and coast guardsmen) and it’s important to be a part of helping them out,” said Brendan Loftus, director of member assistance/education program at the International Union of Elevator Constructors Local No. 1.

Loftus, and two other volunteers affiliated with North America’s Building Trades Unions (NABTU) combed large clumps of brown leaves, branches and debris from the upper pond (one of two ponds here at AFRH-W), clearing the waters from the upcoming fishing season for our residents. International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers member Doug Tansy traveled a long way to give back to the veterans here at AFRH.

“I came down 2500 miles from Alaska and love the opportunity to volunteer at the Armed Forces Retirement Home, do a good thing for some folks that served our country,” he said.

NABTU dropped off about 60 volunteers to clean up the campus in advance of the spring season activities. AFRH staff and resident volunteers divided the group into smaller, manageable teams and assigned them to certain sections of the campus with an immediate need. Teams cleared and hauled away heavy branches from the golf course and driving ranges, and raked pounds of foliage as they cleared clogged culverts near the golf course and the garden plots.

Other teams put their efforts into collecting and dumping filled trash bags and bulk items into a nearby dumpster, while another group overhauled the golf shack by removing debris in and around the structure before adding a fresh new coat of paint to the floor.

Improvements can be made in your ability to balance through exercise. The age of 65, unintentional falls are the most common cause of non-fatal injury, and of accidental death. Good balance is important as you age.

Balance in your life

Story & Photo by Linda Bailey CTRS | Recreation Specialist

Everyone says you need balance in your life. They are usually talking about work life balance. This article is about balance, as in an even distribution of weight enabling someone to remain upright and steady. As you age, it is very important to do what you can to avoid falls. For people over the age of 65, unintentional falls are the most common cause of non-fatal injury, and of accidental death. Good balance is important as you age. Improvements can be made in your ability to balance through exercise.

We have a fun way to work on your balance here at the AFRH-W. We have recently had a donation of additional Wii equipment, including a Wii Fit balance board. The Wii Fit board allows you to measure your posture and your ability to balance. A study in the publication Geriatric Rehabilitation found that the Wii Fit did help improve balance with participants over the course of four weeks use. Most importantly, the Wii Fit uses games to help you reach these goals. In order to use the Wii Fit system, you do need to be able to stand independently on the Wii Fit board. You start by creating a character called a Mii, and do some balance tests. One unintended consequence of my using the board was the computer decided my Mii did not match my statistics, as measured by the equipment, and changed the look of my Mii to a much more realistic looking Mii. This was a bit of a game testing her balance.

Youth Music Academy performance

Story & Photo by Amanda Jensema, CTRS | Recreation Therapist

The residents at AFRH-Washington started their Wednesday with beautiful music provided by talented middle and high school age students. There was a full chorus, with orchestra and band, about 70 students in total. They played and sang a variety of styles of music, from classical Mozart, popular, and silly songs. One of the big hits was an Irish Jig which featured a solo violinist. By the end of the performance you would have thought there fingers would have caught on fire how quickly they were moving! This was their second year in a row coming to perform for the residents.

Last year resident Roger Polzheimus asked if they knew “Oh! to Joy”, which they did not. He challenged them to learn it for their next performance. Not only did they learn it but their very own orchestra director, Todd Morrison, arranged a beautiful piece, which they debuted for the first time for our residents as their closing number. Afterwards they asked Roger what he thought, and he gave them two thumbs up, and challenged them to learn a new song for next year!
A Matter of Balance

Story & Photo by Carol Davis | Recreation Assistant

Falling is the leading cause of injury in the senior population. Mississippi Department of Health personnel, Brad Williams and Ashley Mackenzie-Skipper, are leading a falls-management program at AFRH-Gulfport.

A Matter of Balance is an 8-week class that teaches participants practical ways to help reduce their fear of falling and increase activity levels. Participants learn ways to alter their surroundings to help reduce the risk of falling. They also are learning multiple stretches and exercises to increase strength and balance. Thank you to Brad and Ashley for taking their time to help our residents!

Palate knife painting

Story & Photo by Milton Williams | Art Specialist

Alyson Shepardson. After lunch, the group ventured on to Keesler Air Force Base for shopping and a few hours of leisure activity on a laid back Saturday.

On Monday March 26, 2018, the independent living residents set out on an adventure to Avery Island, the home of the worlds famous Tabasco pepper sauce. I was lucky enough to jump aboard the bus that day to visit as well. This was very exciting for me as for all those that know me, I love an adventure. The bus trip alone was interesting as we viewed cities, swamps, farmlands and houses built in many interesting fashions. Once we arrived, we toured the museum, read the history, watched the process of making the famous sauce, smelled the aromas, tasted the hot and delicious flavors and wandered around the main buildings where I saw a “ribbon” snake slithering through the grass… which definitely crested my gut but I wanted an adventure… and I snapped a picture of a crawfish swimming in the ditch while I hung over a bridge.

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Easter events spring in a hoppy April

By Susan Bergman | MT-BC, Recreation Therapy Services
Photographs by Renee Brown | AFRH Volunteer & Susan Bergman

The Easter Bunny hopped around the AFRH-Gulfport campus to surprise residents, staff, family and visitors on Wednesday, March 21. Brightened eyes gleamed as residents on Valor, Loyalty, and Allegiance Hall smiled for their annual Easter picture and expressed joy when receiving their candy bags filled with sweets. On Thursday, March 22, residents gathered for the annual Easter Service with Pastor Gibson and Father Uko in the morning and concluded the afternoon with a piano lounge social with pianist, Ruth Surratt. Here’s to a Hoppy April and picture perfect Easter joy!

AFRH-G first bad bunny scavenger hunt

What do you do when you want to have a scavenger hunt but it is near Easter – call it the Bad Bunny Scavenger Hunt and hop to it? We set off on a fast paced hunt (think Amazing Race and an Escape Room) throughout AFRH-G with 15 brave residents, four staff and three community volunteers. It was great to work together in teams of three, solve clues and learn a little history of the Home and the people before us. Each clue led the teams to nine areas with three clues to be answered, some were easy, some were challenging but all were fun! Our chief of security was almost cited for speeding with resident Ms. Marion Wolke, but after finding it out it was Ms. Wolke who was telling him to go faster, they were let off with a good laugh. The Bad Bunny got away this time but he did hop back in to deliver candy filled Easter eggs to the participating residents’ apartments. So till next year...or maybe a cute cupid scavenger hunt?

Ice Cream Social heads west!

On Monday, April 16, 2018, residents traveled west for a theme filled ice cream social in the community center. Surrounded by western décor and a variety of ice cream selections, cowgirls and cowboys arrived ready for a showdown of fun. Light-up shoes, cowboy boots, bandanas, and cowboy hats were seen wrangled around the room. The idea was proposed to Recreation by resident Tom Butler. Sean Campbell, DJ on the record player, kept the records spinning. Rawhide played on the front screen of the room while Country and Western tunes sounded from behind. Mr. Butler’s record collection and record player brought it all to life. A great big “yeehaw” to Tom Butler and our many volunteers – resident, community, and military from Keesler Air Force Base – along with family, friends and residents who came out for a rootin’ tootin’ grand ole’ time.

Mystery tournament

On April 12, 2018 Recreation held its fourth Mystery Tournament. There were 13 residents who participated. The Mystery was Cutthroat Scrabble. Residents were given instructions on how to play. The way to win was to get through the double elimination bracket with the highest score on the words that were created. There could only be three winners for this Mystery Tournament. First place was Doris Hopper, second place was Diana Dopp, third place was Carol Harmes and fourth place was Doris Denton.

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute visits AFRH-G

Members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park campus in Long Beach, Mississippi visited the AFRH-G for a tour. Members of the OLLI are active adults who share a love of learning. Members enjoy innovative and enriching programs in an inclusive environment with others who share the same interests. Many members are retired, but it is not a requirement to join, nor do you need to be a graduate or otherwise affiliated with Southern Mississippi. OLLI is for all people of all educational backgrounds and members come from a wide range of backgrounds, vocations and connections to local community.

After going on a tour given by residents Robert “Kitt” Kittinger, Ben Ward and Clifford “Smitty” Smith, the members of OLLI had lunch with the residents. Thank you to the University of Southern Mississippi for your support and interest in the AFRH.
WASHINGTON

Going once, going twice... SOLD!
By Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapist & Marine Robbins | Recreation Therapy Assistant
Photographs by Carolyn Haug | Public Affairs

On Friday, April 6th, a long anticipated day finally arrived! The annual Recreation Therapy White Elephant Auction took place. Throughout the past year, residents, employees, and volunteers provided donations, both new and gently used, for the auction. Some of the items included televisions, DVD players, WiFi routers, clothing, lamps, knickknacks, coffee makers, sports gear, jewelry, as well as amazing pieces of resident artwork to include three hot bidding item pieces from Mimi Rivkin, creative bundles provided by the Anna Maria Flanagan Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and CostCo winter coats. Approximately a hundred residents from all levels of care enjoyed attending this exciting event, with many leaving happily burdened with their lost. The event kicked off at 10:00 am in the AFRH-W Scott community center for residents to view the plethora of items on display for later purchase. Not only was there an auction, but there were items provided for residents to buy for set prices prior to the auction. Viewing closed at 12:00 noon and doors re-opened at 1:00 pm for resident registration where the residents were provided with 125 dollars in funny money by resident Bill Jenterra to spend however they wished. Bill played a vital role in the success of this event, contributing to the collection of auction items, organization, registration, promotion of the event, and so much more. At 1:30 pm, residents were able to purchase buy-it-now items and refreshments which included beer, wine, soda, water, cake pops, pies, and cake. RT staff Amanda Jensema and Carol Mitchell were our auctioneers for the event, with new RT assistant Marine Robbins serving as our very own Vanna White in presenting the auction items. The main event kicked off at 2:00 pm with our first item: a mini refrigerator bought for a full 125 dollars by resident Margaret Jirak! Another full bid auction item was the bar bundle which included a bottle of Jack Daniels and a whiskey decanter set, won by Sheldon Shorthouse. It was a close win against fellow resident David Pauling decided by a coin toss. A number of bidding wars were decided in this fashion which contributed to the suspense! All residents winning an auction bid were also provided with lovely blankets as an extra prize.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who assisted us in the healthy community in bidding and various other areas of the event. And a special shoutout to the following residents and staff: Sheldon Shorthouse, Bill Jenterra, Christine Baldwin, Constance Maziel, Kayla Bennett, Linda Bailey, Steven Briefs, and the CNA/nursing staff. With their help, the event went off without a hitch!

Atlantic fury
By Patrick Cavanagh | Chief of Security & Elaine Frye | Performance Improvement Integrator

On April 24th, 2018, the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Washington (AFRH-W) participated in the Atlantic Fury drill, which was sponsored by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Department of Energy. The drill simulated a hurricane event and aimed to test the emergency preparedness of the AFRH-W’s Incident Command System (ICS) and the response of its staff, residents, and volunteers.

The Atlantic Fury drill was designed to assess the readiness of the AFRH-W’s ICS and its ability to coordinate with other organizations involved in the D.C. Coalition. The drill focused on what was done well, what could be improved, and the lessons learned.

AFRH-W resident receives VA Volunteer Award
By Robert Mitchell | Volunteer Coordinator

Forbes Retiree Home resident Corrine Robinson said while she smiled brightly, holding up her new certificate. Robinson serves double duty by volunteering here at AFRH-W and at the DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Congratulations, Corrine! Your service to your fellow veterans is highly commendable!

Don’t judge a book by its cover… Except during Library Week!
By Marine Robbins | Recreation Therapy Assistant
Photo by Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapist

During National Library Week, we left no page untumed at AFRH-W. The national designation fell between April 8th and 14th so AFRH-W Recreation Therapy staff celebrated on April 12th with a library-themed fun booth! Residents stopped by to pick up free movies and books, play some book-themed games, and get to know their staff and local library better. Residents were challenged by guessing games which required recollection of book cover art and knowledge of classic previously-banned fiction. AFRH-W’s librarian, Christine Baldwin, joined the Recreation Therapy team to remind everyone of the value of our local library and give visibility to the amazing work that she does keeping our library stocked with fun and interesting materials.

Afternoon poetry
By Christine Baldwin | Librarian

To celebrate Poetry Month, a group of AFRH-W residents enjoyed light refreshments of punch and cookies, while they listened to a wide range of poetry and recitations. The afternoon started with an upbeat poem written by resident William Sorince titled “Hope.” Next, Linda Bailey read “It Isn’t the Home, It’s You.” Dressing accordingly, a wonderful recital of “The Raggedy Man” read by Norma Rambow followed. To go hand in hand with the month of April, Bill Opferman read “Paul Revere’s Ride.” Following were three dramatic poems written by resident Mike Martinez: “Moring Friends,” “The Other Self,” and “The Other.” Emmy Lu Daly then chose three of her own works, the humorous “Ode to Feet,” “Enough” and “Be Careful What You Wish For.” With colorful illustrations portrayed in the background, Ernest Janes recited several “Cassius Clay Couplets,” which had everyone laughing. Rick Walker had us thinking of spring as he read “Blueberries,” which was very appropriate for the season. Christine Baldwin then read a poem for resident George Markow Totev titled “Ash Wednesday.” Paul Grimes finished the official program with a heartfelt rendition of the poem “The Shooting of Dan McGrew.” A special thanks to the residents who participated, Linda Bailey, with graphics and ideas; and Amanda Jensema and Marine Roberts.

SC3 McDonald’s day luncheon
Story & Photo by Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy

On March 28, 2018 the residents of AFRH-W Scott 3 enjoyed an afternoon McDonald’s-themed luncheon. The residents were treated to the ever-famous hamburgers, cheeseburgers, Big Macs, French fries, fresh fruit, apple pies, soda pops, and ice cream. They also listened to a lecture on the history of McDonald’s, some fun facts and trivia. Did you know...In 1940 brothers Maurice and Richard McDonald moved to San Bernardino, California and renamed their restaurant “Mcdonald’s Bar-B-Que”. They had 25 menu items which were mostly barbecue.

McDonald’s $27 billion in revenue makes it the 90th largest economy in the world.