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DISTINCTIVE SENIOR LIVING WITH BUCKNER

## Reading FOR fun!

Barbara McNeir is a “frustrated actress.” She loves drama and being on the stage but she never made a career out of it. She also loves to read. As a resident at Buckner Parkway Place in Houston, she has found a creative way to combine her passions by reading out loud to members of the senior living community’s book club who are unable to see the print of books.

“I have always wanted to be on the stage and occasionally I have been,” McNeir said. “I enjoy drama and to read out loud gives me the opportunity to use that skill as well as the pleasure it brings to myself

and to the others who are listening.”

The book club at Parkway Place meets monthly. Many of the members are avid readers, and it’s often difficult to choose a book no one in the group has ever read.

When the group chose to read “When Books Went to War,” Barbara started reading to other members.

“One of our book club members is legally blind and unable to see the print at all,” McNeir said. “When she was told it didn’t come in audio version, I could tell on her face she was disappointed. So I said, ‘I’ll read it. I have to read it anyway so I’ll read it out

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loud to her.' There were a couple of others who have macular degeneration and they can read it, but it is difficult so why not get a group and have fun. So I did."

McNeir read out loud to those interested in listening to the book three times a week for about an hour or for however long her voice would hold out.

"I thoroughly enjoyed it," Jeannette Eaton, a Parkway Place resident, said about listening to McNeir read out loud. Eaton has macular degeneration and is unable to read print anymore, but reading has always been a part of her life. Now, she chooses to listen to books.

Normally, McNeir would add drama to her reading by creating the different voices, but she said sometimes the book's subject matter doesn't allow for it.

Carolyn Randall, co-director of the book club, thinks the book club is a great way to add some depth to an activity enjoyed by so many.

"It's a very comfortable

feeling," she said. "I like to meet people who like the same thing I do, and it's fun to talk about books over and beyond the books we read as a group."

The book club is just one of the many clubs and activities offered at Parkway Place, which is exactly why McNeir chose to move in just before her retirement so she could enjoy all the programs available immediately.

"I enjoy the activities," McNeir said. "I'm really getting into them. It's wonderful. Retirement is great."

Retirement has also given McNeir more time to read.

"That was one of the things I was looking forward to in retirement, to be able to read all those books I bought thinking that one day I'd get around to reading them," McNeir said.

"We have this great library here, and I have lots of other friends who have read good books that they will recommend." ■

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

### Colette Bakari-Nkwelle, Staff Development Coordinator, Buckner Parkway Place



Colette Bakari-Nkwelle has been working at Buckner Parkway Place for seven years. As the staff development coordinator she coordinates training, in-services, competency check offs, hospitality and immunizations for staff as well as works as the CPR instructor for

staff members. Her favorite thing about working for Buckner is the core values based on Christian principles.

#### **Fun facts about Colette:** **What do you like to do in your free time?**

Singing, spending time with family

#### **What is your favorite movie?** "Courageous"

#### **What is your favorite food?** Bread and avocado

#### **What makes you happiest?** When I make an impact on someone's life.

#### **If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you want to go?**

Dubai

#### **What is something about you that most people don't know?**

I know God has a shelter planned for every storm that comes my way.

#### **What do you like best about summer?**

Seeing the wonder of God through the abundant species of fruits and flowers. He created all of them, yet so different. ■

# Couple makes VOLUNTEERING A PRIORITY

**For Robert and Janet Sartain, residents of Baptist Retirement Community in San Angelo, Texas, retirement is a time to give back to the community and to their church. They have set resolutions – to continue making a difference and to keep up their record of attending Sunday school every week.**

Robert has attended Sunday school every week for the past 65 years, and Janet has held that record for 35 years. Robert started the Sunday school attendance program at First Baptist Church in Clarendon, Texas, as a young boy. Now, Robert teaches Sunday school class at First Baptist Church and leads music at the chapel services every Tuesday. Janet volunteers at the Baptist Retirement Community thrift shop and gift shop, plays the piano for chapel services and visits residents in long-term care.

Volunteer work is also important to the couple. In addition to serving at church and Baptist Retirement Community, the couple also spends their summers at Aspendale Mountain Retreat Center in New Mexico. The camp is owned by The El Paso Baptist Association and provides recreational activities, morning devotions and learning experiences for people of all faiths.

“As long as we are able and healthy we plan to

give back in any way we can,” Robert said. “We helped them with anything and everything they needed.”

Robert and Janet start volunteering at the camp in May and continue through August. They

work in the dining room, do laundry, spray-wash sidewalks, work in the woodshop and gift shop and more. They meet with the camp director every morning and are given new tasks depending upon what the camp needs help with that day. Robert and Janet work six to eight hours a day throughout the weekdays and take the weekends off.

“The Lord has blessed us in so many ways, so we want to give back with all that we can,” Janet said. “We are making a difference in the lives of the youth, and they too are making a difference in our lives. We

plan to volunteer at the camp again next summer for at least three months.” ■





# Buckner Westminster veterans laid flags on graves of fallen soldiers on Memorial Day



**Residents from Buckner Westminster Place in Longview laid flags on the graves of fallen soldiers at Lakeview Memorial Gardens in observance of Memorial Day. Many of the residents are veterans, making this event significant to them.**

Alonzo “H” Hodgson, a resident of Westminster Place and World War II veteran, recently moved to Longview and participated to show his respect alongside other veterans.

“It is important for us to remember this day and pay tribute to those who served our country and gave their lives defending it,” Hodgson said. “It is a sad day, and it will certainly be a hard time for us all, but we are thankful to be here. They gave their lives for our country, so this is the least we can do to honor them.”

Hodgson was 17 years old when he enlisted in the Navy on July 9, 1943. He served as a naval foot soldier in a Naval Beach Battalion Company until late March 1946. Their job entailed moving troops and supplies across the ocean. Hodgson was responsible for communicating with the beach master and the ships via signals and radio communications for the unloading of troops and supplies.

Hodgson admitted they had close encounters with being discovered or hit by the enemy, but they

made it out safe every time. While on the water, they would get word that fellow U.S. ships had been blown up or hit leaving several injured. However, there was nothing they could do in those times except wait it out and try to avoid being hit. A single blow could take out 20 men easily.

“I was grateful when we didn’t get attacked out on the ocean during the war,” he said. “I was grateful when I got to come home and was able to pick up my life. I am grateful now as I reflect on everything that has happened.”

The ocean was much bigger than Hodgson anticipated. At one point, he spent 58 days at sea without seeing land.

“We traveled all over the ocean delivering troops and supplies to Guam, New Zealand, the Philippines, Japan and more,” he said. “I was present for the great Battle of Iwo Jima. Our troops were trying to and eventually succeeded in taking this Japanese island.”

The five-week battle comprised some of the fiercest and bloodiest fighting of the war in the Pacific of World War II. Hodgson and his fellow soldiers arrived to bring troops and supplies, and on the second day, their ship was blown up, forcing them to spend seven days on the island. About 6,000 American lives were lost while they captured the island.

Next, they assisted during the Battle of Okinawa. It took them 12 days to unload troops and supplies. A 200-foot cloud cover insured they were never seen. But in the meantime, 40 ships were attacked.

“Our nerves were pulsating the entire time. We



had new troops on board who would contribute to the battle, and we were trying to protect them.”

Hodgson said the aftermath of the war left everyone feeling subdued and melancholy, either because of the lives lost or the destruction left behind. He visited one town that had been destroyed by an aerial raid. There was nothing left but debris and a shanty row of scant buildings.

These memories spurred his call to action this Memorial Day weekend and prompted him to pay tribute to those whose lives were lost serving the very war he was a part of, and other wars that ensured the freedom he has today.

“It is riveting and devastating when we hear the tales of the veterans living at Westminster Place,” said Wes Wells, executive director of Westminster Place. “Planning an event like this is meaningful for those who served and helps those dealing with grief find a way to express themselves. We are thankful for our troops, those who are serving our country and those who have served. It’s important for us to commemorate Memorial Day weekend with an event that matters, acknowledges and signifies honor for all those who sign up to protect.” ■

# Buckner Retirement Services announces major expansions; celebrates new construction

Buckner leadership recently announced expansion and renovation initiatives in two of its Buckner Retirement Services communities through groundbreaking ceremonies in Austin and Beaumont and celebrated the completion of

space will include 36 independent living garden apartments and two long-term nursing Green House® Homes. In addition, the community plans on enlarging and renovating the current assisted living area, as well as adding a private short-term

Calder Woods



Buckner Villas



another in San Angelo during a ribbon-cutting celebration in May. Construction costs for the expansion efforts in Beaumont and Austin are expected to total nearly \$60 million.

Buckner announced at an April 28 groundbreaking ceremony in Beaumont that its Life Plan Community, Calder Woods, will begin a \$25.9 million, 80,000 – square-foot expansion and 51,000-square-foot remodel of the 15-year-old senior living community.

Buckner President and CEO Albert L. Reyes said the Calder Woods expansion reflected “an increased need for more senior housing in Beaumont, particularly for independent living, and we want to provide additional housing and rehabilitation services for seniors who wish to be a part of our community.”

Construction began in May and is expected to be completed by the end of 2017. The new

rehab space with a gym, indoor pool, bistro and additional activity spaces. The Green House Homes are a new concept for the Southeast Texas area and include personalized long-term care in a setting resembling a family home.

On May 2, Buckner Retirement Services held another groundbreaking event at Buckner Villas in Austin to announce a \$29.8 million expansion of the GreenRidge independent living residences at Buckner Villas. The GreenRidge initiative calls for a 122,331-square-foot expansion and 16,010-square-foot remodel.

Pat Crump, vice president of operations for Buckner Retirement Services, said the community will expand housing and amenities offered, renovate the existing common areas to cater to current residents’ needs, as well as those of the retiring baby boomer generation.

“Currently, we have a waiting list for Green

Ridge at Buckner Villas, many of those have requested one-bedroom residences,” Crump said. “This expansion of our independent living housing should help us accommodate these requests. Current residents are delighted with the new amenities that will be added to the campus, and we know these will attract other prospective residents to the community.”

The Buckner Villas expansion and renovation project will add 69 one- and two-bedroom apartment homes and 70 underground parking spaces. It also will include an overhaul of the common areas by enlarging the dining room, extending the bistro, adding a theater, broadening the salon and the spa, building a larger meeting space, as well as refreshing décor and interior design throughout. The expansion and renovations will be completed in December 2017.

“We are pleased to have the opportunity to offer new housing and services to seniors in the Austin community,” said Doyle Antle, executive director of Buckner Villas. “Our goal has always been to listen to the needs of the GreenRidge residents, and many of our renovations incorporate their suggestions and ideas. GreenRidge residents are full of life, and

we want all of their space to reflect their busy, active lifestyles. By increasing our independent living housing and amenities, we will have the opportunity to serve up to 138 additional seniors.”

In addition to the two groundbreaking, Baptist Retirement Community in San Angelo, a Buckner Retirement Services senior living community, celebrated the construction of The Crest on May 17 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The Crest was built to meet an increased need for senior housing and a growing number of seniors being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. The new community will offer new housing and care options to seniors in need of assisted living memory care.

Quinda Feil-Duncan, executive director of Baptist Retirement Community, said Baptist Retirement Community has “experienced tremendous success with the small-home concept in our Green House® Homes, and we wanted to create two new homes that would offer the same type of experience to others with assisted living memory care needs. This model allows us to provide an inviting, close-knit and tranquil environment that is tailored to each resident.” ■



Buckner Villas groundbreaking



The Crest at Baptist Retirement Community



Calder Woods groundbreaking

# Buckner Retirement Services

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