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Yes! I want to support **Altenheim** with a gift of

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to the:

- Annual Appeal
- Grateful Family Program
- Tribute (memorial, in honor of)
- Engraved brick in the Courtyard at Shurmer Place

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- I have remembered Altenheim Senior Living through a bequest or other estate planned gift.
- I would like information about making a bequest or other estate planned gift to Altenheim Senior Living.



Altenheim Senior Living
18627 Shurmer Road, Strongsville, Ohio 44136
Email: giving@altenheim.com
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Flourish

WINTER 2021

"We've Always Stood for Family"

Kindness in the Time of COVID



For nearly a quarter century, Ann Samkas STNA, has been helping residents at Altenheim with their daily living needs and now works in the Memory Care Units. Why? "This is the nicest campus of all I have been on, and working with dementia residents is my calling. In this role I can provide continuity of care – they remember me because they see me every week."

The coronavirus pandemic has affected Ann and her dementia residents in various ways. "It's been a really tough year all around," she said. "But in some ways, it has made our jobs more important because we staff members are the only people our residents see in-person right now. They need to see our familiar faces – even if they're masked!" When asked how residents are handling the mask situation, Ann answered, "Many have adapted. They can recognize our voices and also know us by certain features. They know it's me when they see my head of curly hair." In addition, Ann's residents feel significant anxiety and loneliness since they often forget what the reasons are for masking and isolation. "When they're worried, I try to redirect their attention to something less stressful."

At home, Ann thinks about protecting herself, her husband and her residents. "I don't go out much; just for groceries and other needs," she said. "I don't see my 8-month-old granddaughter because I don't want to expose her to anything. I'm more cautious and protective now."

Dottie Welch, Altenheim Administrator appreciates Ann's contributions to the team. "Ann works mostly in our Memory Care Units and knows each resident as if they were her family," she observed. "She gives 110% all the time, and has also learned the tracking and distribution of supplies so that she can help our medical supply supervisor when needed. We are fortunate to have Ann on our team."

"Working with dementia patients is my calling."

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If you wish to have your name removed from future marketing and fundraising communications, contact the Office of Institutional Advancement between 9am – 5pm Monday-Friday at 440-238-3361, ext 1171.

A Simple Plan Provides Peace

There is no better time to think about your future. As you do, reflect on all you have done with your life. If you do not have a will or estate plan, now is the time to create or update yours.

When you do, you will find ways to:

- Leave more for your family and the causes you support.
- Ensure you leave the legacy you want. Create income for you, your spouse and your family.
- Plan your future to honor your past.

Fortunately, it is fairly easy and overwhelmingly rewarding. With even a simple plan, you can protect your family and leave a legacy that reflects your life's work.

Call 440-238-3361 X 1171 or go to <https://altenheimgiving.com>. We have tools and ideas to help you, and it is easier and more rewarding than you might think.

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Grateful Family Program



Residents and families often thank our awesome staff with a hug, a smile or a heartfelt note of thanks. That's how we know we are doing our job. Many times, families and residents have asked what else they can do to show their gratitude for the care received that got them back on their feet and home. That's why the Grateful Family Program was established.

The Grateful Family Program is a special way to say "thank you." Here are the ways to participate:

Make a gift A philanthropic gift to the program is meaningful way to show appreciation for care. It will support continued excellence in our services and programs. Any staff (either by name or anonymously) may be honored and recognized.

Share the Love Share a story about that special person who helped a resident's recovery.

Words too, are an important gift, such as these:

"I was in a great deal of pain due to having bilateral knee replacements when I came to Altenheim. I want everyone that was included in my care at Altenheim, both directly and indirectly, to know what outstanding people they truly are. Other than my own home, I've never felt so safe, comfortable and loved. Every one of the nurses had compassion like I have never witnessed, even after working 20+ years in the medical field myself. From the bottom of my heart, I do not think I could have recovered nearly as quickly as I have without the combined efforts of the entire team at Altenheim."

To make a gift or share your story, please go to <https://www.altenheim.com/grateful-family-program> or contact the Office of Institutional Advancement at 440-238-3361 X 1171.

"I do not think I could have recovered nearly as quickly as I have without the combined efforts of the entire team at Altenheim."



Message from Paul Psota, CEO

Well2020 was certainly a challenging year. Our lives have been put on hold, many of us not employed, cancelled travel and vacation plans, home-schooling our children via zoom, etc. These have been especially hard times for the residents who have had contact with family and loved ones severely limited. The staff faced daily challenges of adjusting to working with face masks, goggles, face shields and the heart ache of seeing some beloved residents contract COVID. This has been a gut wrenching emotional and financial trial for all. In writing this today, I'm thinking what is there to be grateful for? Having come up with my own list, I decided to ask the awesome staff what they were grateful for in 2020. What a humbling experience to hear their thoughtful, caring responses. You know what? I am filled with gratitude for

. . . the health care heroes featured in this newsletter

. . . the amazing staff who have shown up, and cared for the residents with such commitment.

. . . the community support Altenheim has received from organizations such as the Rotary Club of Strongsville, Benchmark Industrial, from churches such as Grace Church, Divinity Lutheran Church, St. John Neumann, Sts. Joseph & John, local companies and businesses such as Ford Motor Company, Pins and Needles, Huntington Bank and individuals

. . . families and friends who have trusted us to care for their loved ones

. . . a new year filled with promise, peace and joy

I am reminded of this quote by Eileen Caddy:

Gratitude helps you to grow and expand; gratitude brings joy and laughter into your life and into the lives of all those around you

Looking forward to our collective gratitude this year!

In Memorium RAY HASELEY
 Treasurer, Board of Directors
 our colleague and friend
 1933-2020
 He gave generously of his time and talent to make a positive difference

Directing a Heroic Team



Why did Debra Carpenter, RN choose Altenheim? "I was attracted by its reputation for quality care," said the new Director of Nursing. "I was also

impressed by its 100-year plus history in this community. As I drive in every day, I love seeing the white stone dog that was moved to this campus from the original facility."

Debbie, a 35-year nursing veteran, has seen many changes in her profession over the years, but none as impactful as the current pandemic. "COVID-19 has changed our relationships with the community and with resident families. We're trying to help residents and their loved ones through this challenge, and sometimes the families need our support more than the residents do."

Providing care during this high-risk period has added challenges for caregivers, but Debbie feels that her staff is up to the challenge. "I'm so impressed with our interdisciplinary teams who support each other and work together for the benefit

of the residents. We are also fortunate to have fabulous resources, such as all the necessary protective equipment, excellent education and training, regular testing of staff and residents, and encouragement to make safe choices both inside and outside the campus that protect everyone. I haven't always experienced this in other facilities."

Maintaining such tight precautions can wear on caregivers, but Debbie is confident that everyone recognizes the risk. "Our residents understand a lot of what is going on, and I believe they are comforted to know that our staff is taking precautions for them. Part of my job is to continue supporting, reminding and educating our teams to stay on guard until the COVID risk is reduced."

"Debra is a skilled RN who has worked in long-term care for more than 30 years," commented Paul Psota, CEO. "As a Director of Nursing, she has contributed to maintaining Altenheim's high standards for clinical services. She is devoted to fostering a positive, caring culture. Please take the time to welcome Deb when you see her."

Patience and Compassion at Home

"Every client I have is awesome, unique and interesting," enthused Tina Glinecki, STNA, who is a home health aide for Altenheim At Home. "Even challenging clients are not trying to be difficult. It's just that they have lost so much that they need to assert themselves once in a while."

Tina loves her job because she can work at the pace set by her clients and can provide the stability and consistency that each person needs. She also enjoys the chance to develop long-term relationships with clients. For example, she discovered that a gentleman with Alzheimer's dementia loved dance music, so she recorded playlists of big band, Frank Sinatra, Neil Diamond and polka music to play for him so they could "chair dance" together after breakfast.

Tina had almost given up on working in healthcare. She was overwhelmed with the hectic nature of traditional caregiver roles. Home health was the perfect solution. "This job means so much to me," she said. "Home health gives me the ability to use my heart without burning

out. I can share compassion, respect, serenity and love with no expectations. I am there to witness and be patient. I feel like I've done something for others at the end of every day."



COVID-19 has made Tina extra careful. "I carry disinfectant wipes to clean door handles and other high-touch surfaces when I visit, to protect everyone." She stays home as much as possible, always wears her personal protective equipment, and handles her work clothes separately at home

"In addition to her STNA training, Tina has completed specialized training in Alzheimer's and end-of-life needs," commented Mary Kinosh, Administrator of Home Health and Altenheim At Home. "But what makes her a healthcare hero are her communication style and compassionate and patient manner, which encourage clients to express themselves freely and to feel accepted at whatever point they are in life." As one client has said about Tina, "You're always in a good mood when you're here. You make me feel special."

Creative COVID Solutions



Photo taken before COVID

Barb Krakowski, LPN, Resident Care Coordinator for Shurmer Memory Assisted Living, enjoys finding creative ways to solve problems and help staff and residents. Since the pandemic hit, Barb has been applying her creativity to help everyone cope with the required changes. For example, face masks make it hard for residents (especially those with dementia) to recognize people, so

Barb created large round button pins with a photo of each caregiver's face for staff to wear daily so that residents would know who was coming through their doors. She recently bought a sewing machine, so she learned how to make fabric masks and gifted them to staff members for personal use. Also, when one of her dementia residents was especially restless, Barb thought of a solution: she went to a nearby store and purchased a baby doll for her to hold, which soothed her. Barb has also created imaginative costumes and contests to encourage laughter at Halloween. "We try to keep everyone laughing. If I can bring smiles to residents' faces, my day is complete. It's an honor to take care of these folks."

Barb moved away briefly and worked at other facilities, but eventually she returned just as Shurmer Place Memory Assisted Living residence was opening. "This building has so

"Activity" Means So Much More Now



Although they are known by many at skilled nursing, as "the fun department," the Activity Department makes a meaningful difference to residents and families. Amidst the anxiety and constantly changing conditions of this pandemic, it has never played as important a role as it does right now.

Activity Assistants Lucy Allison, Janice Farris, Maria (Joy) Hall, Fernando (Fred) Rodriguez STNA, Connie Wauthier, Greg Liani and Activities Director Cathie Stahurski make up the team. They variously describe their role as, "goodwill ambassadors supporting a richer quality of life" (Greg), "providing a sense of purpose and making each day better" (Cathie), and "entertaining residents in memory-enhancing ways" (Connie). Their work involves socialization, entertainment, exercise, and encouraging personal choice and independence. They provide services to all residential areas of Altenheim.

The coronavirus precautions have made life lonelier for residents, who stay in their rooms for the majority of every day and cannot see

their families in person. This leaves a vacuum of stimulation and interaction, and it can increase anxiety, especially for residents with memory issues. To help residents accomplish their therapeutic goals during this health crisis, the Activities team has had to adjust their methods.

For their safety, residents are visited individually in their rooms by a member of the team in personal protective equipment. While there, staff spends time safely socializing with each resident, providing stimulating games, reminiscing about the resident's past, or playing familiar music for them to sing or dance to. They may open the blinds to brighten the room and provide an outdoor view, and they will even read Bible passages and pray with them if that's what they request. "The silver lining of this is that we have gotten to know our residents better because of the one-on-one time we

much heart, and Altenheim has always felt like home," she observed. "The COVID-19 crisis has only brought our team closer together. We all work as a team to keep things as calm, normal and loving as possible."

Beth Seese, Memory Assisted Living Director, appreciates everything Barb does. "Barb is a genuine and gentle soul, a true advocate for residents, families and staff, and a knowledgeable educator who leads by example. She is completely dedicated to providing compassionate care, whether that means holding a resident's hand or making right-off-the-stove grilled cheese sandwiches for a surprise lunch. I am humbled and honored to work with Barb."

"We try to keep everyone laughing. If I can bring smiles to residents' faces, my day is complete."

Cleveland employee, offered, "I have parents and can relate to the residents. Our work is very compelling, and I can help as both a caregiver and an entertainer." Connie admitted, "I didn't expect to fall in love with the residents, but I have. I'm really suited to this work. I can provide consistency to my residents so that they get to know me." Joy explained, "I tried other jobs, but this is the best. Making people smile makes me happy too."

"In long-term care, the quality of residents' lives is as important as the quantity," states Dottie Welch, Altenheim Administrator. "Our Activity Department staff are unsung heroes in this regard. They are the ones who make sure our residents stay connected to their families, friends and community. They celebrate life events and provide sympathetic ears to listen when needed. Cathie manages all the

"They are the ones who make sure our residents stay connected to their families, friends and community. They celebrate life events and provide sympathetic ears to listen when needed."

spend with each person," said Lucy. Janice agrees. "We have become closer to each resident, and they to us, because of the time we spend in their rooms." Cathie adds, "These closer bonds with our Activity staff have the ability to reduce residents' stress. When we visit, we are merely asking them to enjoy the moment with us."

All the Activity team members clearly love the work they do. Fred, a retired City of

virtual visits, activities and special occasion celebrations. She listens to her staff's ideas and helps to implement new and creative ways to engage our residents."

The next time you see an Activity Department team member, give them a big smile (even if they can only see it in your eyes) and thank them for all they do. It will make their day.

