

# Avila News and Views

*A publication of the Resident Council at Avila Retirement Community*

*Albany, NY*

*May 2025*

## REMEMBERING MEMORIAL DAY WHITE TABLE

By Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald

Ellen and I recently celebrated our granddaughter's graduation from flight school at Vance AFB in Enid, OK. There, we attended a special dinner honoring the new AF pilots. As everyone took their seats, the Base Commander welcomed the future Air Force pilots and their families. He then drew our attention to a single table, covered with a white tablecloth, near the center of the room.

This happy event had a sobering side as well when the MC reminded the audience that we will never forget those who gave their lives serving their country, and others who remain POWs or MIAs.



*Photo by Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald*

The audience sat in reverent silence as the master of ceremonies explained the significance of each item on the table. First, he explained that the white table recalls those who have given their lives for this country, those who are POWs (prisoners of war), and those who are MIAs (missing in action) and cannot be with their loved ones tonight. We pay humble tribute to them and bear witness to their dedicated service and continued absence.

The table is set for one, with a white tablecloth symbolizing their purity of intentions; a single red rose recalls the blood they shed, and a slice of lemon represents their bitter fate. Salt sprinkled on a plate reminds us of the countless tears shed by their families who now live without them. The inverted wine glass and empty chair remind us that they cannot join us tonight, and a lit candle with a yellow ribbon tied around it represents our hope for all of them.

He then ended the solemn tribute saying, "Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise as taps is played in remembrance of our fallen comrades, POWs, and MIAs."

My fellow residents, I guarantee that on that happy occasion, at that moment, there was not a dry eye among the 460 attendees. This Memorial Day, we too pay tribute to the men and women who have given their lives in service for this country, as well as the POWs and MIAs who have sacrificed so much for each of us. May we, this Memorial Day, pray for all who so faithfully serve in the military, protecting our freedom and way of life.

## MEET OUR NEW NEIGHBORS . . .

### GEORGE GERARDI

By Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald



*Photo by Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald*

After spending most of his life on Long Island, George Gerardi joins the Avila community. Born in Jamaica, Queens, his parents and their five children moved to Manhasset, where George continued his education and eventually attended Xavier High School in Manhattan. He credits Frank McGuire, the school's basketball coach at the time, and the Jesuit teachers he encountered there, for instilling in him the values of "the masculine virtues of Christianity."

He continued his Jesuit education at Georgetown University and Fordham Law School. Upon graduation, he joined a small law firm in Manhattan and practiced there for five years, focusing on tax and real estate law.

After setting up his own practice in Manhasset, he married Kathleen Hamilton and so began an incredible adventure that lasted for the next 56 years.

While raising their two sons and two daughters in Roslyn, George described what was a transformative experience for his family. They decided to participate in the Student Exchange Program sponsored by the Urban League. They invited a high school student from a segregated school in the South to share their home in order to complete her last two years of school at the local public high school. At the time, George served on the local school board and advocated for social and interracial justice. George proudly related that with the proper support system, the student attended LSU and Duke University Law School and served as a city court judge in Baltimore.

That experience inspired George and Kathleen to expand their long-held commitment to social justice issues to the world stage. They supported organizations like the Alliance for Progress and the League for Economic Assistance and Development, focusing on projects to ensure clean drinking water, proper sanitation, and preserving natural resources in third-world countries. They travelled extensively to Africa, Central and South America as well as to India, learning different cultures while searching out effective strategies for community development, food processing, and water conservation. George has been particularly inspired by the attention to caring for the earth and its environment, central to the writings of Pope Francis.

After Kathleen's death ten years ago, George is finally able to embrace life fully again and feels that Avila is the place he is meant to be. He is deeply devoted to St. Theresa of Avila and enjoys the close support of his daughter and youngest son, who live with their families in Catskill and Kinderhook. He intends to continue close contact with Siena College and its outstanding Laudato Si Center for Integral Ecology.

George feels that Avila fits his needs for friendliness, concern for one another, and a spiritual dimension. On a personal note, he commented that he enjoys golf, walking the paths around Avila, learning activities, and music, especially classical music, offered in this region. He looks forward to learning more about the lives of other residents and discussing global ecology issues.

We are grateful that George chose Avila and welcome him to his new home.

## JEANETTE & STEPHEN GOTTLIEB

By Rod Correll

Jeanette and Steven Gottlieb, Albany residents for 46 years, recently moved to Avila, taking up residence here in one of the cottages on March 12th. Having spent time as an instructor in its fitness programs several years ago, Jeanette was well aware of what Avila has to offer its residents and looks forward, as does Stephen, to becoming active members of our community.



*Photo by Rod Correll*

After gaining college degrees, Jeanette a BA at what is now the University of North Carolina, Stephen a BA at Princeton and LLB at Yale, the two, independent of each other, decided to postpone seeking full-time employment. They spent some time finding out what the real world looked like and how it worked. Responding to President Kennedy's call to do something for your country, both Stephen and Jeanette signed up for the Peace Corps. And it was on missions for that body, that the two of them went to Iran in 1966 and met for the first time in Tehran. Their courtship was challenging, given the fact that they were stationed one thousand miles apart, Jeanette in the mountains, in northwest Iran in the summer capital of Cyrus the Great, Stephen in the desert, near Persepolis, the winter capital of Cyrus the Great. But love conquered all and has led to a 57-year marriage and a family of two children, a son, Eli, a daughter, BettyAnne and two granddaughters.

In addition to the joy of raising their children, both Gottliebs have pursued interesting careers marked with significant accomplishments. While Jeanette's priority has been the well-being of her family, teaching has always been a passion. Fitness has been her primary focus, a discipline she has illustrated in the classes she's given in numerous venues to people of all ages. She has also taught English as a second language and found giving migrants the communication they need to succeed personally rewarding.

Stephen has been both a lawyer and a law professor. He is a veteran of Legal Services Program of the Peace Corps, teaching a range of seven subjects, including law and political history while he was serving in Iran. Upon his return to the United States, he practiced law, in New York City and then St. Louis, before moving to Albany to become a professor at the Albany Law School for over 40 years. During his distinguished career, Professor Gottlieb authored several acclaimed books, wrote essays that appeared in prominent law journals, and held endowed chairs for distinguished visitors at four law schools.

Being active in the communities in which they've lived and contributing as volunteers, sharing their talents, time and treasure is second nature to this couple. I sense they will fit into ours nicely and enjoy living here.



*Photo by Rod Correll*



## CONNIE HURLEY

By Rod Correll



*Photo by Rod Correll*

The Lodge family added another member on Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> when Mary “Connie” Hurley moved into her apartment on its ground floor. Connie is not a stranger to Albany. She was born and raised here, attended the St. Vincentian Institute (V.I.), before going on to St. Vincent Hospital in New York City where she earned a degree in nursing.

She married her husband, Robert, shortly thereafter, a 65-year-loving partnership, in which they brought up five children, one of whom, a daughter, Ellen, lives near her now. Besides raising their family, both Connie and Robert enjoyed successful careers, Connie as a nurse, Robert as a college professor. During their years together, the couple and their children lived in numerous places, mostly in homes in New York and New Jersey.

But it is their summer home on Peaks Island, a small rocky isle off the coast of Maine, near Portland, that was clearly her favorite, a place where she and her family loved to spend time together, a special place to be. While Avila will now be her home, the house on Peaks Island will continue to be a family treasure that she, her children and their families will return to when occasions arise, and time permits.

It is from that beloved home on Peaks Island that Connie came to Avila when her husband passed away last year. Given the responsibilities she would now be facing alone if she decided to stay there, she decided to return to where she had spent her childhood. Her nearness to her daughter and the circle of friends she still has in Albany were factors and, after thoroughly studying the options available to her, decided that Avila was where she wanted to live.

She seems confident she made the right move coming here and I’m sure she will be successful in building the nest she envisions for herself. She looks forward to taking part in exercise classes being offered, reconnecting with a kindergarten classmate, Chickie Hogan, VI classmates Eileen Nelson and Bev Tobin, making new friends and taking advantage of some of the other activities that take place here at Avila. I dare say she will not give up travelling, especially to Maine, but I expect she will be an active member of our Avila community.

## LENORA KIRBY

By Rose Ann Schaeffing

Lenora Kirby has had an interesting life as one of five children. Her father was in the Army Air Corps during WWII and continued in the Army after the war. As a result, Lenora and her family lived in several places in the United States and also lived in Germany and France for some time. Interestingly, all the children except one were born in West Virginia because their mother always wanted to go there to give birth. The only exception is her sister Therese, who was born while they were living in Germany.

Also, while they were in Germany, Lenora graduated from high school. The football games for her high school were held in Nuremberg Stadium where Hitler had held many of his famous rallies. Lenora also met her future husband in Germany. He was in the Army and travelled with the USO as a singer and comedian.



Photo by Tracy Momrow

Lenora remembers that as a member of the military, her father had her family respond when the five o'clock bugles announced the lowering of the flags for the night. He would always pause to salute the flag in respect and all the family did also. When on or near Army bases, the family also responded to the 10 PM call for lights out.

In 1964, Lenora married her USO sweetheart and later they headed to California to pursue his dream of working in TV and movies. Thus began her "free spirit, just want to have fun" days. She worked with her husband to get talent for game shows and commercials. She herself was a contestant on *Knock Out*, a game show created by NBC with Arte Johnson as the emcee. She also worked with Monte Hall.

As this part of her life took less time, she worked for four years with the county supervisor of Ventura County. She always kept in touch with her family in the East. She loved

California but she liked the East also, especially the fall with all its colors. She eventually settled in Albany where her oldest sister lived with her husband and their three children. When her sister had a stroke, she was glad to be here to offer support and help with her care before her death. Lenora recently sold her home here and moved to Avila.

Spend some time with her to hear interesting stories of her life and family. Ask about her sister's clean house, her mother's late-in-life college and graduate school, how one of her sisters insisted her husband become a doctor. Ask about her connection to the book *Whatever Happened to the Class of '65?* And be sure to ask her about her work to save the California red legged frogs. So many stories, so much fun. Welcome Lenora.

## EILEEN KNOWLES

### Interviewed by Pat Binzer

Eileen was born in the Bronx and has retained a special place in her heart for "the city" even though she has lived in or traveled to many parts of the world. As a young person she worked at Rockefeller Center and later was a legal secretary for a law firm on Park Avenue. Two impressive New York City addresses.

She moved around a good deal with her first husband who was an "IBMer" with frequent relocations from Chicago to Rockland County, NY. During this time, Eileen was primarily a stay-at-home mother raising their four children.

By the time the children were grown, she had moved on to develop her career as a travel agent and a skilled event planner. These careers greatly expanded her world. She became skilled at planning and leading tours, including an extended stay tour of London. She went on a safari and toured the bush in Africa, enjoying the sitings of the many native animals. After the safari and seeing the animals in their native habitats, she was not interested in visiting a zoo and seeing them in cages.

Her most favorite tour was a boat excursion on the English canal system in a rented canal boat 7 feet wide and 60 feet long with just herself and husband Phil Knowles aboard and Phil at the helm.



Photo by Pat Binzer

This two-week sojourn gave them a view of the countryside by day and a tie-up each night in a different location with a chance to go ashore, visit local pubs and engage with the locals.

When they were ready to settle down looking toward retirement, they made their home in Lenox, MA, for the next 35 years where they found their surroundings warm and welcoming. For a time, Phil taught computer skills at the Berkshire Country Day School. Eileen found areas for volunteering, including Shakespeare & Co., a well-known area theatre company.

In addition to the eight children they brought to their blended family, they also had discovered a large extended family that originated in Germany. That resulted in several back-and-forth visits over the years.

Following her husband's death two years ago, Eileen was encouraged to relocate closer to her daughter in Rensselaerville. At the time she was living in an independent residential community in Lenox that had some issues, so Eileen was ready to move on.

Avila was found, chosen and became her new home on February 1 of this year.

Eileen has brought a wealth of talents and experiences to share with Avila residents, including a love of bridge, reading, museums, and organizing special events. She says she is a good bridge player who still considers it a game.

Eileen is a delightful addition to the Avila family.

## WILLIAM AND INGE OSTERHOUDT

By Erin and Ray Teichman



*Photo by Ray and Erin Teichman*

Bill and Inge Osterhoudt moved into Avila three months ago from their home of 48 years in Slingerlands. Both are retired from St. Peter's Hospital where Inge was an LPN and diagnostic coder and Bill a carpenter.

Inge was raised in a Mennonite community in Paraguay where her family settled after fleeing Holland in the wake of the Nazi invasion. The family returned to the Netherlands at the end of the war. In the 1950s her family emigrated to a Bruderhof community in New York State.

Bill is a native New Yorker, born in Coxsackie. His sister lives in Cortland. He and Inge were

introduced by one of Inge's brothers. They married in 1976.

Their two children, Christopher and Stephanie, are both married and live locally. Stephanie is the mother of their three grandchildren.

Christopher introduced his parents to Avila. They decided to move because caring for their home and property was becoming overwhelming. As a cabinet maker, Bill leaves behind his tools amassed over a lifetime of creative wood working. Inge hopes to continue her hobby of painting and giving away Christmas balls.

We welcome them to their Avila home.

**MAUREEN SULLIVAN****By Rose Ann Schaeffing***Photo by Tracy Momrow*

Maureen was born in Burlington, Vermont, lived on a farm in Shoreham, Vermont, and graduated from local elementary and high schools. She went on to graduate from Castleton Teachers' College, now Castleton University in Castleton, Vermont.

Maureen started her career in Bennington, Vermont, as a sixth-grade teacher. She was not happy doing this: one grade, every subject, every day. So, she moved on to work at the local telephone company. After a year she returned to teaching, this time at the eighth-grade level teaching social studies in Coxsackie, NY. In her words "eighth graders are old enough to know what I say and, at that time, young enough to scare." She successfully taught eighth grade history and government for 30 years. She retired from the Coxsackie Schools in 1995 where she had worked long enough to teach the children of her former students. Several of her former students became teachers and joined her as fellow

faculty members. Certainly, her teaching influenced their career choice. Having studied history and government with her, several of her students were inspired to work in government as legislative aides. She still stays connected with some of her former students. She says she retired because "I wanted to move on before I would be teaching my former students' grandchildren!" After retiring from teaching, she worked as a court clerk in Hudson, New York for 20 years.

Maureen took advantage of her summer breaks and retirement time to travel. Her first foreign trip as a young teacher was to Japan in the late seventies. "It was a culture shock. Can you imagine a young farm girl from Vermont travelling to Japan?" She followed this initial trip with travels to every continent except Antarctica. She travelled with friends, with family and alone. Alone or with others, she enjoyed it all.

Ireland (of course) and Italy are her favorite countries. She was impressed by Thailand (known as the "Land of Smiles") because everyone there was so happy and there was so much color everywhere. Her time in the Holy Land was especially inspiring. She visited Australia and New Zealand just one week after the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington. Some people questioned her travelling so soon after these attacks, but she went anyway. She was so impressed by the support and sympathy she received from the residents of Australia and New Zealand.

How did Maureen happen to come to Avila? She lived in a retirement community in Massachusetts for three years to be closer to family, but she was not happy there. She has friends who are familiar with Avila (one of them plans to move here in about six months). She especially likes Avila because there are many opportunities to be involved with the always-friendly residents. She also appreciates the many activities and entertainment opportunities provided by the administration. However, she also values and enjoys her alone time and is grateful that there is no pressure to be "out and about" all the time.

Welcome Maureen, we are happy to have you in our community.



## .. AND THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO ENTERTAIN US

### COWBOY POET AND STORYTELLER MARK MUNZERT

By Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald



Photo by Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald

Residents enjoyed a dose of the cowboy code "without knowing we were getting it," one Friday evening in April. The audience sat listening to tales of hard work, courage, pride, and horse sense. Mark Munzert, 65 years old, still identifies with the lore of cowboys facing the task of herding cattle, rescuing calves buried in deep snow, and riding horses that have a sense of trust in their riders. The cowboy poet recited his poem, recalling adventures, challenges, and heartbreak. Avila residents reacted with applause, some tears, and much laughter.

Mark started writing poetry at 13 when he set out to impress a new, attractive teacher. She was so impressed that she submitted his work to Reader's Digest, which eventually paid him \$50 for his efforts. That started his long fascination with composing cowboy poetry. Mark, who now lives in Queensbury, spent his early years in Arizona, North Dakota, and Texas, among other states, in pursuit of work as a ranch hand. He explained that all he ever wanted was to be a helpful, good ranch hand, despite the hard work, adverse weather, and challenging working conditions. The poem that was an audience favorite was "Reclamation," describing one man's addiction to alcohol, family tragedy, and recovery, making it a story of hope in the face of "liquid courage."

Mark returned to New York State 20 years ago to work for Lincoln Logs, NYS Beef Producers Association, and the Western Music Association, while continuing to write and perform poetry.

At the end of the performance, Mark commented, "When I die, I would like to return as a bronco since they are such beautiful, free spirits." We all hope that Fran will be able to bring Mark back for additional sessions (before he becomes a bronco!).

### FOCUS FEATURE: AVILA'S FINE STAFF

*"Almost before the ink was dry on the work order, Jeff was at our door with bug spray to try to eliminate the wasps' nests at both ends of our 4th fl. balcony. So far, we have no more wasps. "*

*Erin Teichman*

*"Once again, Anne Coyle and her Transportation team have gone above and beyond. I had an emergency dental appointment, and these fine folks worked out their schedule to accommodate me. I so appreciate this outstanding service at Avila, and I thank all involved."*

*Margie Gertzman*

*"Every time we make the copies of News and Views for distribution to the residents, at some point or other we need to call on Lori for help—copier out of ink, paper jam, etc. Whatever happens, Lori always comes to our assistance and fixes the problem. We appreciate her help."*

*Lynn Altonin*



## BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE

By Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald

One of the most popular and active committees continues to be the Building and Grounds Committee under the leadership of its chair, Nancy Barlet. The committee meets each month on the second Thursday at 2:30 in the Craft Room. For a second time, the committee invited residents to complete a survey to identify immediate needs and those requiring financial investments for capital projects. The survey, initially designed two years ago by Dave Purcell, saw 45% of our residents responding in 2025 with suggested improvements.



*Photo by Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald*

Nancy assumed the chair of this committee in January 2025. The committee has 15 residents as regular members, with an additional 5 to 10 residents attending meetings that interest them. Our CEO, Kathleen, and Gordy, head of maintenance, regularly attend to hear first-hand the committee's observations and suggestions. Nancy and Dennis Murphy took responsibility for distributing and organizing the recent survey results. They planned to present the results to the administration and to discuss them at the Residents Council Meeting in May.

Committee members are proud of the improvements that resulted from the first survey, such as repairing garage lighting and door rust, replacing worn thresholds at some entrances, and power washing exterior buildings. The administration prioritized other concerns for capital improvements by organizing them according to the

available financial resources.

Dennis indicated that the second survey resulted in several repeated concerns, often winter-related, and some items that should more appropriately be addressed by a "work order" prepared by residents for issues related to their units. Nancy and Dennis expressed pleasure that the Craft Room has been repainted and designed to accommodate changing residents' art displays, such as the Linus quilt project. Committee members are pleased to see the results of their time and efforts in Avila's continuing upkeep and appearance.

Nancy proudly noted that our CEO, Kathleen, pays attention to the committee's deliberations, comments, and observations. Nancy also indicated that the Building and Grounds Committee welcomes residents' feedback and invites participation in their activities and meetings.

When walking around our home, we are sure you will continue to appreciate Avila's designation as the premier retirement community, as identified by Capital Region Living Magazine for 2025. We can thank the Building and Grounds Committee, among others, for the sense of pride that makes us Avila Proud.

## HONEYBEE

Tom Fitzgerald reminds us that nature always has sound advice for humans, as you can see from Advice from Honeybees. Create a buzz in your life.

*Sip life's sweet moments.*

*Mind your own beeswax.*

*Work together.*

*Always find your way home.*

*Bee yourself."*

## CREATIVE FUN

By Rose Ann Schaeffing



*Photo by Tracy Momrow*

Have you noted all the opportunities for residents to be creative on the monthly schedules? There have been sessions for painting on canvas or on little pots, coloring opportunities, planting in cans or pots you decorated. Those in attendance at these sessions have enjoyed and found creativity they did not know they had within.

Thank you, Fran, for organizing all of this. Come to a session and enjoy the fun and be surprised by what you can create.

## AVILA ANGELS

By Tom Fitzgerald



A hallmark of life at Avila has been residents supporting one another and stepping up in small and large ways to enhance life in our community. Have you noticed these quiet helpers who don't seek recognition but take on various tasks week after week? We might call them Avila Angels. They take pride in doing acts of kindness for others without seeking recognition. Many residents perform such acts. I know of a few, and I wonder how many more you are aware of.

Can you name just a few of the helper residents in the following quiz:

- Who waters our flowers outside Avila and in our living room areas?
- Who fills Barbara Merritt's bird feeders each week?
- Who arranges the flower displays on each floor in the Avila building?
- Who takes pictures in and around Avila and displays them near the elevators?
- Who welcomes new residents on each floor when they arrive?
- Who runs the Country Store?

We thank each of these residents for their acts of kindness that make living at Avila a pleasure. How many were you able to identify?

Please join us in recognizing these and other Avila Angels by expressing your gratitude for their acts of kindness.

- Tom Wahl and Roseann Schaeffing water our plants regularly, making them the pride of Avila.
- Bill Klohck keeps the birds happy and fed outside Barbara's apartment
- Dennis Murphy and Ellen Fitzgerald recently began changing the flower displays on each floor. Joyce Gibbs retired this December after eight years of dedicated service, arranging flower displays on floors.
- John Carver uses his talent for photography, displaying his picture of Avila near the elevators to enhance our appreciation of sites inside and outside our buildings.
- The floor representative takes the time to welcome new residents and answer their many questions about life at Avila.
- Erin Teichman organizes the 20 resident angels who give one hour per week to operate the country store for us, and Barbara Howansky purchases the items available in the store for residents.

How many of these angels were you able to identify? Many more are operating silently in our community and deserve our thanks. Whether they volunteer through committees or act alone, they give their time and talents to Avila. Every one of these angels makes **Avila Strong** and continues to inspire us to do even more for one another. Thank you all.

## USTABE SINGERS

By Marge Griffith



Photo by Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald

I arrived here in Avila in October 2012. I became adjusted and joined many activities. However, I felt that, for me, something was lacking. I love to sing and did not see any singing activities. So I found a place to sing, put up notices, and began a singing group.

A few folks showed up and as time went by more folks came. Soon there were eight regulars every week.

We decided our group needed a name and someone said, "I used to be a singer." That was appealing to us and now we are the *Ustabebe Singers*. We have grown and moved from the third

floor West to the Meditation room.

We have books containing about 50 songs. The folders were donated to us by Pat Binzer. We average about 12 singers every week. On special occasions we have sung for others, but the main purpose is to sing and be happy for an hour each week.

Hope you find your way to our group on Saturday. We would be happy to see you.

## LIFE AT THE LODGE

By Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald

Avila introduces potential residents to three living experiences: its main building, cottages, and the Lodge. The Lodge at Avila, built in 2011, offers a unique experience in a smaller environment, with 37 residents in 40 units. We wondered what features residents appreciate most about Lodge living. Why did residents select the Lodge at Avila? Are they happy with their decision?

To address these and other questions, we interviewed three residents in the library at the Lodge one afternoon in January.

We spoke with Fulvia Pizzitola, Marcia Gingold, and Lynn Altonin, who have lived at the Lodge for 7 months, 20 months, and 13 years, respectively. All expressed happiness with their decision to select the Lodge as their home. Individually, they highlighted the smaller facility as an attraction to get to know other residents, arranging to eat together and enjoying the more intimate public sitting rooms and library. The Wednesday wine and cheese event provides an ideal opportunity to extend friendships over a glass of wine or soda, with some cheese.

When asked about their reasons for selecting the Lodge, they responded that the units are newer, larger, and brighter, including enclosed sunrooms and dens with doors. The general atmosphere feels more restful and family-like and encourages camaraderie among residents. One resident even commented that the presence of nuns uniquely enriches their environment. They also commented that the availability of shuttle transportation to the main building for exercise, dining, and musical programs is an asset. Ironically, the positive communication among residents at the Lodge also highlighted a wish for more consistent communication with the Lodge concerning activities and programs offered in the main building.

Those interviewed expressed satisfaction in living at the Lodge at Avila because of its family feel and the ease of getting to know everyone. They mention the flowers residents place on windowsills, the breakfast discussion groups, and the work of floor representatives welcoming new residents as examples of why life at the Lodge is enjoyable and supportive. All three are happy with their decision to select the Lodge at Avila as their home. They encourage and invite residents from the Cottages and main building to visit for wine and cheese, lunch, or dinner, especially during the summer when their outside patio is in use.

It is heartening to hear that so many Avila residents, like those interviewed for this issue, feel that our community's living amenities enable us to proudly call Avila our home.

## HAVING FUN AT AVILA (THE PURSUIT OF JOY AND WONDER)

By Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald



*Photo by Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald*

When we joined the Avila community, we were seeking a happy life. As a result, many of us have found happiness, joy, and fun participating in many of the activities provided. We participate in numerous programs, such as music concerts, lectures, book clubs, physical fitness, meditation, card games, and social events. The monthly and weekly calendars offer various ways to remain engaged and socialize.

If you haven't yet discovered where some residents go on Friday late afternoon when the "work week" ends, check out the Craft Room to enjoy TGIF Happy Hour from 4:00 to 5:00. This long-standing tradition, spearheaded by Brian Shuman, Pete Sparano, and Tom Wahl, welcomes residents to talk, listen, and appreciate one another.

There is an open invitation for residents to join this group bringing their favorite drink- whether wine, spirits, beer, or soda. Avila provides snacks. The weekly gathering ranges in size from 10 to 15. The drinks and snacks are enjoyed simply sitting around the rectangular table where the conversation ranges from personal experiences, life at Avila, and concerns. Discussion on political topics is not encouraged for the sake of harmony. Participants look forward to Al Staff's traditional appearance around 4:45 to deliver his 2-3 weekly jokes for everyone's enjoyment.

You might be interested in joining this "fun habit" on Fridays at 4:00 in the Craft Room. Enjoy this unique opportunity to socialize with and listen to other residents. See you there.



## SINCE OUR LAST ISSUE . . .

*Commentary and photos by Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald.*



Needy at Four Charitable Center in Albany will benefit from the 78 bags of serviceable used clothing collected from Avila residents in March. The bags were collected, sorted, and delivered by members of the Community Service Committee. Pictured manning the collection table are three members of the Committee: (left to right) Ellen Fitzgerald, Barbara Merritt, chairperson of the drive, and Janet Young."

Every Wednesday from 2-3:00, the Civics Club at the Lodge gathers to view the Great Courses presentation on "The US Constitution through History," which is followed by lively discussions about the challenges of interpreting our Bill of Rights and civic responsibility in today's world. John Wagner led the discussion.



Residents welcomed the Bethlehem Traditional Irish dancers for the third year. The large audience enthusiastically supported the 15 dancers with clapping and calls of "Well done lassies!". We know the dancers enjoyed performing for Avila residents, but you may notice that the dancers are not smiling, which reflects the Irish tradition that dancers should not smile during performances to emphasize the physical demands of their dancing.

The April Book Club meeting took on a special festive note with a Victorian Tea Celebration recognizing Jane Austen's 250th Anniversary by reviewing her contributions to English literature. Pictured are some of the 15 participants at this Book Club celebration."



---

*DID WE REMEMBER TO SAY THANK YOU**By Patricia J. Binzer*

*There's goodness all around us  
When needed, help is on the way.  
Just ask everyone you see here  
and this is what they say:*

*We have welcomed the spring.  
Trimmed trees filled with green  
Tom's tulips in the courtyard  
Filled with colors to be seen.*

*Many filled-out work orders  
went to Gordie and his crew.  
They'll get to it so quickly  
Might even be a surprise to you.*

*We have Jeannie and Caroline  
to keep us looking great  
They cut and color and polish  
Good conversation included in the rate*

*Esther and the housekeeping crew  
Leave your home cleaned and scrubbed  
That includes the kitchen  
the shower and the tub.*

*The exercise room  
and the fine swimming pool  
offer great classes  
Barb Howansky arranged for you*

*Fran keeps very busy  
planning things for us to do  
Much more than a trip or a  
bus ride or taking you shopping too.*

*Thanks to Abra, Matt, and Steve  
and the rest of the Unidine crew,  
a sous chef, the line cooks  
and dishwashers too.  
Don't forget the great servers  
who bring the food to you.*

*Ann will arrange for rides  
where we need to be on time  
Our careful drivers get us there  
and bring us back and all is fine.*

*Lori and other front desk people  
Tell us what we need to know  
And answer the phone with a warm greeting.  
If they're harried  
It doesn't show.*

*There are the security folks  
and the night crew that we rarely see  
But we know they are on duty  
looking out for you and me.*

*Let's lavish praise on those in charge  
of the home where we all rest.  
Kudos to Kathleen and Shawn  
We think they're the very best.*

*We depend upon Karen for  
comfort and solving all our woes  
Michelle and Ginger charm new people  
to move in, and on and on it goes.*

*We appreciate each one of you  
That's what we want you each to know  
In case we don't often say it  
In case it doesn't show.*