

Avila News and Views

A publication of the Resident Council at Avila Retirement Community

Albany, NY

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

Avila is now entering into a new phase as we join forces with Lifespace. As we anticipate the future, we thought it would be an appropriate time to look back to see how Avila came into being. We are grateful to Deborah Damm O'Brien, sister-in-law of Fr. Leo O'Brien, for the following article describing the initial thinking, planning, and resources that eventually led to the construction and opening of Avila.

We know Avila as a premier, unique retirement community in the Capital District. Deborah, then the Director of Housing for Catholic Charities of Albany, was one of the lead individuals in the design and construction of Avila when it opened 20 years ago.

Over the past years, Avila has grown in the number of residents it serves by consistently extending its welcome to individuals of all faith traditions, economic levels, and needs. Over the years, Avila has grown from 20 initial residents to today's 220, and from one to two buildings plus 24 cottages.

AVILA . . . THE BEGINNING

By Deborah Damm O'Brien

I think the seeds for the development of Avila were planted in the 1970s when the Diocese, St. Vincent's Parish and the City of Albany saw a need for safe, affordable senior housing in the City. There were more seniors, many with limited income, in need of senior housing and all parties wanted to do something meaningful with this recently closed Vincent Institute Building. That began the Diocese of Albany's commitment to developing senior housing.



August 2004

Fast forward to the late 1990s and early 2000s. The demographics continued to show that people were living longer and looking for new senior living options. The needs were no longer just among seniors of limited means but were among seniors of every income. A local senior services not-for-profit began developing "entry fee" retirement communities...and the Diocese saw that this could be a next step for its commitment to serving seniors.

Together with Teresian House Nursing Home, the Diocese began to consider creating a kind of campus of services for seniors. This would not only meet the goal of serving seniors desiring to find Catholic sponsored housing and nursing home care but would also assist the nursing home in growing the populations it served.

The Diocese and Teresian House owned property in the Pine Bush off of what is now White Pine Drive. First steps included working with the Pine Bush committee Commission to reach an agreement about using the property while also respecting the Karner Blue Butterfly's habitat. Once that was accomplished, planning began in earnest for construction of a special Catholic sponsored retirement community that would emphasize health, wellness, and community, while providing many amenities.

The work of many people from the Diocese, Catholic Charities, DePaul Housing, Teresian House, and the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm culminated in the opening of the Adirondack Great Camp themed—a unique theme for senior living at that time—retirement community. In recognition of the Carmelites commitment to seniors, the new community was named Avila after the great Carmelite Saint Teresa of Avila.

While there have been many changes and challenges over the years and ownership is now changing, Avila's mission of providing a wonderful home for seniors in the region continues!

MEET OUR NEW NEIGHBORS . . .

GAYLE AND PAUL DINICOLA

By Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald



Photo by Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald

As new residents, we each had an acute sense of change as we adapted to communal living. Gayle and Paul had similar feelings, but life's circumstances added an extra unpleasant event when they arrived at Avila four months ago. After spending a tiring day moving into their first-floor apartment, their rest that evening was interrupted by a call alerting them that a fire had broken out in their car in the parking lot, still filled with clothes and other belongings. Fortunately, after several weeks, they were able to replace clothes, deal with insurance agents, and begin enjoying their new surroundings. So much for a smooth introduction to our retirement community.

When we hear the adage that opposites attract in marriage, Paul and Gayle are prime examples. Paul describes himself as a "ponderer" (one who considers all possibilities before deciding), but Gayle believes she is a "doer" (a helicopter personality, tending to make snap decisions). These circumstances raise the question of how they met and how they cemented the positive relationship developed over 24 years of marriage.

Paul grew up in Pittsfield, MA, earned degrees in engineering from the University of Massachusetts and Syracuse University, and then began a 32-year career at IBM in Kingston, NY. During this time, he felt that the single life was "what God has chosen for me." However, in 2001, his focus changed after his 93-year-old father died, necessitating the sale of the home in Pittsfield. At that time, Paul began rethinking his chosen lifestyle and decided to explore a dating website called Ave Maria Singles, provided by a Catholic organization on EWTN, looking to meet people who shared his religious views.

Gayle grew up in Massachusetts while her father completed his theological studies to become a Protestant minister. He was later appointed pastor of a local parish. Her father was a strong force in her life, her self-esteem, and her role in that community. After spending two years at Colorado Christian College, Gayle returned to the East to begin working as a store manager at Jack in the Box and later Wendy's. With her parents' strong support, she accepted her first husband's marriage proposal. During that 23-year marriage, the couple had three children (two sons and a daughter and later seven grandchildren), before they both realized the need to separate for health reasons and their psychological growth.

After the separation, Gayle finished a degree in theology and explored several faith traditions before joining the Catholic Church. She also joined the EWTN site but was ready to discontinue her membership when, as fate would have it, she discovered Paul's picture and description.

At that point, they reversed personality roles. Gayle, unsure she wanted another marriage, became the ponderer, and Paul, hoping for a decision on their relationship, emerged as the doer. Finally, Paul asked, "I just want to understand your feelings," and at that point, as Gayle says, "he won my heart." They married on June 22, 2002. Following their marriage, Gayle was employed as a religious education teacher at various parishes and as the director of adult formation programs for the Archdiocese of New York. When Paul retired from IBM, they both began considering the future and started exploring retirement communities that would support their lifestyles, physical needs, and future challenges. Avila, as the solution to their needs, presented itself when Ginger described a first-floor unit that matched their stated needs and was available. They put a deposit on that unit the next day.

Most days, you can see Gayle smiling as she walks her faithful dog. She loves to read and plays a variety of instruments. Right now, her cello is her passion. A happy Paul is the newest star member of the drumming class on Wednesdays. He is also interested in vegetable gardening and plans to explore those possibilities in the spring, not only on his patio but also in the raised beds. They have some wonderful stories to tell if you engage them in the halls and spend some time-sharing stories with them. We welcome them to our home at Avila.

MARGARET LAFRANCE AND AUBREY KINSEY

By Ray and Erin Teichman

Margaret and Aubrey met in early 2023, and in what she calls a totally unexpected turn of events, as she had lived alone with her cats for years, she and Aubrey became engaged and married August 23, 2024.

Aubrey was born and raised in Oklahoma. At 19 he joined the Army, was sent to Vietnam; later posted to Vicenza, Italy where he stayed for 24 years which was interrupted once by a 9-year assignment to Germany as an Army NATO employee, where he was in charge of a classified train carrying generals and diplomats to NATO facilities.

He is the youngest and last of eight. Aubrey has two children who live in the area.

Margaret was born in Washington, DC and grew up in Elmira, NY. She began piano at three, dance lessons at five and at eight added flute, music composition and writing to her repertoire. She graduated from Mt. Holyoke College with a degree in music performance and composition; later earning a Master's in flute performance at Ithaca College. She taught at Cornell as well as privately and continued her writing. Unfortunately, in both 2020 and 2021, due to accidents, Margaret's injuries curtailed her performing and teaching career, although she still loves to play in public.

From 1990 to 2000 Margaret was the volunteer Director of the Tibetan Refugee Children's Fund as well as volunteer director of Lama Shyalpa Rinpoche's meditation retreat center in the Berkshires. During these 10 years she also served as the Lama's personal assistant, and spent much time living in India, Nepal and Tibet.

Margaret has a sister living in Phoenix, AZ.

While Aubrey and Margaret are still feeling "new" and adjusting to life at Avila, they are both happy to be here. They are especially grateful to all the staff here who have been so helpful and gracious.

BARBARA MACDONALD

By Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald

Barbara Macdonald (Scottish spelling) joined our community four months ago, moving only ten miles from her Colonie home of 40 years. Even though it was only a short distance, the move was a huge psychological and physical challenge. She experienced personal medical issues, problems transferring her Colonie home to new owners, and providing continuing support for her husband, Don, who resides in a local nursing home, combating dementia. Having these challenging months behind her, she is now appreciating congregative life and Avila's friendly, supportive culture and inviting activities.

We have known Barbara and her husband for many years through St. Clare's Church in Colonie, where they lived and raised their family. Don spent 38 years as a program planner and analyst at the NYS Department of Corrections, after graduating from SUNY Albany with a degree in Criminal Justice. He was an avid runner throughout his adult life. Barbara received her degree in Liberal Arts and elementary education from Nazareth College in Rochester. After a brief time, teaching in East Greenbush, she

and Don were married in 1971 and began their family with a daughter, Beth, who lives in Massachusetts and is a library specialist, followed by their son, Tom, who lives in Stowe, MA and works at MIT, after graduating from Clarkson and later Clemson University for graduate school.

Barbara enjoys telling the wonderful story of how fate and coincidence brought her and Don together for the first time. On her first day as a freshman at Nazareth, the college invited freshmen from neighboring St. John Fisher College to a social that night. Don, one of many freshmen attending, was "assigned" to talk and dance with Barbara. That evening, in Don's eyes, was so successful that he returned the next day asking to see her again. They walked and talked before sitting on one of the many campus benches, which then collapsed when they sat down. That was the start of a sixty-year happy relationship (as fate would have it!).

Barbara and Don enjoyed traveling, but most of their trips in the early years after their 1971 marriage were frequent visits to each of their parents' homes in the Utica area and in Waverly. Later, however, they did travel to England as part of a Boys Scout sponsor trip, and then to Ireland for their 25th Anniversary celebration. During later years, the family traveled each summer to Ogunquit, Maine, where family members fell in love with the ocean and the seacoast.

Barbara recalls filling her days by volunteering at the Colonie library, visiting nursing homes, and assisting patients at the Teresian House. For 17 years, Don spent much of his free time at the Ronald McDonald House. While at the Teresian House, Barbara recalled that one of her favorite patients had a favorite saying: "that old age is not so much the Golden Years as the Rusty Years."

The COVID years were not an easy time for Barbara, more like the rusty years, as it was for most of us. As Don's illness grew worse, she realized that she could not continue to maintain their house, and a major change was required. With her children's help, she set out to investigate retirement communities for herself and nursing homes for her husband. One day, after visiting several communities, she returned to Avila, where she saw two units, one of which captivated her with its view of the trees and filled her heart and soul with peace. Happily, she selected that apartment the following day. She told us that her faith led her to believe Avila was her best choice, and that "my faith has supported me my entire life."



Photo by Ellen and Tom Fitzgerald

She commented on the friendliness of the residents and on their happy faces as she walked the halls during prior visits. As she works to overcome some rather serious health issues, she looks forward to exploring more of Avila's activities.

Barbara is a welcome addition to our Avila family. It is great to have you with us, Barbara.

ROSEMARY MOLLOY

By Rose Ann Schaeffing



Photo by Rose Ann Schaeffing

Rosemary came to her home in the Lodge four months ago. She is very pleased with having moved here and expressed how friendly and welcoming everyone is. She is impressed by all the activities available and participates often but is also pleased there is no pressure to be out of her apartment all the time. Soon after her arrival she found a flyer in her mailbox reminding residents who still wished to participate in the White Pine Fund that the deadline for donations was near. She says this immediately showed her that this is a generous community where residents consider everyone to be an important part of the community.

Rosemary was born in Hartford, Connecticut. She graduated from Mount St Mary College in Hartford and went on to earn a master's degree in chemistry in 1962 at Catholic University in DC. She taught at St. Mary College in Newburgh. She also studied at Seton Hall. Then along came Andrew, her knight in shining armor, who rescued her from continuing to

seek more formal education. They married in 1966 and had four sons. The family has expanded with spouses and six grandchildren. They are spread all over the country from New York to Oregon and points in between. They continue to be a close group. They maintain a regular group text chain and have zoom gatherings which have included book reading and sharing. Rosemary loves that her grandchildren do not view her as just a Granny but as a vibrant person with many interests and a zest for always learning. She has been asked to travel to Japan in April with her son and daughter-in-law (originally from South Korea). This is just the kind of opportunity she couldn't refuse!

Rosemary ended her education career at Marist College (now University) where her husband had accepted a job as a professor of chemistry. Rosemary worked in the registrar's office where she assigned students to their advisors, so she enjoyed getting to know all the students. An unpleasant task in this job was signing and mailing letters to students and parents to inform them of being placed on probation or being dismissed from the school. The deans made the decisions, but Rosemary had to sign and send the letters.

After retirement in 1991 Rosemary and Andy moved to a cozy log cabin in Milan, New York near Red Hook. After Andy died in 2006, Rosemary continued to live there until 2013 and then she rented a small apartment in Red Hook until she moved to the Lodge. She enjoyed her time in Milan and Red Hook, but she felt her next move should be to an area less isolated and she and her family chose Albany and the Lodge.

In interviewing Rosemary, I feel like I have just gotten a tiny peek into her very full life. She has travelled extensively, continues to belong to a book club with friends through zoom and continues to be a part of a prison pen pal group that she had joined at St. Christopher parish in Red Hook. This group writes letters to prisoners on death row in Alabama.

When she talks about this program and the inmates, her sense of compassion and commitment to justice are very clear. She is also an artist and has had public exhibits including at Hyde Park and the Ogden Museum of Art. Rosemary is an avid reader and eagerly shares her insights and critiques. I came away from our interview with several additions to my reading list.

Welcome Rosemary, you are a valuable addition to our community.

MARY AND RICHARD MONEYMAKER

By Rose Ann Schaeffing

At the start of our interview, Mary said it would be a short interview because “we are boring and have had boring lives.” I certainly found this to be untrue. We started with Mary. She was born in New York City. In her early twenties she was in an auto accident, and she received a \$2,800 settlement as a result. Being young and free, she and a girlfriend used this money to board an ocean liner and set sail for Europe. They spent two months trekking through Italy, France and Spain before returning home to real life. She travelled several times to Ireland to visit relatives with her mother who was born in Ireland. She attended Russel Sage College and received a degree in political science and worked for New York in court administration.



Photo by Rose Ann Schaeffing

Richard was born in Arlington, Virginia and grew up there. He graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in political science. He worked for the New York State Telecommunications Association as a representative for phone companies for 40 years. When he started there were 65 phone companies and there were far fewer when he retired in 2004, so he participated in many changes in the industry...

Mary and Richard came to Avila from a beautiful, historic home on Madison Place here in Albany. They had purchased this home in 1971. That was a good time to purchase homes in the area due to side effects of the Empire State Plaza development. Richard and Mary loved this 1850 home. They carefully refurbished it back to its original beauty. This was a labor of love as Richard did much of the work himself. He and Mary spent many weekends going to auctions and estate sales to purchase appropriate furnishings and other items for this project. They also refurbished an 1850's era summer home in New Baltimore, New York.

Somewhere in between or during these home restorations, Mary found time to golf almost daily, and Richard built some model ships and enjoyed sailing on Lake Sacandaga where they had a camp, and they travelled quite a bit. They are both settling into their new home here at Avila. Like many of us, the sale of and leaving their home was not easy. Richard readily admits adjusting was not easy, especially since he was so used to being busy all the time. He has made it easier for himself by joining scrabble groups, learning to play canasta, playing corn hole and using the pool. And he is looking forward to bocce ball in the spring.

Welcome Mary and Richard.

JUDY AND MARIO ROSENTHAL

By Jane Hale



Photo by Jane Hale

When the musical *In the Heights* came to Broadway in 2005, it showcased the meeting place for teenagers called The Wall in a park in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan. And that's where 15-year-old Judy Breier and 16-year-old Mario Alfredo Rosenthal first met over 60 years ago while both were students at George Washington High School. After completing their undergraduate studies at City College in New York, Judy in early childhood education and Mario in psychology, Judy stayed on to complete her master's degree.

The next years were busy with marriage, children and developing their respective careers. Judy's third grade teaching position expanded into a district wide theater program and Mario's jewelry business expanded across the internet when their younger son Joshua joined his father's business. Eventually, when the decision was made to close the family business, Mario retired and Joshua moved into other business ventures. Their older son Seth is raising Judy and Mario's three grandsons in the Albany area

When I asked about the unusual combination of the names Mario Alfredo with Rosenthal, Mario told me the story too often repeated for Jews living in Germany during the WW II years. His parents were caught in the horror of Kristallnacht in Germany in 1938 and his father was among those rounded up and transported to Buchenwald by the Nazis. Fortunately, his mother was able to escape to Italy with Mario's older brother. Mario's father survived Buchenwald and at war's end both parents immigrated to Bolivia where they were reunited through the efforts of the Red Cross. When Mario was born in Bolivia, his parents gave him a name they felt was appropriate to their new home and so he became Mario Alfredo Rosenthal. Eventually, the Rosenthal family left Bolivia for the United States where the 15- and 16-year-old high school students met.

Judy and Mario have been at Avila for only two months, but Judy has already started volunteering at the Country Store with thoughts of perhaps putting together a theater group here at Avila. Mario's extensive experience as the president of the Board of his co-op in Fort Lee, New Jersey, may make him a candidate for Avila's Resident Council. However they choose to divide their time, we welcome them to Avila.

JUDITH (JUDE) SAGOR

By Pat Binzer

Jude has been a resident at Avila for only a few months and already has won the hearts of many of us. She is engaging, energetic, talented, fun and smart.

When asked why she moved to Avila, she said she wanted to get settled somewhere before a crisis occurred and maintain an active life here and in the outside world. So far, she is succeeding in doing just that.

Jude explained that as she moves around, she finds her people (or "my people" as she calls them) to fulfill her life. At Avila she has found people welcoming, friendly, smiling and comfortable.



Photo by Pat Binzer

She has brought her love and talent for music to Avila, joining the Ustabe Singers as a singer and a willing accompanist on her guitar. On the outside world she is a member of A Girl Band, that practices every week. They play a variety of music on stringed instruments from doo-wop to gospel. The group may play at Avila at some point. Jude also sings with two local choral groups.

She reflected on her life stages of health fitness that included a time as a ski instructor, a distance runner, including one marathon, a long-distance bike rider and a swimmer. She referred to the changes in activities as her "bodies of life." She talked about these activities as integral to her life's changes. She learned to move on and find new beginnings.

Jude traveled extensively with her former husband visiting national parks, Alaska, Africa, Brazil, England, and Russia.

She was born and raised in Hartford, Connecticut. After graduating from high school, she went to Putney, Vermont, for her undergraduate degree. She later finished her doctorate in psychology at UAlbany.

Her psychology career found her working in an in-patient clinic at Albany Med, followed by Community Health Plan doing out-patient work. While raising her two children, she worked for an insurance company which provided flex hours. An interesting turn in her career was working as a psychologist at a nearby prison.

Jude has two grown children: a son who lives in the Philadelphia area and a daughter who lives near Boston and is within driving distance, each with young children.

Interesting side note: Jude's mother-in-law lives in a Lifespace community named Harbour's Edge in Delray Beach, Florida.

What gives her the greatest pleasure and satisfaction is helping people, be it something small, like offering an arm to someone and fulfilling larger needs. She has come to the right place. Welcome to Avila.

... OUR NEW STAFF MEMBER

NINA KRISANDA, AVILA RESIDENTIAL SERVICES ADVISOR?

By Jane Hale

When I interviewed Nina Krisanda for *News and Views*, my first question to her was: What exactly is a Residential Services Advisor and why does Avila need one? The short answer is that Nina is the person you go to when you need help. It may be as easy as finding a florist or a new mattress, or it may be as difficult as finding a doctor to deal with a particular health issue. It may even be helping a resident deal with a problem involving Avila itself. In other words, Nina is that "go to" person for everything from a simple question to getting through life's more traumatic events. Her involvement with the Capital Region Caregivers Coalition also gives her an insight into what's available in this area to make independent senior living a continuing viable alternative.



Photo by Jane Hale

The thinking of some residents may be, "How can this young person understand my needs?" That's a justifiable concern until you look through Nina's resume and find those concerns are very quickly dispelled. After graduation from the Advanced Master's Program at Keuka College, Nina became involved in a series of service-oriented positions, all of which placed an emphasis on age and disability related concerns as well as on occupational therapy. Because she has honed her skills in a technology centered world, she brings to Avila invaluable experience in navigating governmental and private healthcare systems that many seniors find so daunting. Her husband Jeff is also involved in a related field although as a pediatric physical therapist, the emphasis of his work may not exactly fit Avila residents. But for the more active members of Avila, Jeff's boxing gym may offer an interesting form of physical activity.

Nina considers one of the most important aspects of her job is to provide emotional support to those Avila residents who are dealing with difficult transition periods in their lives. That could involve the necessity for a temporary move to Teresian House for rehab or putting together a support system that will enable a resident to continue living at Avila. In order to deal with the many and varied concerns that fall under the umbrella of her job description, it's important to Nina that the residents find her office a warm, welcoming and safe place to bring their concerns.

... AND LEARN ABOUT SOME OF OUR STAFF MEMBERS

TOM THOMPSON AND RICHARD THOMPSON

By Pat Binzer



Photo by Pat Binzer

Avila is fortunate to have the Thompson father-son duo on our maintenance staff. Known for their friendly smiles and efficient service when solving the many issues that summon one of them to our doors on a daily basis. We are constantly amazed at the extent of the skills they bring to solve our wide variety of requests.

We wanted to know a little more about each of them. We wanted to know things about their everyday lives away from Avila, such as sports teams, pets, great vacations, or even their pet peeves. So, I asked them. And they told me.

Tom is a Buffalo Bills fan through and through. Richard admits he's not really into sports, but he likes the New York Yankees baseball team and the Denver Broncos in the football season.

As for pets, Tom has a husky named Ayva. Richard's pet (numerous pets) are rabbits. Of course he didn't start out with eight bunnies, but you can guess how they came to be. They all have names and live in three very large crates in his apartment.

When asked about special vacations they had taken, Richard was delighted to talk about a two-week cruise out of Miami that stopped at several ports with time to go ashore and look around the important sites in the Bahamas and surrounding areas. He also has been to Mexico. Tom's idea of a great vacation was to take cruises everywhere throughout the Caribbean.



Photo by Pat Binzer

everywhere throughout the Caribbean.

Tom has worked at Avila for thirteen years and Richard has been here for almost three years. Tom's favorite part about working here is the residents. Richard said what he enjoys most is the fact that he learns something new every day.

When asked about their pet peeves, Richard's answer was quick: vague work orders. When a work order doesn't have enough detail, it is hard to judge how long it will take to complete and what expertise will be needed. When Tom was asked for his pet peeve, he thought a moment and answered, "I don't have any."

Solving issues for the residents is only part of the many aspects of their jobs. There isn't much that needs fixing, updating, installing, etc. that isn't handled by Tom and Richard and the rest of our small maintenance crew led by Gordy. All of you are greatly appreciated.

LORI ELDRIDGE

By Ray and Erin Teichman



Photo by Ray and Erin Teichman

Lori Eldridge became Avila's front desk receptionist three years ago when she was hired by her former supervisor, Donna Smith, Avila's CEO at the time. She was a business major in high school and has spent her working career in office administration. She thoroughly enjoys assisting residents, welcoming guests, and being Avila's initial connection to the outside world.

Lori is a native New Yorker born in Ballston Spa, currently living in an apartment in Glens Falls where her life revolves around her two dogs, Derby a Newfoundland and Rex a yellow Labrador retriever. She inherited her love of dogs and interest in raising, training, and showing them from her mother. Lori's brother lives in New Jersey with his family.

Her outside interests include 70s music, ice hockey, and baking; but walking and exercising her dogs is at the top of her list. Her dream goals include showing one of her dogs at the Westminster Kennel Club February Show; and taking a trip to

Newfoundland. We hope she will realize both of them.

SPRING IS COMING

By Rose Ann Schaeffing

Eventually the snow will melt and there will be green grass again! Spring will provide opportunities for all interested residents to be part of an informal gardening club. This can involve planting and caring for the raised beds at the Lodge and in the courtyard at Avila and/or having a small personal garden behind the garages. This year the group will try to have as many native plants as possible. We are consulting with some local experts to help get an understanding of what we could do here. An initial meeting for those interested in these gardening projects will be held in late March. Watch for announcements

FOCUS FEATURE

"I am so appreciative that Gordie and his staff so quickly honored my request for "leaf blowing," yes "leaf blowing" in December.

My request was taken care of on the day of my request during the week of Christmas.

Thank you to Jeff who did a fantastic job. "

Margie Faverman ,Cottage #16

"Though most of us never see Diane, she is present in the beautiful and clever seasonal decorations that adorn many of our public areas, the apartment front doors in the main building (and at the Lodge as well, I would imagine), and are placed quietly in the internal mailboxes of the cottages. Diane is the creator of these lovely surprises and gifts them to us.

I am not always on Diane's schedule to place a thank you call, and I want her to know that I really enjoy receiving them, and they have a place of honor in my cottage!

Again, many thanks, Diane!"

Margie Faverman, Cottage #16

AVILA RESIDENT COUNCIL PROGRAM COMMITTEE

By Pat Binzer

As a group the Program Committee meets at 3:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month in the Craft Room chaired by Joan Friedman and Laura Leeds. All residents are welcome to attend and participate.

Fran Amedio, Program and Activities Director, provides a description of the upcoming special events and new offerings for the next month. The committee members then discuss items and issues on the current month's calendar, including comments raised by newer and long-term residents and offer ideas for future outings and activities.

The committee is aware that the popularity of some activities is waning. Requests for something different or at a different time of day are increasing. Requests come from newer, younger, more active residents for things to do and places to go while a portion of the long-term Avila population has difficulty getting around to other venues because of limited accessibility with walkers and other devices. Comments about challenges and positive features are discussed with Fran and the committee members throughout the month. The goal is to offer enough programming variety to meet the wishes and abilities of our varied populations.

It is clear that to address these issues many more residents need to become involved and attend the committee meetings and volunteer to help with the many tasks that are going undone because no one is stepping up to lend a hand or a useful opinion.

Some interesting facts you may not know:

At the beginning of each month a very large calendar of the scheduled events for that month has been completed by Fran and is placed in everyone's in-house mailbox.

What you may not know is Fran is well on her way to completing a large calendar for the next two or three months. Many items are repeated in the same time slots month after month. If there are changes in the schedule or certain activities are no longer being held someone in charge of the event or activity needs to notify Fran, preferably in writing, in time for her to change the calendar.

Space at Avila is at a premium. If an activity or meeting is listed as occurring weekly but meets once a month, let Fran know well in advance so she can free up space and correct the calendar before it is printed. If you are in charge of a meeting or activity it is helpful if Fran knows the requirements of the group: who is in charge, day and time, size of the group, frequency of activity, setup, duration of event, preferred space, special equipment needed by Avila. Scheduling arrangements need to be made well in advance to ensure availability and correct notification to others.

If you have participated in a trip, meal out, event, in-house presentation, concert, movie, etc. and loved it or would not go again, let Fran or any committee member know so changes can be made for future scheduling. Increased resident involvement will make for a more fulfilling life for all Avila residents.

LAUDATO SI GROUP—LEARNING AND DOING

By Rose Ann Schaeffing

This group was started by George Gerardi in the summer of 2025. He came to Avila with extensive experience, knowledge and interest in integrative ecology. He wanted to continue this interest in his retirement. After speaking with his neighbors and other residents he met, he decided to start a study group that would help Avila become a more environmentally conscious community' The name of the group is taken from the encyclical of Pope Francis: *Laudato Si* (Praise Be) On the Care for Our Common Home.

The group has hosted several guest speakers, watched and discussed videos pertaining to integral ecology, gone on a field trip to the Pine Bush Education Center and George has kept the group abreast of programs at the Laudato Si Center for Integral Ecology at Siena University' Some group members have attended programs there and all are regularly informed about programs that can be live-streamed at www.siena.edu/resources/livestream/.

The group has also suggested and discussed specific things we can do here at Avila to actively apply our role in reducing our footprint. Very simple steps have been discussed (reusable food containers, participating in CLYNK recycling, etc.). Beyond that they have discussed how to have a broader influence by working with resident committees, staff and management and, hopefully, with Lifespace to influence decisions regarding maintenance and improvements here at Avila.

All residents are welcome to attend the monthly meetings and to become involved in discussions and activities. Watch the calendar and flyers for scheduling.

SYMPOSIUM ABOUT SAVING OUR PLANET

By Marjorie Jacobs

On February 5, 2026, Avila residents, Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald, George Gerardi, Bob Elie, and myself, attended a Siena University day-long seminar from a group of folks who believe in the climate change movement and have the hope that the planet can be salvaged. In January George Gerardi presented for our edification a video and a four-page testimonial called "The Earth Charter," which had been a follow-up to a globally attended Earth Summit of the same name which took place in 1992 (more information at www.EarthCharter.org). I was then and there drawn to the continuation of George's *Laudato Si* series at Avila. The testimonial ends with a call for a 'Way Forward,' a recommitment to the United Nations and to the principles expressed in the Earth Charter which espouses understanding, tolerance, and compassionate caring; and, primarily, ecology in this era of serious climate change.

The keynote speaker was Amy Domini. She spoke for some time about her 99-year-old mother who had impressed recycling by using wax paper to wrap her sandwich and filling a thermos for years of taking her lunch to work. Amy became a leader in the field of 'Ethical Stock Brokering' when she disregarded making purchases of stocks and bonds with companies who did not follow a strict mandate of having humanitarian ideals.

In summation I quote from *The Earth Charter*: Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

SINCE OUR LAST ISSUE . . .

Comments and photos by Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald.



In January, Barbara Howansky and two of her instructors demonstrated chair and drumming exercises from newer classes for residents, noting that seniors should move their bones and muscles as much as possible to maintain health. Pictured are Nancy Barlett and Tom Fitzgerald attempting drumming activities as a natural, rhythmic movement that invites socializing and laughter.

The fourth annual clothing drive was held in early February, when residents were asked to donate clothes. Organized by Barbara Merritt and supported by members of the Community Service Committee, this year's highly successful drive generated 57 bags of women's and men's clothes, which were delivered to four local charities. This effort supports Avila's "Month of Kindness," showing our concern for the ecology and the needy of the Capital Region. Good job, residents!



In late February, Avila residents welcomed again two Rabbis from Beth Emeth Temple in Albany to lead a Shabbat Service of song, prayer, and reflection. The event, organized and publicized by Joan Friedman, was well attended, offering an opportunity to share and appreciate religious traditions. A dinner, again hosted by Joan and her husband, Harvey, followed the service, encouraging reflection and conversation among participants."

WATCHING WINTER MELT AWAY

By Patricia J. Binzer

*Did you think
winter would never end this year?
Did you want
the snowbanks dark and dirty
to disappear from sight?*

*Did you tire
of cancelling appointments
and dinner dates with friends?
You chose to stay home every night.*

*Did you wish
you could retire the heavy clothing
and get out the favorites for spring?
Did you dream
of palm trees and pina coladas
and sandy beaches, favorite things?*

*Did you know
the snowfalls totals beat records?
The days of frigid cold reached 32.
Were you fooled
by days of brilliant sunshine
with zero degrees outside for you?*

*Do you believe
that spring is just around the corner
and crocuses are anxious to appear?
Do you have faith
in the return of each new season;
looking for it once again this year?*

*Have you noticed
the morning sun greets you sooner
and sets later in evenings every day?
Have you noticed
how apartment light keeps changing
casting sunbeams a whole new way?*

*Have you heard
fewer plows making snowbanks
and more airplanes taking people where they want
to go?*

*Have you seen
more neighbors walking outside
and more returning songbirds
putting on a show.*

*It must be almost time for tulips
and green grass will start to grow
There'll be warmth and sunshine
and hope there's no more snow.*

*Have you felt
happier to be with people
to share a smile or story of the day?*

*You have observed
the melting of the winter.
And hope it has really gone away.*