

SUMMER 2022

Blue Skies of Texas
COURIER



Volunteerism
Abounds
at
Blue Skies

SENIOR LIVING IN THE TRADITION OF AIR FORCE VILLAGE

Executive **REPORT**



Darrell D. Jones

*Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)
President & CEO*

Inside *this issue*

Three Pats	3
Serving	4/5
TSHL	6
Freedom	7
Mission / Vision	8
Contacts	8

ON THE COVER: *Volunteer gardeners help each other grow delicious produce in their garden plots to share with neighbors. Kathy Daigle (foreground) and Rick and Mae Horn admire the beautiful wildflowers while attending to their crops.*

Not all residents at Blue Skies of Texas were in the Service, but all the residents at Blue Skies of Texas believe in service. That's one of the many unique characteristics that makes Blue Skies remarkable. Our commitment to serve others is the common glue that binds us together as a family. This is a place where residents find a wealth of new friends, find their niche and discover new adventures along the way.

It is great to be part of a family. I have three brothers, and we were always known as the Jones Boys to family and friends. I have two sons, and when someone once said they wanted a picture of all the Jones Boys, my two sons jumped up. I had to smile. I now have two grandsons, so the picture is getting a lot more crowded.

This edition of the Courier is about family, friendship and service. Some will argue the family you choose is more important than the one you're born into. After all, your friends don't have to be there when things get tough. Yet they are. They choose to be there for you. We see it in action here every day. If you visit Blue Skies, you'll see why so many people have found their second family. It's a culture of caring, service and enjoying all that life has to offer.

Whether your connection comes from shared experiences, shared friendships, shared interests, or shared goals, the bond is strong. Our residents come together to socialize and serve others. Our 70+ different resident-run clubs and organizations make it easy to learn, to grow and to pursue new interests.

Do these groups have an impact? You bet, and often it's on a much larger scale than our community. You'll see how our residents are helping seniors everywhere by working with the Texas Legislature to improve the lives of seniors and those who work with them.

It's not just our residents who share a special connection at Blue Skies: our partners and supporters are also part of the calling. You need only look at our annual Play for Freedom Golf Tournament, which supports our world-renowned Alzheimer's Care and Research Center, to recognize the deep commitment to others. We broke all records this year because of our supporters – sponsors, players, donors, fans and our loyal residents.

I could go on and on about Blue Skies and our residents. I encourage you to dig into this edition of the Courier and find out for yourself. Even better, come visit Blue Skies and see what all the buzz is about.

Darrell

A tale of three *Pats*

Starting over can require a courageous leap. But if you try, it can enrich your life beyond measure. This is a Tale of Three Pats – three women took the leap and landed at Blue Skies in 2018-19 within five months of each other. They could not have imagined a better sisterhood of smart, fun women with whom they'd share countless meals, deep conversation and laughter.

PAT WAGNER moved to her cottage in the Lakes area in late 2018, joined shortly thereafter by Pat Perry and Pat Hochstat. Along with some other single women in their neighborhood of cozy bungalows, they got together for dinner, shared life stories over wine and found that despite different backgrounds, they share similar values. As Pat P summed it, "This is a group of good people with good personalities who lend each other emotional support when needed and know how to have fun."

Pat W's late husband retired as a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserves, so she knows about moving. "Coming to Blue Skies was like coming home," she said. A lifelong volunteer, she helped save lives as a bone marrow courier for the National Marrow Donor Program for 10 years. Her passion lies with P.E.O. International (Philanthropic Educational Organization), a 153-year-old organization that promotes educational opportunities for women. She recently retired as President of the P.E.O. chapter that meets at Blue Skies West.

Of her faithful Blue Skies circle, she says, "When I was in the hospital, they helped me. Here, when you move to another facility like assisted living, people don't forget you. These folks are good family."

PAT PERRY arrived in 2019, just weeks ahead of Pat Hochstat. Pat P says, "Right away, we all got along, enjoyed playing games and dining together. Our personalities meshed. We trust each other. When times are tough, each is there with moral support. And ... we're all just two minutes away!" She and Pat H are active in the Seasoned Soles walking/running group and she enters half marathons and takes multiple exercise classes. A retired forester, she fought fires and still runs on high energy. She volunteers at Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center each week, shuttling patients to and from the parking lot to their appointments.

PAT HOCHSTAT is a widow whose husband was not in the military. Her parents had lived at Air Force Village and she was delighted when the eligibility changed and she was able to move to Blue Skies. "My sponsor put a group of us together for dinner and we became the closest thing to family. Although the pandemic shut things down for a while, we were able to get together in our homes during the fall of 2020, which helped us survive COVID." She appreciates the conversations that often center on shared experiences and philosophical questions about life. "I thought I'd sit and read in retirement," she says, "but it hasn't quite turned out that way." Her life is active and stimulating. She has earned medals for competing in races with the Seasoned Soles. As a volunteer, she looks



The Three Pats enjoy Happy Hour on Pat Hochstat's patio. L-R, Pat Hochstat, Pat Perry and Pat Wagner.

for discrete projects that she can finish and then move on to something else. Decorating public spaces on campus for the holidays has been great fun, and during tax season, she helps residents and employees prepare their taxes through AARP.

The Pats note that there's another P who is integral to their merry band – Peggi Parkhill, an Air Force retiree who knows the city and is their capable tour guide. "We're really a foursome," Pat P says. *(Editor's Note: Peggi, if you'd change your name to Pat, this story could be A Tale of Four Pats.)*

A Tale of Three Pats illustrates the joyful camaraderie that magically happens when retirees move to the friendly Blue Skies.

After a lifetime of serving, they retire...and keep on serving.

Among the many impressive characteristics that set Blue Skies apart is our residents' pervasive spirit of volunteerism. After lifetimes of service to country, education, medicine, industry, family and more, retirees come to Blue Skies not to take a break from serving, but to continue serving in innovative ways. The hundreds of service hours our residents log each month might make other retirees dizzy, but it makes our retirees feel fulfilled.

DOTTIE & JIM CONNER

Dottie and Jim Conner exemplify the joy of volunteer work. They continually find inspiration to serve by admiring the bountiful selflessness of the many friends they've made here.

Lt Col Jim Conner, USAF (Ret), oversees the 35 popular garden plots on the West campus where resident gardeners happily farm year 'round. He helped build beehives that attract colonies of pollinators to save the planet. Others have created wildflower and butterfly gardens. A scientist, he shares his expertise at a local school where he judges science fairs. He invites the John Jay High School ROTC to perform at the annual Blue Skies Veterans Day program. He also leads the local chapter of the MOAA (Military Officers Association of America).

Jim and Dottie are part of the newcomer welcoming group that visits with prospective and new residents to ease their transition and give them a transparent

view of life at Blue Skies. Dottie has produced shows on campus and shares her singing and dancing talents in the annual Blue Skies "Follies," directed by resident Marcia Tinsley. Dottie volunteers with residents in skilled nursing, along with a corps of others who visit, read, bring juice and snacks, and provide the gift of friendship.

CHRIS JOHNSON

Maj Chris Johnson, USAF (Ret) is a lifelong trailblazer. One of just four women of color in her WAF (Women in the Air Force) class in 1950, she served in Vietnam and retired after a distinguished career. Later, she joined the faculty at Hamilton College in New York, where she initiated a HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program) that has given hundreds of students the opportunity to attend college who otherwise would not have had the means. The grateful students affectionately called her "Mother."



Joan Potter, left, and Chris Johnson celebrate that more than 1800 dogs have been comforted by these soft beds lovingly made by Joan and delivered by Chris.

At Blue Skies, she applies her inventive service ideas to aid the voiceless. At 94, she gathers discarded newspapers around campus and delivers them to animal shelters. When she found that no-kill shelters needed dog beds, she inspired fellow resident Joan Potter to add her sewing skills to the cause, and Joan since has made over 1800 dog beds to date for the furry homeless. Chris picks up unsold clothing and household goods from the campus thrift shop and delivers them to battered women's and homeless veterans' shelters. Her tireless and selfless response to others' needs recently earned her an award from the Women's Club of San Antonio, another in a lifetime of honors for her pioneering commitment to serve.



Jim and Dottie (4th and 5th from the left) and a group of friends from the Blue Skies Chapel helped bag food for the Children's Hunger Fund, along with Pastor Wayne Knutson Jr. (2nd from right).

SUE & BILL WILT

Sue and Bill Wilt keep busy with activities on and off campus. Sue and Pam Kroyer are the co-chairs of the White Elephant Thrift Shop on the East campus. Saralee Hardel handles the finances, and a faithful corps of volunteers processes the constant flow of incoming donations of furniture, clothing and household goods that are sold to employees and residents. Proceeds are funneled back into the community for a swath of beneficial causes.

Examples of the White Elephant's impact:

- Provided funds for 10 comfortable new chairs in the recreation room where residents enjoy shooting pool, playing games and relaxing with friends.
- Purchased 20 small grocery carts for residents to transport groceries from their vehicles to their residences.
- Bill led a campaign to raise \$10K to create a dog park – now a popular spot for pets and their owners to hang out. The White Elephant matched funds with donors to make the dream a reality.

Sue also spearheads the annual Employees' Children's Christmas Party – a festive affair replete with gifts, food and more than 100 happy children. "The



Sue Wilt, right, and Pam Kroyer co-chair the White Elephant Thrift Shop on the East campus.

employees do so much for us and this is one way we can include their families and do something special for them," Sue says. Residents' donations fully fund the celebration.

Capt Bill Wilt, USAF (Ret), volunteers at the Lackland AFB Airman's Heritage Museum. Thousands of people annually attend basic training graduations and visit the museum. A former Officer Training instructor and Civil War buff, Bill enjoys giving presentations to visitors. He convinced a Blue Skies friend, 99-year-old WWII fighter pilot Travis Smith, to accompany him, and Travis thus became involved with the Museum. "With his background of 64 combat missions and expertise in military history, Travis devoted hours to cataloging and sorting the Museum's vast collection of military aviation books and has become a celebrated hero. We set him up at a table with a stack of fliers that show a photo of him in uniform with his airplane, and people stop to talk and ask for autographs," Bill says.

A Village of Volunteers

Volunteers run the 70+ clubs and organizations that keep residents active, busy, engaged and socialized. And they keep finding ways to serve. Due to space limitations, we cannot honor them all by name and achievement, but here are a few examples of their talents, creativity and dedication:

Jerre Griffin repairs specialty furniture for residents through his work in the wood shop. When someone insists on paying him, he returns the money back to the shop.

Volunteers keep the Blue Skies libraries stocked, organized and ready for readers' enjoyment.

Ralph Kelly helps residents navigate VA benefits requirements.

Volunteers decorate the campuses for holidays and special events.

The Yacht Club holds a lively annual regatta with model boats.

Steve Wilson, a trained videographer, has produced a series of fascinating resident oral histories and has helped tell the Blue Skies story through creative marketing and healthcare videos.

Trained experts help residents and employees with income tax preparation.

Many share their skills and time at Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center and Pharmacy.

Dawn Halsell works in The Mission library, and also organizes crafts and snacks for parties and movie nights to brighten life for Mission residents.

Resident Councils on both campuses provide a forum for residents to express their ideas and concerns to management and directors.

Susan and Keith Shumaker handle furniture sales when residents move, with the proceeds going back into the community for programming and projects.

Several tech savvy groups help residents with computer issues and conduct free computer classes.

In addition to the hundreds of hours that residents put into the two campus thrift shops, **Barb Malone** also volunteers at the Lackland AFB thrift shop.

Residents share their vocal talents in The Village Voices, a group that entertains at various campus functions.

The "11th Hour" volunteers sit with residents who are at the end of life, holding their hands and providing compassionate comfort.

Blue Skies residents who've been active in the TSHL include, L-R, Barbara Aydlett (current), and former members Warren Moore, Steve Wilson and Ahia Shabazz.



TSHL

THEY'VE GOT YOUR BACK!

Play a game of pickleball. Join friends for happy hour. Volunteer. And while you're savoring your retirement years, the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature (TSHL) is resolutely advocating for your interests as a senior citizen.

A BLUE SKIES TRADITION

For many years, Blue Skies has boasted one or more representatives on the TSHL, ensuring you have a voice in the legislative process. The mission of the TSHL is to improve the lives of older Texans through education and involvement in legislation and governmental affairs. Members are elected by the Agency on Aging to represent their local county or counties in a non-partisan capacity.

Barbara Aydlett is serving her sixth two-year term on the TSHL where she currently is the Deputy Speaker Pro Tem. She has served with a group of residents who formerly were TSHL members, including Chris Johnson, Warren Moore, Ahia Shabazz, and Steve Wilson.

Every summer, the TSHL meets in a formal legislative session at the Texas House. They prepare a slate of resolutions that affect older Texans in areas such as criminal justice, health and human resources, human services, pensions, retirement and more.

A retired RN, Barbara has chaired the Health and Human Services Committee as a stalwart advocate for the myriad of health issues that affect seniors. "Each

session, we put together a legislative report that details our resolutions and we share the report with every state representative and state senator, the governor and lieutenant governor. They know seniors vote and they listen to us," she said.

When Chris Johnson served on the TSHL, she visited senior centers and met with diverse groups of older citizens. "I asked about the issues that concerned them and taught them how to communicate their concerns to City Council reps and legislators," she said.

Warren Moore and his wife, Ahia Shabazz, both served on the TSHL. Warren said, "Our purpose was to serve the retired community. We visited community centers and senior residences and reached out to let them know about helpful and free resources they could access."

Steve Wilson was honored as the TSHL's Outstanding Freshman Legislator, and he earned the Executive Committee Award of Distinction. One of his achievements was developing a training video that demonstrates advocacy techniques for new TSHL members.

Since inception in 1985, the TSHL has impacted over 250 pieces of legislation. Recent successes include establishing the Silver Alert program for missing seniors and creating pension program initiatives.

TSHL is your non-partisan, non-profit ally, working on serious issues that affect your quality of life. We are grateful to those who serve. Barbara says she would like to recruit new Blue Skies members. Sounds like a call to action, folks!

Tournament Raises Record \$150K for Freedom House

Motivated by compassion for the residents of Freedom House and energized by the spirit of friendly competition, 140 golfers on 35 teams enjoyed a beautiful day at The Quarry Golf Course on March 25. With the help of 33 generous sponsors, they raised a record \$151,285 to benefit Freedom House, the Alzheimer's Care and Research Center at Blue Skies of Texas.

Over the past 28 years, the annual tournament has netted \$2.5M to benefit residents of Freedom House, support that has been instrumental in keeping Freedom House at the forefront of dementia care. The home-style environment, highly trained staff, and innovative programming attract visitors from facilities nationwide to observe and emulate best practices.

Through Alzheimer's research and person-centered care, Freedom House has developed programs and services that enhance and enrich life for those suffering from debilitating memory loss. The popular Music & Memory program utilizes live entertainment and technology to inspire residents to sing, dance and tap their toes as they remember the joyful impact of music on their well-lived lives.

A virtual reality simulator enlivens residents through imaginative adventures that include allowing former pilots to relive the glory of flight. "I just flew in from Edwards Air Force Base," a resident happily told his daughter after a simulated flight. Others can experience the freedom of driving a car or hiking in the mountains. It's an awesome sight to behold these thrilling escapades, all played out in their safe surroundings at Freedom House.



This team of Blue Skies residents Played for Freedom ... and won! Congratulations to (L-R), James Cosgrove, Lt Col Al Buie, Lt Gen Tom Keck and Gerhard Frisch.

Residents also enjoy inter-generational activities with the children of Blue Skies staff and local military personnel who attend the Blue Skies childcare center. High-functioning residents may venture out for a field trip to see Hill Country wildflowers or enjoy lunch at a favorite restaurant.

Much of this excellent lifestyle and care is made possible by Play for Freedom, and we are deeply grateful to all who participated – our sponsors and vendors, golfers, and this year's 22 hardworking volunteers who made sure all aspects of the tournament ran smoothly.



Special Thanks To Our Loyal Sponsors!

PRESENTING SPONSORS:

Leonard Contracting
Morrison Living
Select Rehabilitation

LIBERTY SPONSORS:

Bank of San Antonio
Clean Scapes
Drake Commercial Group
Frost Bank
Johnny's Construction
Just Company
Marsh McLellan
Vanguard Resources

PATRIOTIC SPONSORS:

Broadway Bank
DMC – Dynamic Mechanical Contracting
DOCUmation
Col and Mrs. Roger Hansen
Security Service Federal Credit Union
Sitterle Homes
Wiss, Janney, Elstner Assoc., Inc.

STARS & STRIPES SPONSORS:

A.L.S. Construction
American Home Roofing
Baird Foundation Repair
Bridgehead IT
Lt Col Karen and Maj Brian Cannon in Memory of Richard and Marylu
Hagauer and Christopher Cannon
Carvajal Pharmacy
COL and Mrs. Dan Meyers
Finelines Flooring
Fisher House, Inc.

FrontRunner Pest Control
Gen and Mrs. Paul Hester
Love & Company
Lowe's – Alamo Ranch
Maj Gen and Mrs. Glen Shaffer
Sierra Window Fashions



5100 John D. Ryan Blvd.
San Antonio, Texas 78245-3502



NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 2446
SAN ANTONIO, TX

Contact *MS*

Toll-Free
(866) 553-5389

Marketing
(210) 568-3200

Development
(210) 568-3206

Blue Skies East
(210) 673-2761

Blue Skies West
(210) 677-8666

Alzheimer's Care &
Research Center
(210) 838-6300

OUR VISION

We will set the standard of excellence in senior lifecare through our relentless pursuit of innovation, service, and compassionate care.

OUR MISSION

We will improve lives by providing exceptional retirement living and continuing care with an emphasis on individual quality of life and dignity.

Secure Website For Donations

If you'd like to make a gift to Air Force Villages Charitable Foundation using your credit card, please go to www.blueskiesoftexas.org/giving. Your information is fully secure. Your friends at Blue Skies of Texas thank you.

SENIOR LIVING ISN'T ABOUT AGING,

IT'S ABOUT LIVING.

Morrison Living is proud to provide inspired dining, wellness, and hospitality services to over 400 communities. Thanks to decades of experience and data-driven strategies, we've transformed senior living with innovative programs and smart solutions.

Our clients – and their valued residents – depend on us for a consistent service experience that makes everyday living the best it can be.



Morrison
LIVING

LET US BE THE BEST PART OF YOUR DAY.
www.morrisonliving.com