

SUMMER 2023

Blue Skies of Texas
COURIER

*Dignity and
friendship
abound in*
**Memory
Care**

SENIOR LIVING IN THE TRADITION OF AIR FORCE VILLAGE

Executive **REPORT**



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

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ON THE COVER:

Freedom House Memory Care residents enjoy friendship amid the beautiful surroundings at Blue Skies.

Cover photo courtesy of Blue Skies residents Bob and Judy Howen.

It's nice to be recognized for a job well done! This edition of the *Courier* allows us to boast about new design innovations and upgrades to our homes, introduces you to our nationally-recognized Alzheimer's and dementia research community, and spotlights outstanding individuals who have been recognized for their compassionate service to others. There's a lot going on at Blue Skies. You must see it to believe it.

Teamwork brings out the best in everyone. Sarah Manzke, our Director of Sales & Marketing and a member of the LeadingAge Texas Leadership Collective, joined with Heather Ransom, our head of Capital Projects, to dramatically rethink renovations and modernization. Employing industry experts and senior living professionals and with key input from current residents, they designed the best-in-class upgrades you will read about in this *Courier*. Once again, seeing is believing.

Described as "an answer to our prayers" and "the reason we came to Blue Skies," Freedom House is the nationally-recognized treatment arm of the Alzheimer's Care and Research Center at Blue Skies. The Freedom House Study^{*} focused on the treatment and cure of Alzheimer's, dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases and was conducted at Freedom House. Twenty-three years after opening and after a recent \$6M renovation, the tradition continues. Today we partner with The Biggs Institute for Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio (one of only 34 such centers of excellence in the U.S. and the only one in Texas). You'll get the whole story here and understand why families can't believe what they are seeing.

Quality doesn't go unnoticed. LeadingAge Texas presented Blue Skies three significant awards in 2023. Retired Army Colonel Dan Meyers received the "Excellence in Governance" award for his work on the Blue Skies Board of Directors. Larissa Alejo, our Environmental Services Supervisor, received the "Emerging Leader" award, and the Freedom House Alzheimer's Care and Research Center received the award for "Excellence in Research and Education." In addition, the San Antonio Express-News recognized Blue Skies team members during its annual Salute to Nurses. Ivonne Torres was chosen as the top RN (Registered Nurse) Case Manager in Hospice and Bethany Osborne received third place recognition in the LVN (Licensed Vocational Nurse) category for her work in Skilled Nursing at The Mission at Blue Skies. I wish you could see these professionals in action.

You deserve the final shout out. This year's Play for Freedom Golf Tournament, supporting Alzheimer's care and research at Freedom House, raised a record \$166,400 during the one-day tournament. Most of the effort was headed by Daniel Casillas, Fundraising Associate, and his team of volunteers but the real credit goes to you, our supporters, for your generosity. I wish you could have seen the generosity poured out.

It should be easy to see why I'm excited to be part of the team at Blue Skies of Texas. I hope you'll take me up on the offer to see for yourself and let us show you why you should be part of our family at Blue Skies of Texas.

Darrell

*Donald R. Royall, Raymond Palmer, Laura K. Chiodo, and Marsha J. Polk, Executive Control Mediates Memory's Association with Change in Instrumental Activities of Daily Living: the Freedom House Study, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, January, 2005.

Modern Spacious Elegant

Apartment Life Reimagined

Panoramic views. Private balconies. Spacious interiors. Friendly neighbors. A plethora of enticing activities every day. This is apartment life at Blue Skies. And it could be your life.

STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL

Apartments at Blue Skies East and West provide the elegance and security of well-constructed architecture that transcends time. Inside, apartments have been reimagined with updated, upscale interiors, some of which are unfinished and awaiting personalization by you. You may have options in selecting décor such as color schemes, flooring, granite countertops and fixtures. Others are ready for move-in and have been modernized with new cabinetry, lighting, kitchen renovations, upgraded master baths, bedrooms and closets.

Sarah Manzke, Director of Sales & Marketing, says the luxury refurbishing is the culmination of diligent market research that involved the study of popular trends, along with input from current and prospective residents and marketing staff. Sarah says, “Working with our capital projects team, we are creating beautiful, contemporary residences that are attracting savvy retirees who want stylish interiors to suit their active lifestyles. Apartments on both campuses are being refurbished on a case-by-case basis. Each is unique and all are up to our high standards of excellence.”

Sarah notes that models are available to illustrate the potential of each floor plan. “As we finish and stage units, they go quickly. Residents are seizing the opportunity to live in these elegant apartments.”

She notes that for those who prefer stand-alone homes, there is also an attractive selection on both Blue Skies campuses, noting, “Many neighborhoods have wait lists, so make sure to ask about depositing now so your preferred home is available when you are ready. To find out more, please contact our Blue Skies marketing team at 210-568-3200.”



Scan this QR code for a flip book that gives you a happy glimpse of models and floor plans.



MEMORY CARE AT **FREEDOM** HOUSE

**YOU CAN FEEL THE LOVE IN THIS
PEACEFUL, NURTURING PLACE.**



More than 55 million seniors worldwide are living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Neurodegenerative diseases can be heartbreaking. But those lucky enough to find Freedom House at Blue Skies soon discover that anxiety and worry can be assuaged in an environment where peace, compassion, and dignity abound.

At Freedom House Alzheimer's Care and Research Center, residents rediscover the joy of embracing precious moments and feeling cherished. The skilled, dedicated staff appreciates the life and legacy of residents and treats them as if they were family. It is a comforting, tranquil and nurturing place. And for caregivers and loved ones, it is the answer to prayers – offering everything an Alzheimer's patient needs to feel safe, to be treated with respect, and to thrive.

MUSIC, DANCE, FAMILY, JOY

On any given day, you'll find a stream of caring staff and visitors bringing creative joy with music, dance, the aromas of enticing food, crafts-making, and friendship.

- Children from the Child Care Center attached to Freedom House often drop by for a hug, a holiday treat, games, and shared delight in meeting furry critters at a visiting petting zoo. It's pure magic.
- Susan Shumaker, a Blue Skies resident, may bring joy in the form of familiar music videos from an earlier era. Faces alight with remembrance.
- Everyone loves the annual Cowboy Breakfast, complete with tacos, biscuits and gravy, and country music.
- On holidays, Annabell Garcia, Activity Director, takes photos of residents to share with families who live afar. Staff and families create meaningful connections.
- Carlos Barrera, a favorite musician, performs old songs for singalongs and dancing. Even residents in wheelchairs find their way to the dance floor. Another artist, TJ Dolotina, brings country music to entertain the residents amid much toe-tapping, clapping and big smiles.
- Holiday meals with family members conjure up memories of happy times with food, laughter, and lively conversation.
- Residents find solace in the beautiful garden and grounds surrounding their home, and higher functioning residents enjoy short road trips to see wildflowers and country landscapes.
- Blue Skies residents and family members of Freedom House residents visit, sometimes bringing treats and activities. Patty Bengale, the daughter of a resident, brings cupcakes and helps the residents ice and decorate them. Then they feast.
- Spouses of Freedom House residents and spouses of Blue Skies residents who are providing care at home meet regularly in a support group that allays fears, informs on the latest in dementia treatments, and builds relationships.

CONTINUUM OF CARE

Since opening in 1998, Freedom House has expanded to include three distinct households that offer appropriate care to residents as the disease progresses. The highest-functioning residents enjoy a homestyle environment with privacy, shared meals, and stimulating activities. A second phase treats the individual needs of residents who require expanded care to ensure their safety and security, while

continuing to respect their dignity. As they approach the end stages of the disease, they receive specialized care in the Caughron Wing where they are lovingly cared for by skilled, trained staff who feel called to the ministry of this service.

RESEARCHING A CURE

Freedom House is unique in many ways, including its research partnership with the acclaimed Biggs Institute for Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases at the University of Texas Health Science Center. Compassionate care coupled with research into the cause and treatment of Alzheimer's and other dementias are compatible missions at Freedom House, where studies with leading researchers are gaining valuable insights into the causes of dementia, discovering new treatments and inspiring hope for a cure.

PEACE OF MIND AND RESPITE FOR LOVED ONES

Freedom House engages residents' loved ones in the care, which forges meaningful relationships among the staff, residents, and families. Col John Siebert, USAF (Ret), says, "Freedom House is the number one reason I came to Blue Skies." His wife, Butch, has had Alzheimer's for 12 years and caring for her at their home in Austin became unbearably stressful. "I slept with my eyes open," he says. Known to all by the nickname that her sister assigned her as an infant, Butch (nee Walta) is a diminutive woman who led a full, active life. He remembers her as "a dynamo and superstar Air Force wife." In his daily visits he notes, "It's a pleasure to see the care, the activities, and the sense of community. I walk away each day knowing she is well cared for, and I can sleep at night."

He recalls one example of the extraordinary care: "Butch had a fall, broke a hip, and had to have surgery. Freedom House staff handled the emergency superbly and efficiently, getting an ambulance very quickly."



John Siebert is grateful for the loving care Freedom House extends to his wife Butch.

"After surgery, she spent three weeks in rehab at The Mission (skilled nursing at Blue Skies). The anesthesia and recovery took a lot out of her, and she struggled, but The Mission staff was fantastic. After three weeks, she returned to Freedom House, and they embraced her with such kindness. She saw the welcome banner and her eyes lit up. They made her feel as if she'd come home."

Butch and John's two adult daughters, Cindy and Lori, live out of state, but they alternate visiting monthly. "They would echo every positive thing I've said," John says, adding, "Lori is an RN of 35 years and thinks this place is amazing. And through their visits, they also have become part of the community."

He adds that although his singular goal in coming to Blue Skies was the care Freedom House could give Butch, the move has been surprisingly wonderful for him as well. "I fully enjoy the life here," he says.

A TRUSTED RESOURCE

If you notice signs of Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia in someone you love, the Freedom House staff is here to lend knowledgeable guidance and support. Freedom House Director Sandra Guerra welcomes your calls and visits: 210-838-6341 or sandraguerra@blueskiestx.org.

LEADINGAGE Awards

And the winners are ... Blue Skies!



LARISSA ALEJO

Environmental Services Supervisor at Blue Skies West

Larissa won the award for “Emerging Leader.” Nominated by Lori DeWitt, Blue Skies West Resident Services Director, Larissa earned accolades for “her planning, scheduling and organizational skills and attention to detail. She has passed these skills on to her staff and together they provide effective, efficient, and professional services to nearly 600 residents every week. She works with our Capital Projects team to revamp the cleaning of homes prior to move in – taking this responsibility saved over \$18K. Her ability to run her department through personnel shortages and the way she handles employee situations is nothing short of amazing. She excels in budgeting, and is keenly aware of costs.”

FREEDOM HOUSE ALZHEIMER'S CARE AND RESEARCH CENTER

This 72-bed assisted living memory care residence won the award for “Excellence in Research and Education.”

Ally Knight, RN, MBA, Chief Health Services Officer, nominated the Center for “its initiative in re-establishing a collaborative research partnership with the Biggs

Institute for Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. More than 100 residents aged 62+ from all health backgrounds in the Blue Skies community have volunteered to participate in studies that will benefit people around the world suffering from neurodegenerative diseases.”



COLONEL DANIEL MEYERS (US Army, Retired)

A Blue Skies of Texas Board member for nine years, COL Meyers won the award for “Excellence in Governance.” In gratitude for his vision and service, Blue Skies nominated COL Meyers, noting, “He has been a tremendous supporter of the community, providing exceptional expertise in strategic and tactical investment strategies and as a passionate supporter of the Community's development and fundraising efforts. COL Meyers is a visionary leader helping to design a road map for long-term viability and short-term strength within the Blue Skies of Texas Corporation. He has given significantly of his time, effort and expertise and has selflessly committed to two more years to ensure a seamless transition of duties.”

LeadingAge Texas, which represents providers of quality aging care and services, annually honors those who excel in leadership and advocacy. Blue Skies captured three of nine statewide awards given for those “who embody our highest aspirations and inspire our admiration, all while making appreciable contributions within and beyond the walls of their communities.”



Team leaders representing the Freedom House Alzheimer's Care and Research Center are, left to right: Sandra Gonzalez, LVN, Nurse Manager; Jackie Martinez, Environmental Service Manager; Annabell Garcia, Activity Director; Cindy Yanez, Freedom House Senior Administrative Assistant; and Sandra Guerra, BSN, RN, Freedom House Director.



2023 PLAY FOR FREEDOM NETS \$166,400 IN RECORD PROCEEDS

After a rainy morning, the skies cleared just in time for 136 golfers to tee off and enjoy a fun, festive day at The Quarry Golf Course of San Antonio for the 29th Annual Play for Freedom tournament benefitting Freedom House Alzheimer's Care and Research Center at Blue Skies.

Many thanks to our 31 golf sponsors, including Title Sponsor - Leonard Contracting; and Presenting Sponsors - Johnny's Construction, Morrison Living, and Select Rehabilitation. Thanks also to 51 in-kind sponsors who donated over \$11K in raffle prizes that included a deluxe patio set from Lowe's Alamo Ranch; jewelry from Americus Diamond and Kendra Scott; tours from wineries in Fredericksburg, TX; stays at the Wyndham Riverwalk, Thompson Hotel, Hyatt Hill Country Resort, Marriott Rivercenter, Marriott Market Square, and Marriott Airport; and gift certificates from local restaurants and theme parks. Morrison Living provided lunch.

Record proceeds from the tournament – \$166,400 – will support programs that help Freedom House maintain the highest standards of care in a comfortable, safe, nurturing environment. Sandra Guerra, Freedom House Director, expressed gratitude for the tournament's ongoing support of the Freedom House mission. "We work every day to find new ways to help our residents live fulfilling lives ... and a portion of



Lt Gen Tom Keck, James Cosgrove, and Gerhard Frisch celebrate their win as the top Blue Skies resident team at the 2023 tournament. (CMDR Ronald Miller, also in the foursome, is not pictured.)

these proceeds will be used to train and certify staff to be the best in the industry. We also plan to purchase a third iN2L system so that we will have one available to residents in each of our three phases of care," she says. The virtual reality system supports social interaction, cognitive and physical exercise, and therapy. It enables residents to reminisce, and to experience virtual adventure. Memory care residents across the spectrum love interacting with the iN2L applications.

Next year's tournament is set for Friday, March 22, 2024, at The Quarry Golf Course.

FIESTA AT BLUE SKIES



San Antonio's Fiesta spreads its joy everywhere – especially at Blue Skies where residents and staff revel in the festive spirit with flowers, food, and fun.



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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.

REFER AN ELIGIBLE AIR FORCE WIDOW

Blue Skies of Texas is an exceptional retirement community with an extraordinary charitable mission – reaching out to the widowed spouses of retired Air Force officers who would like to live in this safe community and may need some financial assistance to do so. Our mission comforts those in need and gives purpose to our community that transcends the ordinary. If you know of an eligible widow of a retired Air Force officer who might qualify, please call (210) 568-5029 or (210) 568-3282. All assistance is strictly confidential.

SENIOR LIVING ISN'T
ABOUT AGING,

**IT'S ABOUT
LIVING.**



Morrison Living is proud to provide inspired dining, wellness, and hospitality services to Blue Skies of Texas and 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.

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