



STAFF:

SHARING GOD’S LOVE THROUGH GOOD MEALS

*“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.”
—Psalm 34:8*

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Eat this bread. Drink this cup. The Bible uses so many food images because most of us experience food as a form of love.

As babies we receive food from our mothers. Later we show love by cooking food for others. Accepting and appreciating food someone else has cooked is another way to show love. At Edison Christian Life Services (ECLS), we pay lots of attention to food, so our residents will know how much we care about them.

Our kitchens serve around 400 meals a day. We employ over 40 people working full or part time in dining services to give residents meals customized to their taste preferences and health needs.

David Ansel is quick to express appreciation. As director of dining services, he is responsible for the operations and culinary production of dining services. His department prepares food for all three buildings. “I’ve worked at other senior communities and have been on a support team that advises dining services across the nation. I can say with absolute confidence that I’ve never seen an interdisciplinary team more dedicated to caring for its residents than Edison Christian Life Services,” he says.

David works full time Monday through Friday. He reviews daily and seasonal menus with staff; works with production manager Greg Kindig, who orders supplies; manages financials and hiring; and stays on top of local, state, and federal compliance regulations.

“Infection control has always been central for effective dining services, but since COVID-19 began, infection control has become the pillar of my job. I do frequent audits of employee handwashing, food handling, and food temperature control. Due to restrictions on communal dining, we have added challenges to present food attractively and at correct temperatures. We check the dish machines three times a day for appropriate chemical use, water pressure, and proper temperatures at each cycle—things we don’t think about at home. Even though our dish machines are equipped to kill bacteria, we have an emergency supply of disposable dishware for residents with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases. We also seek guidance from the director of nursing,” he explains.

ECLS receives menu suggestions from Morrison Living, the dining services company that we began working with years ago as our continuum of care expanded.



David Ansel, Director of Dining Services

“Using a dining services company gives us safe practices, core policies and procedures (especially for the coronavirus), managerial expertise, and relationships with multiple vendors,” David says.

He reviews and adapts menus in consultation with his top staff, including Greg Kindig. “Kara Schneider, our registered dietician, came to us with six years of experience. She helped me develop a quality assurance program. Joanna Sikkema, our lead cook, came to us with a strong background in culinary leadership roles. She’s helped us introduce even more fresh food and offer choices uniquely suited to residents’ preferences—like *bagelslag* [Dutch for chocolate sprinkles] on toast, which I’d never heard of.”

Before the pandemic, David liked walking through the seven dining rooms to get feedback on whether they were enjoying the meals. Now he has to limit resident contact for their safety, so he relies on comment cards, phone calls with residents, and masked socially-distanced discussions.

“I’m so proud of how willing and brave our staff has been to adjust to ever-changing circumstances. Plans can be made and executed quickly here. You can feel the genuine care and Christian community here. It warms my heart to be part of a team with such great love for residents,” he says.

David and his family live in Kalamazoo. His wife, Sydney, takes their 20-month-old son, Wyatt, to her full-time nanny job. They enjoy cooking at home, hiking, and backpacking. They’re also active with

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FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



Our spring newsletter features our dining services staff. They faithfully plan for and prepare three meals daily for residents throughout our continuum of care. Our director of dining services, registered dietician, and lead cook share how they meet our residents' dietary needs. The dining services team strives to provide a variety of meals to satisfy our residents' preferences. They share how COVID has created new challenges related to meal service and how the

closure of common dining rooms has affected their staff and the residents. The dining services staff members continually adapt to meet many unanticipated needs.

Through service awards and an annual banquet, our board members honor staff members who have reached milestones of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and more years of service. You can see recent award recipients pictured in this newsletter. We are thankful for the stability that long-term staff members provide for our facilities, and we value each member's unique contribution to our ministry.

At our website, edisonchristian.org, you can read about our three facilities—Edison Christian Health Center, Edison Christian Assisted Living, and Edison Christian Independent Living. You will see details on job opportunities and different

ways to give to Edison Christian Life Services. You can also link directly to:

- Barnabas Foundation (for free estate planning help)
- LeadingAge Michigan, our state association (to support programs and policies to benefit older adults in Michigan)

We are grateful that progress is being made to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. We have gone to great lengths to try to protect our residents from the virus that has so threatened the elderly among us. We have expended tremendous effort to train all involved in our work on preventative measures including proper hand hygiene, safe use of personal protection equipment, and proper social distancing. We hope that the COVID-19 vaccine will help to contain the virus and allow us to resume a more normal routine. We are advocating to policymakers to allow more reasonable visitation guidelines for our facilities. Although forced isolation has provided a level of physical protection from the virus, the emotional and functional losses that develop create additional concerns. We are doing our best to remain compliant and meet our residents' multi-faceted needs. We thank the Lord for his blessing on our efforts.

Thank you for your continuing support through prayers, gifts, and volunteer time. Please consider contributing again to help us meet residents' needs. We praise God for his grace and blessing in our ministry.

—Todd Nyeholt

Try This Free Way to Help Edison Christian Life Services

It cost them nothing to make the change. It didn't take much time. Yet many prudent people did something that made a big impact on our ability to serve Edison Christian Life Services' residents.

What was this simple action? At some point, these people accepted an offer of free help with their wills and estate plans. They decided to include a bequest in their estate plan for Edison Christian Life Services or Edison Christian Foundation (though it's fine to receive help and not give to us). For example, In 2020 we received three estate gifts to ECLS totaling \$4,956.

The top reasons people give for making bequests to us are to express appreciation for care provided to a loved one; to support work they've witnessed while volunteering here; and to help older adults because they're aware of the need here.

Almost everyone wonders how to pass property to a surviving spouse, provide for orphaned children, or avoid heavy estate taxes. But many Christians have extra questions. Those who have faithfully tithed from their income want to know how to use their will to tithe from their estate. You can follow the lead of more than 9,000 people who have already accepted a generous offer from the Barnabas Foundation. At no cost to you, Barnabas staff will help you work out a plan to provide for loved ones and give to Christian causes. This plan can also include answers to key questions, such as:

- How will my property be distributed when I die? (You need a will.)
- Who can manage my property if I lose my ability to think straight? (You need a durable power of attorney for finances.)
- Who will make health decisions if I become unable to do so for myself? (You need a durable power of attorney for health care.)

Steve Baker and Amy Bakker Baty, the local Barnabas Foundation representatives, have practiced law in business and estate planning. Steve Baker is the senior estate planner, and Amy is the director of planned giving services. Typically, they need to meet with you just once, for only 60 to 90 minutes, to develop a free written analysis for you to bring to an attorney. Steve or Amy can recommend attorneys who know how to include charity in wills and estate plans. Gifts to the Barnabas Foundation are neither solicited nor encouraged, because 200 Christian member organizations support the foundation. So you won't be asked for a "donation."

Simply call (616) 956-1232 or (888) 448-3040 and ask to speak with Steve Baker or Amy Bakker Baty. Their email addresses are sbake@barnabasfoundation.com and abaty@barnabasfoundation.com. Their office is at 601 3 Mile Road NW, Suite 200, Grand Rapids, MI 49544. For free, confidential advice on estate planning, you may also phone Todd Nyeholt at (616) 453-2475.

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

November 2020 - February 2021

Sarah Andrews

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Elsie Arnoudse

Michael Arnoudse

Shirley Beck

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Alice Blackport-Bolt

Mr. Arthur Blackport

Gwenlynn Bos

Wendy Bos

Wendy Bos *

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Robert Boyce

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Mrs. Ruth Visser *

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Bob & Chris Cooper

Bob & Chris Cooper *

Elizabeth Cooper *

Ann Davis

Gloria Yff

Nancy DeBruine

Wayne & Marla Broek

Terry DeBruine

Adrian & Helen DeKruif

Maureen DeKruif *

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Nella Daves

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Marilyn DenBoer

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The Terlouw Family

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** Gifts designated for Edison Christian Foundation*

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their congregation's public ministry and disaster relief, including emergency food distribution.

Kara Schneider, our registered dietitian, started at ECLS in March 2020, right before the pandemic changed everything. "My husband and I lived in Washington, DC, where I worked for six years in a senior living community. I'm from Cheyboygan, Michigan, and always wanted to move back to my home state," she says.

"Because of COVID-19, I've never seen any ECLS resident eat in a dining room yet. Normally, I'd be walking through daily during meals. It's taken longer than I'd like to build relationships. I do go into resident rooms, as needed, but we're all wearing masks and didn't know each other face-to-face before," Kara adds.

Nevertheless, she has jumped right in to help solve a coronavirus-related problem common to long-term care facilities everywhere—weight loss because of depression and social isolation from loved ones.

Kara works full time Monday through Friday. She meets each morning with other department managers. "Since we work as an interdisciplinary team, we look at the whole picture. They do a really good job of documenting everything here, including monthly weight changes and residents who are not eating well. Sometimes it's because they've had a medication change or pneumonia or a urinary tract infection. If someone has chewing or swallowing issues, they might need a soft diet or thickened



Kara Schneider, Registered Dietitian

liquids—or one-on-one therapy with a speech therapist. Or maybe it's a food preference issue," she says.

Regarding food preferences, Kara compliments lead cook Joanna Sikkema's insights. "The residents where I used to work liked Southern food, especially fried chicken. Here I've had to learn our residents' preferences. When the suggested menu item was grilled cheese-and-tomato sandwiches, Joanna knew some residents would rather eat plain grilled cheese on raisin bread."

Kara and the team fortify favorite foods to help residents maintain or increase weight, such as adding extra dried milk to mashed potatoes or butter and brown sugar to oatmeal. They offer frequent snacks and smoothies.

Now that group socials are no longer possible, they encourage hydration and eating through special options. "To get as much fluid into residents as possible, we offer weekly socials with special drinks, like Cherry Coke, Shirley Temples, lemonade, or unique tea flavors. Our activity staff decorates carts and brings drinks to each resident. In February, dark chocolate was our 'superfood of the month.' For Valentine's Day, we served a dark chocolate torte topped with strawberries covered in dark chocolate," Kara says.

All the attention to residents' dietary needs and preferences produced a surprising result. Kara explains that residents in senior facilities everywhere often lose weight during the winter. But this winter, ECLS residents actually gained weight. Kara sees it as yet another example of staff collaboration.

"I'm impressed by how quickly ECLS responded to COVID-19. I have friends at facilities in Michigan and DC that have had major outbreaks. Here, people are so diligent about wearing masks, washing hands, and doing whatever is needed to prevent coronavirus spread. This dedication to residents' welfare results in higher morale within the facility," Kara says.

She and her husband, Mike, recently bought a home in Byron Center. Mike, a project manager, works from home. They enjoy outdoor activities and trying new restaurants, so they have done lots of ordering in rather than going out. Kara has a twin sister in Bay City, a brother in

Kalkaska, and her parents are teachers in Detroit.

Joanna Sikkema only started as lead cook here in November 2020, but she came in knowing a lot about residents' preferences. She learned about the job opening from night cook Suzanna Carlson, her sister. Their sister, Elizabeth Ekema, is a charge nurse at assisted living, and their sister, Mary Carlson, is a dietary aide here. Their aunt, Mina Van't Hof, made her last home here.

"Since I started during COVID-19, I don't know exactly how they used to do things. But I have lots of culinary experience, and I know our residents' cultural preferences," Joanna says.

While attending Kent Career Tech Center, she took classes in culinary, baking, and pastry arts and began working at University Club of Grand Rapids. She earned a certificate in culinary management and worked her way up from dish washer to sous chef (second in command). Joanna enjoyed working at the prestigious University Club, but the pandemic reduced her hours.

She works five days a week, including a Saturday or Sunday, from 4 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. "I'm usually sleeping by 8:30 p.m.," she admits. When she arrives in the wee hours, Joanna turns on all the kitchen equipment, prepares breakfast, cooks four hot items for lunch, and prepares for the next day. Another kitchen employee does salads and cold items. Greg Kindig works from 4 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays through Fridays. The night cook, who comes in at



Joanna Sikkema, Lead Cook

(continued on page 6)

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS *(continued from page 3)*

Ralph Koll (continued)

Kathleen B. Verbrugge
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Ben Mol *
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Mr. & Mrs. Bill Wilmeth *

Linda Verhey

Mr. David Verhey *

** Gifts designated for Edison Christian Foundation*

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SHARING GOD'S LOVE THROUGH GOOD MEALS *(continued from page 4)*

9 a.m., cooks supper and sometimes cooks lunch.

"I cook for the health center, assisted living, and independent living. Each of the seven dining rooms gets its own set of food. Dietary aides plate it upstairs, and certified nurse aides (CNAs) bring the meals to resident rooms.

"An average of 10 to 12 people order an alternate main dish, and I bring those items upstairs. If the aides are helping residents in their rooms, then I deliver the items to a CNA at the resident's door," Joanna says.

She welcomes ECLS's emphasis on fresh food, including homemade soups. When frozen ham croquettes were on the menu,

Joanna tasted them and decided to make her own from scratch. "It took time, but the residents really liked them. I've been making homemade desserts for socials [treats brought by cart to individual rooms]. People especially liked my Texas sheet cake brownies and cherry pecan cake," she says.

Joanna sometimes modifies recipes with help from Kara Schneider, our registered dietician. "I've got background expertise in cooking, and Kara makes sure the food meets nutritional needs. We've seen growth in communication among cooks and in using more fresh vegetables and fresh herbs. Fresh food is a bit more expensive but still within our budget, especially

because it's more nutritious. It takes a little longer, but I've cooked from scratch for many years."

Joanna looks forward to more contact with residents and other departments when the pandemic is under control. She and her husband, Christian, live in northeast Grand Rapids. Christian works at Mark-Maker. Joanna is also a fitness and nutrition coach for Beachbody, a website that provides at-home workouts. The Sikkemas attend Heritage Reformed Church, where, pre-COVID, Joanna led mission trips, helped youth groups, and sang in the choir.

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS *(continued from page 5)*

Robert & Gertrude Verhey

Mr. David Verhey
David & Mary Bazen *

Gladys Versluis

Mary & Paul Boelkins
Don & Kim Burke
J. Marc DeKorte
Joan & Dan Dykstra
Mrs. Marge Konyndyk
Francene Lewis
Matt Lewis
Bill & Patty Morren
Glen & Stephany Morren
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Elsie Wisner

Elizabeth Wahlfield
Elizabeth Wahlfield *

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Fred & Audrey Nietering
Mike & Mary Orlopp
Ruth Penning
Laura Worst

Peter & Margaret Zabowkas

Mr. William Sturuss

Total Memorial Gifts ... \$43,490

IN LOVING MEMORY

November 2020 – February 2021

Edith VanStrien	November 30	age 95	Wilma VandeKopple	January 9	age 94
Nancy DeBruine	December 13	age 83	Robert Baker	January 10	age 85
Hazel Stahl	December 17	age 94	Marilyn Heibel	January 11	age 94
Gladys Versluis	December 19	age 83	Shirley Beck	January 13	age 93
Esther Palma	December 22	age 89	Jean Dykstra	January 28	age 92
Carolyn Gregor	December 23	age 84	Bernadette Branzski	February 4	age 91
Angeline Hoekzema	January 5	age 98	Raymond Potts	February 19	age 95
Robert Antzak	January 8	age 80	Winifred "Jean" Kalkofen	February 28	age 89
Dorothy Potts	January 8	age 92			

EDISON CHRISTIAN INDEPENDENT LIVING

Edison Christian Independent Living provides senior citizen independent living and offers meals, activities, and housekeeping services. Our residents enjoy secure, homelike comfort and Christian companionship. Studio and one-bedroom apartments are currently available.

**For more information and a tour, call:
(616) 453-0993 edisonchristian.org**

RECENT ECLS RETIREE

*In honor of your service from the
Board of Directors:*

Sandra Stepek 25 years
With our appreciation for your commitment to our residents!

GIFTS RECEIVED IN HONOR OF

November 2020 – February 2021

In honor of... **Nella Daves**from Ella Horjus
In honor of... **Tom Huizenga** .. from David & Susan Huizenga
In honor of... **David Tolsma**....from Mark & Elizabeth Tolsma
In honor of... **Janice Kosak**..... from Frank Kosak
In honor of... **Ann Slade's birthday** from Doug Slade
In honor of... **Ann Slade**from Kate O'Brien
In honor of... **Margaret Anderson** from William Anderson

CONTRIBUTING CHURCHES

November 2020 – February 2021

Bethany URC	Heritage Ref. Congregation
Bethel URC	Lamont CRC
Blythefield CRC	Oakview Community
Creston CRC	Seventh Ref.
Free Ref.	Walker URC
Grace Protestant Ref.	

2020 SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS



5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Latrice Smith, Esther Horjus, Jameson Ashbaugh, Flannery Crittendon, Becky Green. **Not pictured:** Sarah Beh, Heather Blickley, Christine Heeringa, Erik Ledezma, Jennifer Schaffer, Jean Spriensma, Michelle Witte-Boomgaard, Maggie Zarbeck.



25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mary Hickox, Esther Heerema, Sandra Dunn, Jane Gotberg.
Not pictured: Kim Zylstra.



10, 15 & 20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Karen Brinks (20), Dave Irwin (15), Nancy DesRocher (10), Tina Kleinert (20). **Not pictured:** Sam Meert (10), Claudia Smith (10), Dawn Smits (10), Luz Sepulveda (15), David VanderVelde (15), Nancy Allen (20), Sara Andree (20), Kathy Levandoski (20), Kathy Markham (20), Mary Wheaton (20).



30 & 35 YEARS OF SERVICE

Jan VanStrien (board member), Karen VanZweden (board member), Joel Potts (35), Dianne Verhaar (30), Sue Sielawa (35), Lisa Zomerlei (35).



Edison Christian Life Services
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EDISON CHRISTIAN
 LIFE SERVICES

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021



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