



STAFF:

TOGETHER WITH RESIDENTS IN GOD'S FAMILY

"...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." —Romans 12:5

Isn't it a comfort to read Romans and remember that God sees us as family members who belong to each other? There's true peace in believing that no matter where or who you are, Christ offers you a new identity as part of one loving family.

If you've spent much time here, you've probably noticed how often the phrases "this is their home" or "treat each other like family" come up. Staff, residents, relatives, and volunteers all describe this sense of mutual caring in God's family.

This spring newsletter profiles three employees who work in environmental services at Edison Christian Life Services. They make sure residents are comfortable, safe, and have clean clothes and tidy living areas.

David VanderVelde, a lifelong West Sider, describes his job here as "definitely the Lord's calling." He earned associate degrees in HVAC and maintenance technology while working part time in after-school cleaning at West Side Christian School. "I enjoyed that but had been praying about getting full-time work.

"Then, on Labor Day evening in 2004, Betty and John Bouwman knocked on my door. We all attend West Leonard Christian Reformed Church, and Betty was a nurse here. They told me about a newly-created floor technician position and said I'd be perfect for it," he recalls.

Before David came on board, the maintenance staff had to return in the evenings to clean carpets. Though David's job is within the housekeeping department, he also works closely with maintenance staff. "Housekeeping mainly works in resident

rooms doing dusting, sweeping, and light cleaning. I run the buffers, floor scrubbers, carpet extractors, and other machines. I go up on ladders to change light bulbs and clean ceiling fans," he says.

He typically works second shift weekdays and every other weekend. "I work in all three buildings. I bring trash bins to the compactor, bring up nursing and incontinence supplies from the lower level, clean lower level breakrooms and bathrooms in the Health Center, vacuum common areas, deep clean tile floors, and clean carpets. But my job encompasses so much more than floor care."

David also helps maintenance staff move furniture, shovels snows from entrances, brings dietary carts and housekeeping supplies between the Health Center, Assisted Living and Independent Living buildings, and fills in when the laundry is short staffed. He is the person everyone calls after maintenance workers go home.



David VanderVelde, floor technician

"I unclog toilets. I've helped staff and visitors change tires or jump batteries in the parking lot. One resident calls me 'Mr. TV-fixer,' because I help so many residents with their TVs, remotes, and headphones," he says.

He's proud of his skills in removing fabric stains with OxyClean, using razor blades to scrape old wax from vinyl-tiled floor corners, and replacing carpet squares so that the new ones don't stand out in comparison.

And he loves getting to know residents and staff by name. "I was taught when I came here—and pass on to new staff—that our residents don't live in a facility. We work in their home. Once they start working here, not many staff want to leave because it's like working with family.

"I still remember talking to the late Fred Hollebeek about how the original Christian Rest Home—a house on Alpine Avenue—was 'born of necessity.' My church was one of the starter churches for that project. We are part of a real heritage of God's grace," he adds.

David's father passed away in 2003, and he lives with his mom across from Richmond Park. His siblings, nephews, and niece are scattered from Muskegon to New Orleans to California. At West Leonard CRC, David serves or has served on the soundboard system team, church council, and property committee. He enjoys yardwork, cats, time at the family trailer in Lincoln Pines Resort—and reading obituaries "because all the life stories are really neat."

(continued on page 4)



FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



Our spring newsletter features our environmental services staff. They faithfully work to maintain our facilities and equipment, clean and disinfect our resident rooms and common areas, and process the laundry within the Health Center. The environmental services staff serve under the direction of our Maintenance Supervisor and Housekeeping and Laundry Supervisor and strive to provide a safe and sanitary home for our residents.

COVID has provided new infection control cleaning challenges for these staff members over the past two years. Our environmental services staff find satisfaction in providing a well maintained and tidy home for our residents.

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)

Edison Christian Life Services, along with most businesses, has been increasingly challenged by the current labor market. We are looking to hire nurses, CNAs, food service, activities and environmental services staff. A complete up-to-date list of job openings can be found on the website listed above under the careers tab. Applications can be submitted online. We hope that you or someone you know will consider joining us in our ministry to our residents!

We continue to express our gratitude to God for guiding us through the COVID pandemic. We have gone to great lengths to try to protect our residents from the virus that particularly threatens the elderly among us. We have carefully implemented the regulatory requirements that have been imposed on our facilities.

We managed COVID outbreaks with residents and staff in late fall and in early 2022 during the delta and omicron surges with relatively good outcomes. We are thankful that our residents can again enjoy visits from family and friends within the facilities. We continue to advocate to policymakers for a reasonable approach to protect our residents' health and facilitate their emotional well-being. We thank the Lord for his direction and 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 amazing grace shown to us 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 Health Center 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 Health Center (ECHC) or Edison Christian Foundation (though it's fine to receive help and not give to us). For example, in 2021 we received four estate gifts to ECHC and one to Edison Christian Foundation totaling \$21,472.

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 2021 - February 2022

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Mrs. Lois Ruiter*

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* Gifts designated for Edison Christian Foundation

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Lisa Blaskis, housekeeping/laundry aide

Lisa Blaskis is all about hard work and good cheer. She came to the Health Center in March 2016 after 32 years managing a Little Caesar's Pizza restaurant and a stint in home healthcare. "I started in the laundry department and am now an aide in both housekeeping and laundry," she says. Lisa works second shifts for housekeeping and laundry. She's scheduled for four weekdays but often works weekends too.

"I switch back and forth depending on who else is on duty or if we are short staffed. When we needed a COVID screener at the door, I did that, too. Picking up extra shifts doesn't bother me after doing up to 75 hours a week at Little Caesar's," Lisa says.

"I absolutely enjoy working here and have daily and weekly chores, like emptying trash on Mondays, feeding recyclables to the PaperGator on Tuesdays, and cleaning residents' oxygen concentrators on Thursdays. Dave VanderVelde and I work together to clean lower level common areas, offices, and bathrooms in the Health Center. I don't get called away as much as he does, but we help each other out. We can read each other's mind," Lisa says.

When on laundry duty, she goes upstairs five times a night to get laundry from each hall's dirty linen closet. Each load takes two hours to wash and dry. The morning laundry workers return everything to the right hall and room. Laundry put in at night gets returned the next morning. Sometimes aides come down to get a resident's favorite clothes, blanket, or quilt as soon as it's dry.

"I am a natural night owl. Even with my working schedule, I still get to interact

with staff in activities, dietary, and nursing as well as with Todd Nyeholt and the receptionist. There are windows all over, even in the downstairs hallways, so I still get to see the sun.

"The general feel here is upbeat, positive, and friendly. The residents here are so warm, and they like to converse. If it was my grandma or grandpa here, I'd definitely want to make sure they had clean clothes and a clean environment. When new staff come in, we tell them, 'Treat each resident like it's your grandpa or grandma.'

"I love the elderly, and my parents are gone. We're not supposed to have favorite residents, but we all do. One resident reminded me of my mom, and this lady liked me to stop in to say good night each night. It was really hard when she passed away two years ago," Lisa recalls.

She misses the easy camaraderie before COVID but is glad that restrictions are easing. "Now that residents can come outside their rooms, we can talk through our masks. Every now and then we can give high fives or side hugs. I love watching residents enjoying games again, like bingo, the parachute game, or drumming on exercise balls."

After she began working here, Lisa and David, her husband, moved from northeast Grand Rapids to "right behind the Health Center. I can walk to and from work in three minutes and feel perfectly safe, even in the dark," she says. They share their home with a daughter and three grandchildren. They also have a daughter in Colorado, son in Grand Rapids, and son and two granddaughters in Newaygo. Lisa really enjoys spending time with her family and counts that as her favorite hobby.

Alex Cullimore has no problem remembering to say Edison Christian Health Center instead of Christian Rest Home. That's because he was hired in February 2021, a couple years after the name change. The assistant maintenance supervisor position was created to train a replacement for Joel Potts when he retires.

"Joel's retirement date isn't set yet, so it's nice I got to start here early enough to get so much information from him. Since the Health Center was built in stages, there are so many halls, shortcuts, and door codes. Joel knows it all, and I enjoy working with him," Alex says. Before hiring on here, he had worked his way up from service



Alex Cullimore, assistant maintenance supervisor

technician to assistant service supervisor to maintenance supervisor with Redwood Living, a multistate apartment complex firm.

"My current job is similar to before in that I'm still working with my hands and with people. I still get to do HVAC and carpentry work, but now I also work on wheelchairs. Instead of working with residents aged 18 and up, I'm working with residents who are older and have more health issues.

"I used to have to keep track of so much on my apartment properties. But there's even more recordkeeping now so inspectors can verify that that we regularly check pressure gauges and test things like fire suppression systems and generators. That's good, because we have lost power since I've worked here, but our generators were ready," he says.

Alex works the day shift, Monday through Friday, and rotates being on call with Joel Potts, Dave Irwin, and David VanderVelde. "I start by checking emails and work orders and doing preventive maintenance. We have daily, weekly, biweekly, monthly, and quarterly things to test and check, like motors and bearing assemblies or temperatures on boilers and beauty shop hairdryers. Dave Irwin also does some preventive maintenance.

"Dave, Joel, and I go through the work orders according to our preferences and skill sets. Dave likes plumbing and lighting issues. Joel checks wheelchairs while residents are sleeping. I do oddball stuff because I'm new and nothing bothers me, whether it's a clogged toilet, leaky faucet, or

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MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS *(continued from page 3)*

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* Gifts designated for Edison Christian Foundation

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TOGETHER WITH RESIDENTS IN GOD'S FAMILY *(continued from page 4)*

bed that needs fixing. With three buildings, there's no shortage of work and always something different. Our department preps rooms for contractors, plumbers, and painters. After they finish, we put in outlets, shelves, and bifold doors," Alex explains.

When he arrives to take care of a work order, he introduces himself to the relevant staff member or resident and explains why he's there. Residents often ask for other help, such as with TV remotes. If someone's lost their remote, Alex brings up a replacement and reprograms it. "Watching their shows is really important to them, and they struggle with so many

buttons, channels, and input options. I explain, "This is your volume, channel, and power button. That's all you need."

Perhaps because he describes himself as a "people person" and attends department head meetings, Alex has found it easy to get to know staff and residents. "Everyone here is pretty great to work with. I often hear employees say that they like working here better than wherever they came from. It's nice to chat with residents, and I can tell that every conversation makes a difference in their day," he says.

He and his wife, Sara, live with their young sons, Corbin and Othaniel, on a wooded acreage just outside Cannonsburg. They

enjoy gardening, playing in the woods, and enjoying outdoor activities with Alex's mom in Spring Lake.

YOUR NEXT JOB?

*"Helpful staff and friendly residents...
a calling from the Lord...
like working with family...
upbeat and positive...
better than my last job."*

That's how new and long-term employees describe working at Edison Christian Life Services.

We'd love for you to join our caring staff.

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS *(continued from page 5)*

Roger & Helen VanderVelde

Mr. John Hulsing
Mr. John Hulsing*
David & Linda Randall
Mr. William Sturuss*

Roger VanderVelde

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Mr. William Sturuss*

Total Memorial Gifts ... \$66,897

** Gifts designated for Edison Christian Foundation*

IN LOVING MEMORY

November 2021 – February 2022

Don Leistico	November 7	age 85	Phyllis Markus	January 17	age 85
William LeBaron	November 10	age 87	Leonard Kloet	January 29	age 90
Fred Platte	November 16	age 90	Sue Noneman	February 14	age 80
Carol Diehm	November 21	age 86	David Seldomridge	February 18	age 75
Jane Winger	December 2	age 95	Helen Boersma	February 20	age 91
John Burke	December 10	age 82	Phyllis Dunaj	February 23	age 85
Robert Gillette	December 23	age 94	Lawrence Slezak	February 23	age 77
Barbara Boyle	January 2	age 88	Lydia Tacoma	February 24	age 87
Virginia Boonstra	January 2	age 93			

YOUR NEXT HOME?

“Now that it’s easier to book contractors again, we’ve got several rooms ready to move into at Assisted Living and Independent Living. Potential residents will find great choices,” Alex Cullimore says. We’d love for you to make your next home with us.

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

CONTRIBUTING CHURCHES

November 2021 – February 2022

Beckwith Hills CRC
Bethel URC
Blythefield CRC
Creston CRC
First Evangelical Cov.
First Protestant Ref.
Free Ref.

Grace Protestant Ref.
Heritage Ref. Congregation
Seventh Ref.
Walker URC
West Leonard CRC
Westend CRC

EDISON CHRISTIAN ASSISTED LIVING

Edison Christian Assisted Living encourages residents to maintain independence while acknowledging that assistance may be needed in the activities of daily living. Assistance is available to help residents with bathing, dressing, taking medications, and other daily activities. Our support and services help our residents to live life fully. Assisted living apartments are currently available.

For more information and a tour, call:
(616) 453-0581 edisonchristian.org

GIFTS RECEIVED IN HONOR OF

November 2021 – February 2022

In honor of... **Margaret Anderson** from William Anderson
In honor of... **Dorothy Koll** ...from Jonathan & Joyce VanderBee
In honor of... **Ann Slade’s 81st birthday**..... from Doug Slade

RECENT ECLS RETIREE

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

Debra Groeneveld..... **18 years**
With our appreciation for your commitment to our residents!

2021 SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS



5, 10 & 15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Angela Green (10), Martha Horjus (5), Shannon Sullivan (10), Brad Nyeholt (15), Bev Black (10), Lisa Blaskis (5), and Andrew Syswerda (5). **Not pictured:** Brenda Bellows (5), Kambrie Boomgaard (5), Suzanna Carlson (5), Vianca Santoyo-Ramirez (5), Diouly Benoit-Hooper (10), Jordyn Bowers (10), Diane Kramer (10), Frank Patis (10), Susan Ortiz (15), Connie Schuiling (15).



20, 25, 35 & 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Vonnie Engelsma (board member), Todd Nyeholt (35), Kay Engelsman (20), Darlene Anderson (25), Cheryl Visser (20), Jody Tolsma (20), and Nancy Zerfas (20). **Not pictured:** Anne Green (20), Jena Kass (20), Sam Sutton (20), and Connie Vainavicz (40).



Edison Christian Life Services
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Grand Rapids, MI 49504

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EDISON CHRISTIAN
LIFE SERVICES

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2022



Check out our website at:
edisonchristian.org

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