



THE BRIDGE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS WITH AGELESS FRIENDSHIP

Friends Across the Ages • Nursing Home Volunteer Network
Vol. 18 Spring/Summer - 2018

President's Message



ANDREW
MITCHELL

My wife Kim and I have spent more than 10 years volunteering with Friends Across the Ages. These years have provided fun, friendships and sometimes sorrow. We have built many lasting bonds, as well as fleeting moments of joy. Volunteering together has made the experience much easier and more impactful. While we like to think that we have always been popular with our resident friends, we know that they have really enjoyed our visits for the past two years.

Our 2 ½ year old son Will began volunteering with us when he was around 6 months old. The look on peoples' faces when they see him is incredible. The #1 thing that people ask us now is "Where is that little one tonight?" It's almost as if they like him more than us! Seeing this shift in responses to our visits really brings out the personal elements of our visits. Volunteering with Friends Across the Ages has proven to be one of the best decisions that we ever made.

Main Article cont...

If you would like to stop by and see the new office, just let us know! The good news is it is a little easier to find than the old office—which should help brand new volunteers coming in for interviews and orientations.

For now, our mailing address will remain at our P.O. Box, but we will let you know if that changes in the future. We welcome any additional donations to help us cover the rent, and we appreciate your continued support as we settle into this new space and begin new chapter for *Friends Across the Ages*.

NEW OFFICE—AND THANK YOU, TONY BARR

For the past 15 or 16 years, *Friends Across the Ages* has had an office at Barr Systems, donated to us by Tony Barr. We want to express our appreciation to him for giving *Friends* a home base for all these years, free of charge. He also let us utilize the conference rooms for board meetings, and the lovely courtyard for our annual spring volunteer appreciation party. Barr Systems was a beautiful setting in which to welcome volunteers, new and old.

However, that era has now come to an end. Mr. Barr sold the office complex last year, but rented back one section and generously let us stay as long as he had an office there as well. But now he is moving on, and so must we. So, as of May 1, we have a new office for a quite reasonable rent (which includes utilities and everything), located near Thornebrook Shopping Center in Gainesville. The initial lease is just 6 months, so this will give us a chance to try it out and be sure it is working for us, and that we are able to cover the rent.

There is a small conference room in which we can hold our board meetings, but alas, no courtyard! Fortunately, Kim and Andrew Mitchell were kind enough to host our spring volunteer appreciation party this year at their lovely home, and have said we can count on them for the foreseeable future. So we continue to be grateful to generous people like them. And we are grateful for the final generous gift from Tony Barr of the office furniture we had been using in the old office.

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VOLUNTEER ANNIVERSARIES

Winter and Spring 2018

11 years

ROBBIE CURRY, Parklands

10 years

KIM & ANDREW MITCHELL, Signature

7 years

CHRISTINE HALL & LENA
MELENDEZ, GHCC

4 years

ROSHA POU DYAL, Park Meadows

3 Years

BETSY THEWES, Parklands

2 Year

CASSIE COOPER, Signature
JAMIE KISTLER, Parklands & Terrace

1 Year

NIURKA FERNANDEZ, Terrace

Welcome New Volunteers

LINDSEY ANDERSON.....Parklands
DOMINIKA BURBULTerrace
MONIKA CAFFIERTerrace
LINDA DOLHAYTerrace & Parklands
VANESSA GREENE.....Signature
MARYANNE LONGSignature
KAREN PIPEKParklands
PENNY REIFSignature

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018

ANDREW MITCHELL.....President
ROSHA POU DYAL.....Vice President
HEATHER GEIDEL.....Secretary
STEVE BLAY.....Treasurer
ALLISON BLAYNetwork Facilitator

ROBBIE CURRY LAURA LONDONO
GEORGE HAMILTON KIM MITCHELL

Friends Across the Ages SPRING FESTIVAL 2018

Every year, *Friends Across the Ages* holds a “Spring Festival”—a week of festivities at various area nursing homes. This year’s events included a Karaoke Party at Park Meadows, a Home School Chorus performance at North Florida Rehab, a Luau Bingo Party at Gainesville Health Care Center, a Casino Party at Parklands, and a Spring Bingo Party at Signature Health Care.

We ended the week with our annual Volunteer Appreciation Party—which was kindly hosted this year by Kim and Andrew Mitchell at their lovely historic Gainesville home. As always, we gave appreciation gifts to all volunteers, and a few special awards. This year’s awards included:

“**Dedication Award**”—Stephanie Santos: Stephanie began volunteering at Park Meadows about a year and a half ago, and has shown an exceptional level of commitment and responsibility. Her ready smile is welcomed by all who meet her.

“**Stick-To-It Award**”—Samantha Stilley: Steve likes to give a roll of duct tape to the recipient of this award, as a sign that they have really stuck to volunteering despite challenges. Sam has indeed persisted, despite being the only student volunteer in our Parklands group, and plans to continue through her graduation.

“**Friends Across the Nations Award**”—Martina Pořízková: Martina hails from the Czech Republic, and came to Gainesville for 6 months while her husband was here as a Fulbright Scholar. Martina was an extremely faithful and enthusiastic volunteer with our group at Parklands, and we already miss her very much.

“**Initiative Award**”—Laura Londono: Laura has been volunteering for the past year, and recently took the initiative to begin a student chapter of *Friends* at UF. She also has joined our board of directors and will be serving as our Park Meadows volunteer coordinator as Rosha Poudyal moves away. We appreciate her willingness to jump into these leadership roles and to help *Friends* better reach student volunteers.

“**Ten Year Award**”—Kim and Andrew Mitchell: Kim and Andrew have been loyal volunteers at Signature for a decade, and have been the coordinators of our Signature group for most of that time. They continued even when Andrew was away for military training (he would talk to the residents via phone), and through the arrival of their son, Will. They are pillars of this organization, and *Friends* would be lost without them. We are profoundly grateful that they continue to give of themselves so faithfully.

“**Spirit Award**”—Will Mitchell: Every year we give this award to someone who seems to embody the spirit of our organization. This year we selected 2-year-old Will Mitchell who volunteers every week with his parents, and in a unique way embodies the “across the ages” part of “Friends Across the Ages.” The residents all love him and he is able to make them smile in a way no one else can.

Thank you to all who participated in this year’s Spring Festival festivities. We look forward to next year!



Group photo of the volunteers at our Spring Volunteer Appreciation Party



Volunteer Martina Pořízková helps residents play Black Jack at the Casino Party at Parklands.



Residents and volunteers at Park Meadows singing “YMCA” at the Karaoke Party



Volunteer Linda Dolhay helps joins in the Bingo fun at Signature



Volunteer Jamie Kistler helps residents play Bingo at the Luau Bingo Party at Gainesville Health Care Center

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: ROBERT GRIFFIN

By Martina Pořízková, with contributions by Samantha Stilley



Even though I volunteered at Parklands for only a few months, I experienced a very special encounter there. I usually visited the residents only in the dining room, a common area where they gather. However, one day, our coordinator Steve asked me to accompany him and visit a resident who is not often in the dining room. I was told that this person, Rob, had written a poem. It aroused my curiosity even more when Steve told me that we could try using the poem as lyrics and putting it to music. So I and my friend Samantha, who had been volunteering at Parklands a bit longer than me, joined Steve and went to Rob’s room.

Rob showed us two poems he had written and I liked both very much. We decided to put to music one of them which was called “Forever Times Infinity”. As I already mentioned, meeting Rob was very special, because it was the first time I met a resident who was that proactive and eager to work on something together with us, volunteers. Thanks to Steve who brought his guitar with him, we started to somehow play and sing the chorus. It was very spontaneous and all of us liked how it came out. Then, it was Rob’s turn to sing. He surprised me by saying that he had already had a melody for lyrics in his mind for quite a time. He told us

that he had begun writing his song in 2007. This fact only reinforced my feeling that the day we did this music project must have been quite special to him, too. So we ended up recording this song on Steve’s phone on the porch of the Parklands building. It was a beautiful, sunny day. We all were singing the chorus and the rest of the song was Rob singing alone.

After this encounter Sam and I came quite often to say hello to Rob. We learned that he was born in Key West where he lived till just before he was 12 and then he moved to Keystone Heights, a small town near Gainesville. Rob suffers from muscular dystrophy. As both of his parents had already passed away, he ended up living in a nursing home. There were always so many topics to speak about with Rob. Not only music, but also sports are very important for him. He was even a sports writer in Alabama at one point! As I am from the Czech Republic, we also discussed cultural differences, languages and it was just so nice for me to get to meet Rob regularly and talk. We also spoke about our faith sometimes and as Rob said, he is focusing right now on what God wants him to do. And I am sure music is a perfect way for Rob to discover ways to fulfill his potential in future. Link to Rob’s song on Youtube <https://tinyurl.com/robgriffinsong>