

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: RAY PARKS

BY: CASSIE COOPER

My first time volunteering with *Friends Across the Ages* was in December of 2015 for the annual holiday caroling event at Signature Healthcare. I started coming to weekly meetings after this and I met several residents but the person I ended up spending the most time with was Ray.

Ray Parks was born in Ohio and is an avid Ohio State Buckeyes fan. I always see him sporting a blanket with his favorite team on it. He spent five years serving our country in the Navy. His nurse and I joke with him saying this is probably why he only likes to eat meat and potatoes. Ray has a love for cats which is why we are such great friends. He tells me quite often of two kitties he had while living in Virginia. (Pooh Bear and Jelly Belly) He has two children and a few grandchildren whom he talks about regularly. He enjoys pictures of two of his grandchildren playing baseball. He's so proud!

Ray's favorite snack is Oreo cookies. I take him some every week that I visit. I started out handing him one cookie at a time but he was quick to tell me that wasn't enough! So now I make sure to give him two at a time.

In the moments I spend talking with Ray and watching him eat those Oreos I can't help but



think about life a little deeper. Our lives all have a beginning and an end -- and those are significant parts. But the most important things are what's in the middle. The time we spend with our family and friends, the times we love, the times we laugh -- that's the sweet stuff!

I'm so blessed to know Ray. When I started volunteering I assumed that I would be the change in someone else's life. But Ray is most definitely the change in mine. He has truly become one of my best friends and I look forward to seeing him every week!



THE BRIDGE

BRIDGING GENERATIONS WITH AGELESS FRIENDSHIP

Friends Across the Ages • Nursing Home Volunteer Network

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FRIENDS BRIDGES THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Friends Across the Ages is proud to announce that we will soon be launching a brand new website. Our current website, built for us nearly 15 years ago by *Friends* supporter Jeremy Shinn, has served us well for a long time now. But the times, they are a'changin', and the time has come for *Friends* to change with them. Our website is our primary means of recruiting, communicating with, and offering resources for both local and non-local volunteers, and the new website will give us an enhanced way to fulfill all of those functions.

Here are some of the features the new website will include:

- Fresh testimonials, pictures and stories from our current volunteers, to help people understand why this kind of volunteering is so important and fulfilling.
- Updated volunteer training materials, on topics such as communication skills and end-of-life issues.
- Resources for family members of residents of nursing homes.
- More accessible links to our current blog, and eventually, to the new book we hope to put out next year.
- Detailed information, tools, and contact forms for both local and non-local volunteers, to help them get started volunteering.

The initial launch of the website will take place at the beginning the new year, and fresh content and features will be added from there. We are looking forward to having a new tool to better enable us to achieve our constant mission: to bridge generations with ageless friendship.

President's Message



ANDREW MITCHELL

As we begin to close out another year, it is hard to believe that it has passed so quickly. Just two days ago, I was sitting with a wonderful resident who told me that "Even if things aren't perfect here, I have a roof, a bed and three meals every day. I am truly blessed." It was a simple, yet fresh perspective. Fresh, because, in nearly 10 years volunteering with Friends, it is not a common outlook. It helped me to remember to enjoy the simple things and not to take them for granted. I hope that, as an organization, we always remember our simple goal of providing friendship for those who cannot easily find it. Please enjoy this holiday season.



We would like to thank and recognize these special "Friends of *Friends*."

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KARAOKE PARTIES

We have recently held two different karaoke parties at two different nursing homes—one in August at North Florida Rehab and Specialty Care, and another in September at Signature Health care. Through the wonder of wifi, we were able to find any song the residents requested and pull it up for them to sing along, everything from hymns, to Elvis, (and hymns sung by Elvis), to Glen Campbell, to the Jackson Five, and much more. These karaoke parties were such a hit, we hope to do several more of them in the new year!



All the volunteers who attended the karaoke party in August at NFRSC.



Volunteer Robbie Curry looks on while volunteers Will and Andrew Mitchell sing karaoke with a resident at Signature Health Care.

WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS

Summer and Fall 2017

- KRISTINA ASKIN—SIGNATURE
- DAVID BILLMAN—SIGNATURE
- VICTOR CAMPANO—PARK MEADOWS
- AMANDA COLLAZO—SIGNATURE
- NIURKA FERNANDEZ—TERRACE
- KARLA NEGRON—PARKLANDS
- MARTINA PORISKOVA—PARKLANDS
- SARAH SANCHEZ—SIGNATURE
- JESSICA SCHREIER—PARK MEADOWS
- BROOKE SCHWARTZ—SIGNATURE
- SAMANTHA STILLEY—PARKLANDS

VOLUNTEER ANNIVERSARIES

Summer and Fall 2017

- 42 years:
FLORENCE VAN ARNAM
- 11 years:
DONNA, KYLE & CHASE MOORE
- 3 years:
JOHN HOBBS
ROSHA POU DYAL
PAUL VOLPE
- 2 years:
CASSIE COOPER
- 1 year:
KAYLA MILLER
ROSE WILDER

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- JAMIE KISTLER BETSY THEWES

CONGRATS, ERIKA AND HEATHER!

One of the things about *Friends Across the Ages* is that when we have known folks for awhile—be they volunteers or residents—they become like family to us. That is certainly the case for two of our volunteers/board members, Erika Robinson and Heather Geidel. So we want to offer our heartfelt congrats to these two members of our family for forming new families of their own!

Erika, who has been volunteering at

Signature for almost 3 years, was married this past July to Kyle Robinson, and has embraced his two children as her own. Heather, who began volunteering when she was a UF student back around 2008, has recently become engaged to be married. She will tie the knot with John Benton this coming May. We could not be more happy for these two wonderful young women, and wish them all the best in the coming years.



Erika and her new husband Kyle singing "Summer Lovin" from the musical Grease at a recent Friends karaoke party.



Heather and her now fiancé' John at our Friends volunteer appreciation party this past spring.