



SUPPORTER SCOOP

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF FRIENDSHIP

Summer 2025



Welcome to Friendship's latest Supporter Scoop Newsletter! This summer, we've celebrated milestones, compassion, and the impact of supporting friends throughout our four campuses. From a golf tournament and our inaugural Friendship Fest to many causes for celebration, there's a lot to share.

In this issue, read about our award-winning assisted living and our 6th annual golf tournament. Meanwhile, our residents and employees have been giving back all summer long during Friendship Fest fundraising events. We also spotlight stories of some special residents, as well as those of our newest board leadership. We're grateful to have you with us on this journey to create positive change.

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Assisted Living Communities Earn National Awards

Three of Friendship's assisted living facilities—Friendship Assisted Living on the North Campus and The Oaks and the Joseph C. Thomas Center at Friendship Richfield Living—have been recognized as 2024 recipients of the Bronze – Commitment to Quality Award by the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) for their commitment to improving the lives of residents through quality care. This distinction is the first of three progressive award levels through the AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Program. The Program honors providers across the nation that have demonstrated their dedication to enhancing the quality of care for our nation's elders and individuals with disabilities.

Friendship's President and CEO Joe Hoff said, "This achievement reflects the dedication of our team members who work tirelessly to provide exceptional care and support to our residents every day. Joining Friendship Salem Terrace, which earned this distinction last year, all four of our assisted living communities are

now nationally recognized for their commitment to quality. This milestone affirms our ongoing promise to continuously enhance the lives of those we serve."

The AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Program is a rigorous three-level process reviewed and evaluated by trained experts against a set of nationally recognized standards for organizational excellence. The standards of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program help organizations achieve superior performance over time to improve the quality of life and care of long-term care residents.

Providers begin the quality improvement journey at the Bronze level, where they develop an organizational profile detailing among other elements their vision, mission, key customers, and key strengths and challenges. Bronze applicants must demonstrate the use of a performance improvement system. Trained examiners review each application to determine if a center has met the demands of the criteria. As a recipient of the Bronze - Commitment to Quality award, Friendship's assisted living facilities may now move forward to the Silver - Achievement in Quality award criteria.

"This milestone affirms our ongoing promise to continuously enhance the lives of those we serve."

-- Joe Hoff

As we celebrate our team members whose hard work resulted in these awards, we look forward to continuing to strive for even higher levels of quality for those we serve.



Golfers Raise Clubs and Funds at 6th Annual Tournament

Friendship's 6th Annual Golf Tournament helped advance our organization's mission by bringing friends together as we raised more than \$22,000 for the Friendship Fund, which allows us the greatest flexibility to designate money where it is most needed—whether for activities, capital needs, employee education, or resident programming.

The event, held on June 5 at Roanoke Country Club, was the result of over 30 businesses and many more individuals contributing generous sponsorships and showing up for the big day ready to swing their clubs. We are especially grateful for the event's title sponsors, Cary Street Partners, Marsh & McLennan Agency, and StarCare Pharmacy. All the golfers and sponsors made the event a fun success, benefiting all the residents whom Friendship serves.

"Their support helps Friendship continue to make the Roanoke Valley shine."

-- Sarah Stephens



"We are so appreciative of the continued generosity of all those who came out to support this great cause," said Sarah Stephens, Development Officer. "Their support helps Friendship continue to make the Roanoke Valley shine as a great community for seniors to call home."

A video from the event can be seen [here](#). Be the first to hear updates on next year's golf tournament by reaching out to Sarah at 540.265.2122 or sstephens@friendship.us.





Salem Native Celebrates 105th Birthday

Bertie Conner turned 105 on June 10, and we couldn't be more thrilled to celebrate this incredible milestone with her! Born in 1920 to Joseph Cephus and Lillie Belle Rucker, Bertie has called Salem home for over a century—witnessing everything from horse-drawn wagons to smartphones (though she'll still choose a hot cup of coffee and a good visit over a gadget any day!).

As one of many children, Bertie grew up surrounded by family, faith, and the kind of small-town warmth that's defined her life ever since. In 1936, she married her sweetheart, Roy Allen Conner, and together they raised seven wonderful children. (Yes—seven!) Family has always been at the center of her life, and her love only multiplied as grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-greats came along.

Bertie spent her working years employed at Valleydale in Salem, while also mastering the art of juggling home, church, and community. A faithful member of her congregation, she served as a Sunday School teacher for more than 40 years—impacting generations with her gentle wisdom and strong spirit.

When she wasn't at church or work, Bertie enjoyed crafts, family get-togethers, and time with friends. Now part of the Friendship Richfield Living community, she's known for her quick wit, her endless gratitude, and her two favorite indulgences: coffee and chocolate (which we suspect may be her secret to long life!).

When asked what advice she'd share after 105 years, she doesn't hesitate: "Always be thankful."

"Always be thankful."

-- Bertie Conner

Wise words from a woman who has seen the world change many times over—and has met it all with grace, grit, and a grateful heart.

Happy Birthday, Bertie! Here's to 105 years of love, laughter, and a whole lot of coffee.



Friendship Fest Puts the Fun in Summer Fundraising

Friendship team members and community members came together this summer to raise money for residents and employees facing financial needs, and they had a great time doing it! With a variety of events hosted at all four campuses in Roanoke and Salem, participating employees and residents played cornhole, contributed to 50/50 raffles, dunked coworkers in a dunking tank, ate chili, and hosted many more events to raise money for a cause near and dear to everyone's heart.

Friendship Assisted Living Dining Director Chris Eanes is someone who knows the importance of supporting team members. When Chris was diagnosed with kidney failure, he had to go through dialysis treatments that were costly and physically exhausting. As the dialysis costs piled up, Eanes said, "I was kind of in a hole. It was hard enough to come in to work for those 40 hours a week after [dialysis]. Finding a second job to help pay for it was nearly impossible." That's when he turned to Friendship's Employee Emergency Fund, one of the areas money raised during Friendship Fest went toward.

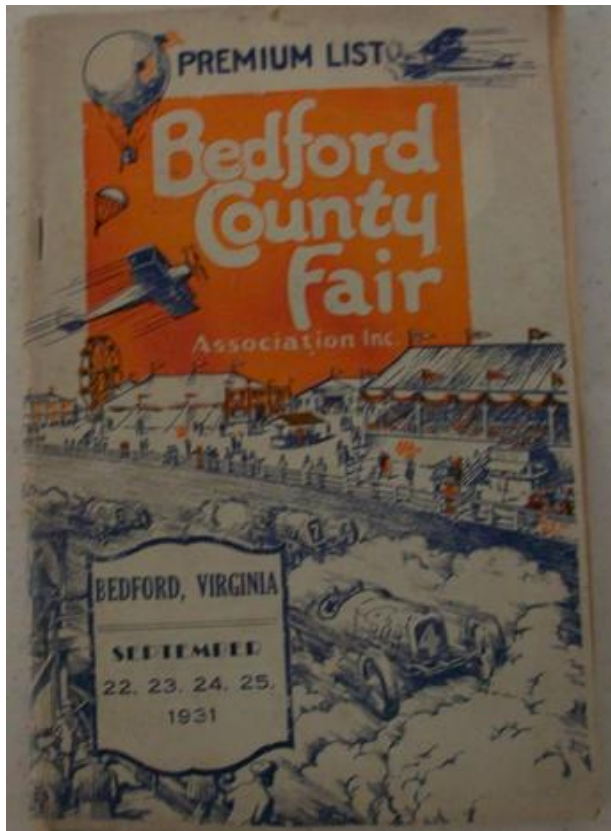
[Watch the rest of Chris's story here.](#)



Friendship has supported both residents and team members who experience unexpected hard times throughout the organization's history, and those who live and work here are some of the people who make that possible. It was a delight to see the comradery and creativity that came together this summer through Friendship Fest's fundraising events.

The campuses also enjoyed the challenge of seeing how quickly they could meet the fundraising goal. We hoped to raise \$7,000 by the end of the summer, but that goal was surpassed before July even ended!

Friendship is grateful for the energy and generosity of everyone who was involved in raising these funds. As a nonprofit organization, we recognize the importance of supporting those in our community. A great time was had by all, and everyone enjoyed being a part of making a difference!



The Incredible Life of Resident Nancy Jones

"When people ask me where I was born," Nancy Jones says with a grin, "I tell them, 'a cemetery.'" And it's true—well, mostly. She grew up in Bedford, Virginia, in a farmhouse out in the country, sitting on a stretch of land that bordered the town cemetery. "We were so close," she says, "I used to tip-toe over as a toddler and take one little flower off a grave to keep."

But that cemetery wasn't the strangest thing about where Nancy lived. The real magic was in the backyard—where, several times a year, a carnival or a fair would roll in like a traveling dream. Some stayed for two days, others a week. Tents would pop up overnight. Ferris wheels would spin to life. Elephants and tigers would wander past their back windows like they were part of the family.

"And the best part?" she says. "We didn't need a ticket. Me and my six brothers and sisters could walk out the back door and be in the fair." They rode every ride. Played every game. And the carnival workers, well, they knew who the family was. "We got free rides all day. No questions asked."

When the carnival packed up, though, they weren't exactly neat. Trash scattered the yard—big rolls of tickets, popcorn boxes, soda cups—and the family would spend the next few days picking it all up.

One year, while cleaning the field, they spotted something long and oddly shaped with bright colors all over it. "It was a snake," Ms. Nancy says, eyes wide, "painted with red and blue diamonds! A real circus snake that somehow got left behind!"

Her daddy stood guard while the family called the police. "They thought we were making it up," she laughs. "But that carnival came back real fast once they realized they were missing their star attraction."

"We got free rides all day. No questions asked."

-- Nancy Jones

In the 1940s, the cemetery and fairgrounds were still in active use, but the town had begun developing a newer cemetery, Greenwood Cemetery, on the fairgrounds. Eventually, the fairgrounds that held so many of Ms. Nancy's favorite childhood memories—rides, animals, and family—would be turned over to make room for a newer cemetery. "I was so sad when we had to move away from that house," Ms. Nancy says quietly. "Momma said I cried for three weeks."

"I had a great childhood," she says. "How many kids can say they grew up in a cemetery—with a carnival?"



New Chair and Vice Chair of Friendship Board of Directors

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Lucian Grove, MD, FACP, a Roanoke native and respected healthcare leader, as the new Chair of the Friendship Board of Directors. Grove brings decades of internal medicine experience and a deep commitment to Friendship's mission. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Virginia, he earned his medical degree with honors from UVA School of Medicine and completed residencies at the University of Alabama Hospital and UVA.

Grove practiced in Salem for 35 years and has served on Friendship's Board since 1999, founding and chairing the Clinical Committee and previously leading the Finance Committee. In addition, he served as vice president of Contracting Enterprises Inc. and president of Roanoke Welding Co. and is currently medical advisor for Chorda Pharma. His appointment as board chair comes at a pivotal time as Friendship expands its programs and services for older adults across the region.

"I couldn't be more confident in the path ahead with these two exceptional leaders at the helm."

-- Joe Hoff

We also look forward to having Dr. Nathaniel L. (NL) Bishop as Vice Chair of Friendship's Board. Bishop is a respected voice in healthcare leadership and higher education. Previously a licensed nursing home administrator, he is a long-time supporter of elder care initiatives. He earned degrees from Radford University and Virginia Tech, along with a doctorate from Wesley Seminary in Washington, D.C., and brings decades of experience in healthcare administration.



Friendship Chair Dr. Lucian Grove

Bishop retired in 2024 as senior vice president and chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer for Carilion Clinic. He currently serves as community ambassador for the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. He has served on the Friendship board since 2021, providing leadership to the Clinical, Compensation, Nominating and Corporate Governance Committees.

"We are excited to have Dr. Lucian Grove and Dr. N.L. Bishop in their new leadership roles on our Board of Directors," said Joe Hoff, President and CEO of Friendship. "Dr. Grove's long-standing relationship with Friendship and his clinical and business insight, paired with Dr. Bishop's visionary leadership and passion for equitable, person-centered care, position us for an exciting future. Their guidance will be instrumental as we continue to grow and innovate to meet the evolving needs of seniors in our region. I couldn't be more confident in the path ahead with these two exceptional leaders at the helm."



Friendship Vice Chair Dr. Nathaniel L. (NL) Bishop

Full Circle Moment for New Vice Chair Dr. N.L. Bishop

At Friendship, we often talk about how life comes full circle. Few stories reflect that truth as beautifully as the journey of Dr. NL Bishop, newly appointed Vice Chair of the Friendship Board of Directors, and his long-standing connection to a very special member of our community: Mr. Thomas Au.

Before Dr. Bishop became a respected leader in higher education and an influential voice in healthcare, he was a young professional just beginning his path in healthcare administration. And like all great journeys, his started with a teacher. That teacher was Mr. Au.

Years ago, Mr. Au served as an administrator and mentor, training future leaders in the field of senior living. Among his mentees was Dr. Bishop, then an ambitious administrator-in-training eager to learn the ins and outs of senior care. Under Mr. Au's guidance, Dr. Bishop gained not only technical knowledge but also a deep respect for the role of compassion, dignity, and integrity in caring for older adults.

Today, Dr. Bishop brings that same passion and wisdom to his leadership role at Friendship—one of Virginia's largest senior living communities. And in a full-circle moment that touches the heart, the man who trained him is now a resident here.

"Mr. Au shaped the foundation of my career," Dr. Bishop shared. "To now serve in a leadership capacity at the same organization where he lives is not only a privilege—it's personal. It reminds me every day why this work matters."

This unique connection between mentor and mentee—now resident and board leader—reflects the spirit of continuity, care, and community that defines Friendship. It's a testament to the lasting impact of mentorship, the value of lifelong learning, and the deep respect we hold for those who paved the way.

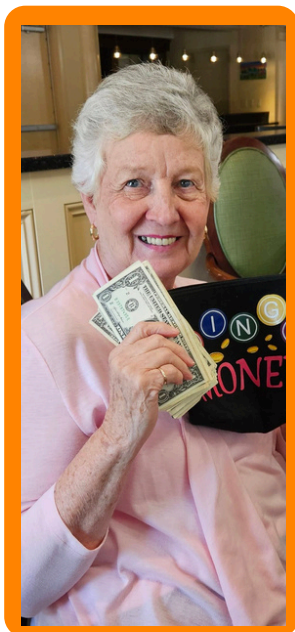
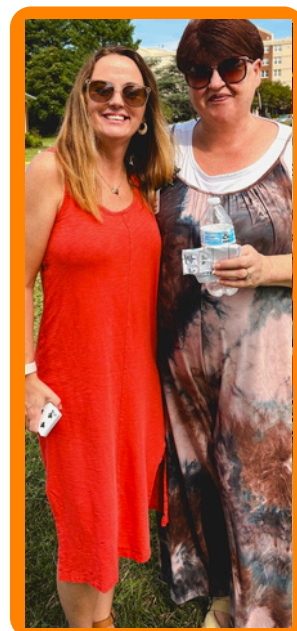
"It reminds me every day why this work matters."

-- Dr. N.L. Bishop

At Friendship, stories like this aren't rare—they're woven into the fabric of who we are. We celebrate the people who teach, lead, and inspire across generations. And we're honored that Mr. Au and Dr. Bishop are part of that legacy.

Glimpses of Friendship

From bingo, book groups, and live music to dancing, group walks, and tropical fun, time at Friendship has been fun this summer!





Supporters Like You Power Friendship's Work

Friendship Foundation is a nonprofit organization, and we strive each day to be the leader that transforms perceptions and embraces aging.

We look forward to continuing our mission of supporting friends by providing peace of mind for many years to come.

Make a tax-deductible gift today, and help us empower those we serve to live fuller, healthier lives!

DONATE ONLINE

Make a secure gift on our website at friendship.us/give-today.

DONATE BY MAIL

You can mail in your gift, including by check or money order, to:
Friendship Foundation
367 Hershberger Road, NW
Roanoke, VA 24012

DONATE BY PHONE

Call us at 540-265-2122. We look forward to speaking with you Mon.–Fri., 8:30 am – 5:00 pm.

