

REFLECTIONS

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WILLOW BROOK CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

CONTENTS

A SEASON OF HOMECOMING 3

By Troy McKnight, CEO, WBCC
The season of homecoming is upon us – read Troy's take on the topic.

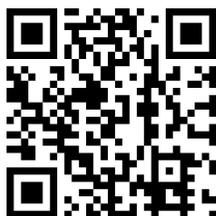
THE HOMECOMING HE NEVER HAD 4

By Cathy Courtice, Director of Community Relations, WBCC
Hear how Honor Flight Columbus was the homecoming that Vietnam Veteran Dave Johe never got.

THE JOY OF CHOSEN FAMILY 6, 7

By Cathy Courtice, Director of Community Relations, WBCC
Willow Brook Christian Home DON Theresa Agyepong recalls going home to her chosen family in Berlin, Germany.

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Cover Photo: Leaf covered bridge along the waterway path at Willow Brook Christian Village.
Photo by Christina Dresdow.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Gentle readers,

What does homecoming mean to you? How has the concept of "coming home" manifested in your life? This issue of *Reflections* considers these questions and introduces you to three different people in the Willow Brook family who have experienced their own homecomings, all in different ways. As we were putting together this issue, it became clear that homecoming is just as much about people as it is about place, perhaps even more so. The old saying goes that "home is where the heart is." Wherever your heart is, may it be nourished and held by the abundance of the season: the colors, smells, foods, activities, and holidays. Most importantly, may coming home - however that looks for you - be an exercise in compassion and acceptance. Whether joyous or bittersweet, may coming home give you the strength and courage to embrace life, and love - in all its beautiful hues.

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55 Lazelle Road

Columbus, Ohio 43235

Phone: 614-885-3300

Willow Brook Christian Village

100 Willow Brook Way South

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FIRESIDE CHATS WITH CEO TROY MCKNIGHT



Photo by Christina Dresdow

Troy McKnight, CEO of Willow Brook Christian Communities.

A SEASON OF HOMECOMING

As the seasons change and leaves start to turn brilliant shades of red and gold, there's a warmth in the air that goes beyond the temperature. It's the feeling of homecoming: a time when we reconnect with our roots, our loved ones, and the special places we hold in our hearts.

I've not experienced an old-fashioned homecoming in some time. The high school and college years have long been in my past, and now reunions are more my speed. But I do have a freshman daughter in college, and our family is planning to attend her college homecoming this year. It will also be our first time to reconnect with her since she moved into her dorm in August. The anticipation is building and the homecoming will be a joyous one.

For many, homecoming involves a return to the place where they grew up. This year, the McKnight's homecoming will be in

Texas when we return for the holidays. The time will be filled with stories of our new Ohio adventure and our daughter's first year of college. We'll rekindle friendships, revisit old haunts, drive familiar streets, and eat some Whataburger.

Homecoming is also about welcoming, whether to a place you have been before, or in my family's case, to a place you have never been. The day we moved into our new Ohio home, we were quickly

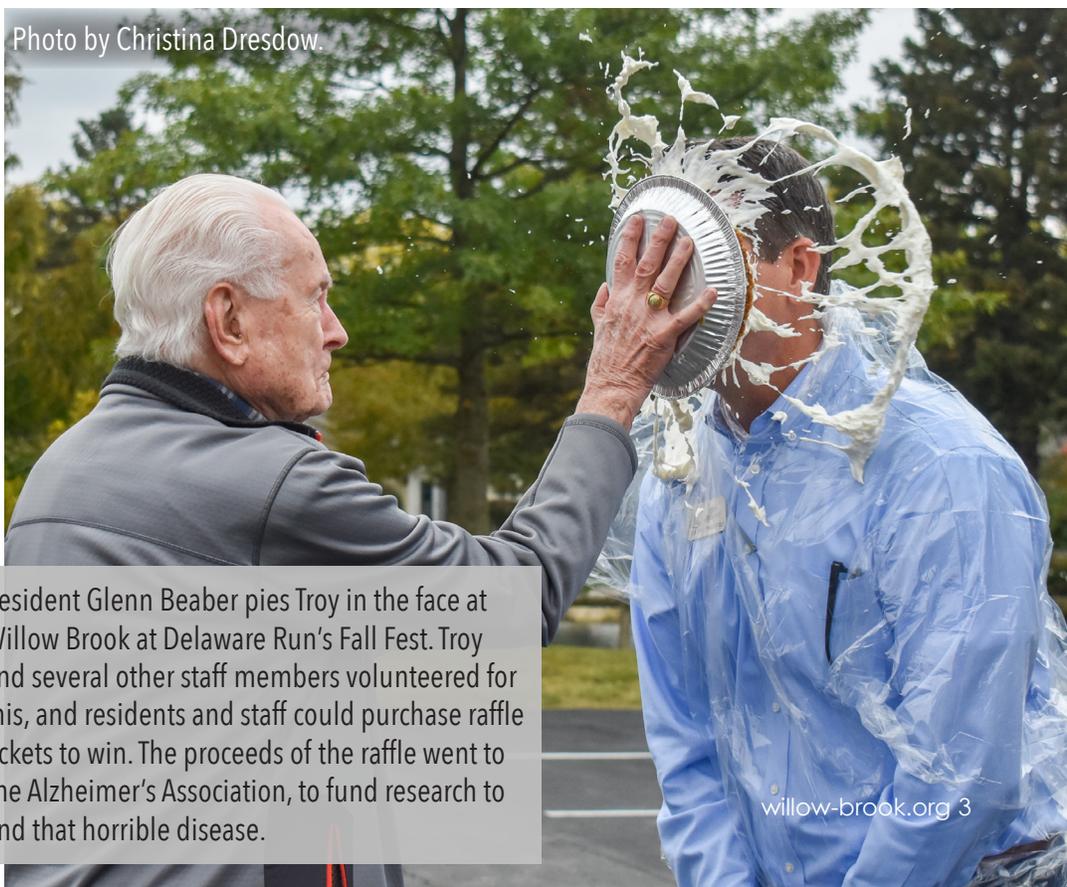
greeted by friendly neighbors who offered an abundance of help. Residents and teammates of Willow Brook stepped in with home repairs, meals, and encouragement. Additionally, our new church home showered us with more meals and prayer support. We felt so blessed to be a part of a new neighborhood, community, and church.

Each day that we call Ohio home, we forge new relationships and create memories. It is crazy to think about, but those very things are the foundation of a future homecoming. I can imagine it now: hugs with old friends, driving down Route 23, and eating some Skyline Chili!

So as we embrace the spirit of homecoming, let's remember that it's not just about returning to a place, it's about returning to the people who matter most. It's a celebration of our roots, our relationships, and the love that surrounds us.

Wishing you all a heartwarming and fulfilling homecoming season. ❤️

Photo by Christina Dresdow



Resident Glenn Beaber pies Troy in the face at Willow Brook at Delaware Run's Fall Fest. Troy and several other staff members volunteered for this, and residents and staff could purchase raffle tickets to win. The proceeds of the raffle went to The Alzheimer's Association, to fund research to end that horrible disease.

THE HOMECOMING HE NEVER HAD

It all started at a regular Tuesday morning coffee hour at Willow Brook Christian Village. But on this particular Tuesday, Willow Brook life enrichment coordinator Cassie Call told those gathered about Honor Flight, and encouraged residents who had served in the military to apply. Dave Johe's ears perked up. He had four friends at the Village who were also veterans, and an idea began forming in his mind. What if all of them could go together on an honor flight? Dave made some calls and was told to list his buddies on the application, and have

Dave Johe reminiscing about his time on the Honor Flight Columbus trip.

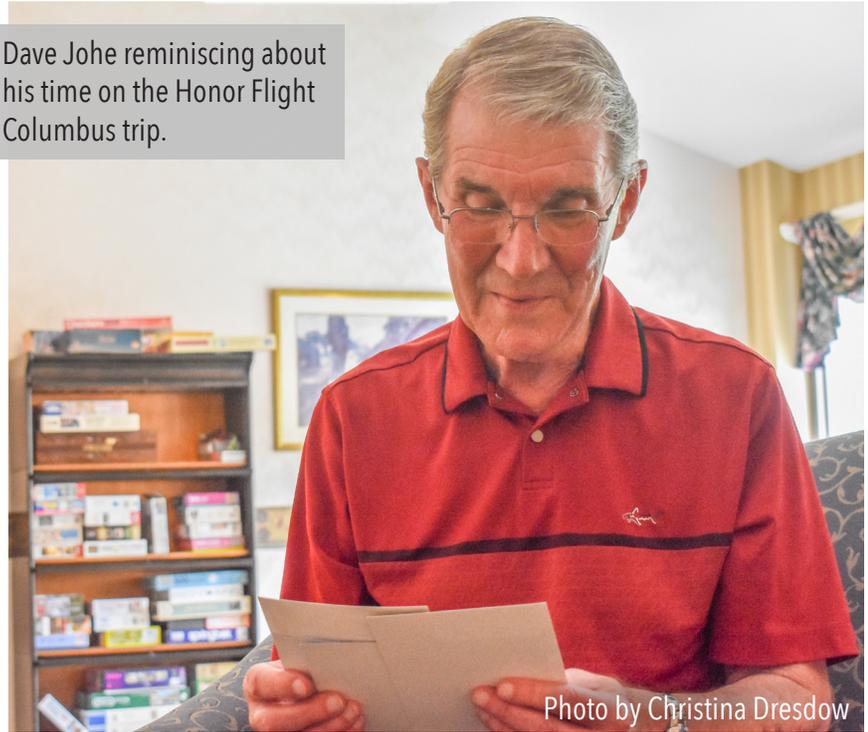


Photo by Christina Dresdow



(Left to right) Dave Johe, Mal MacLean, Pete Grace, Dean Endsley, and Ken Wenner - who all had the opportunity to go on the Honor Flight together. Photo from album by Barbara Waters.

his buddies do the same—so they did. And that is how five friends and fellow vets shared an incredible day together a year ago on October 6, 2022.

"Our trip was incredible from beginning to end," says Dave. From the pre-dawn send-off at the Village, where residents and first responders gathered to see them off, to the luxurious buses chartered to take the attendees to each memorial in Washington DC, to the mail call upon their return to Columbus, the day was not only picture-perfect, but a real homecoming—one that Dave and many of our other veterans were denied years ago.

When Dave came home from the military after serving in Vietnam, there were no crowds cheering thanks, there was no band to serenade. Instead, he was told to blend in, and given strict instructions not to wear his uniform stateside or talk about his service, lest he be called names or compromise his own safety and well-being.

In stark contrast, when Dave and his comrades returned from honor flight, throngs of cheering people filled the Columbus airport terminal, handmade signs were waved, music filled the air, and even Brutus Buckeye was there to offer his thanks to our veterans. "It dawned on me after returning from the honor flight, that it was the homecoming Vietnam veterans never got," says Dave. "It was one of the most significant events of my life. It was closure. It was homecoming. And I was reminded that there are lots of good people out there. People appreciated that we served our country, and people do care." ♥

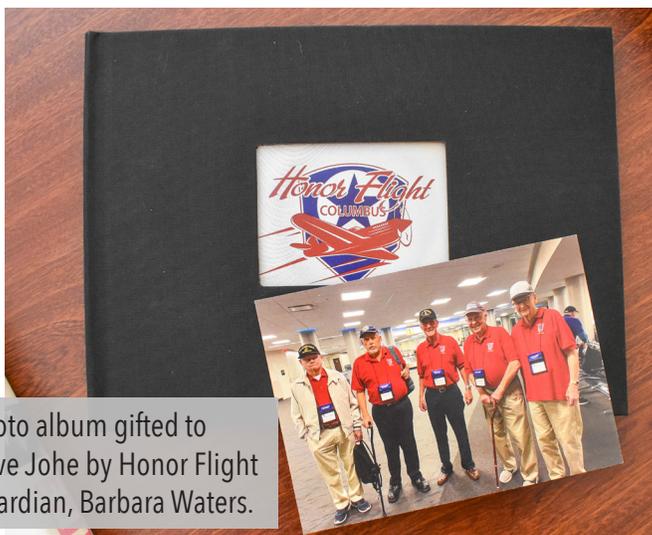


Photo album gifted to Dave Johe by Honor Flight Guardian, Barbara Waters.

THE PATTERNS OF LIFE: THE PERFECT MOSAIC

Excerpted from a story by Chris Eddy,
resident at Willow Brook at Delaware Run



(Right to left) Chris Eddy with her mother Ona, Wilda, and Shelly – friends for life.

Patterns have been woven throughout my life. Most notable has been the unplanned and recurring pattern of always ending up coming home to live near the Delaware Run waterway. Delaware Run is a perennial stream tributary of the Olentangy River here in central Ohio. I was born near this stream and the stream ran right along the backyard of my childhood home (making for the perfect location for make-believe to create childhood fantasies!).

As a young girl, my friends and I would hang out in my backyard, playing in or near the stream, watching the tadpoles float by or the birds dart about capturing flying insects. One friend in particular that would play with me by the stream was Shelly, a friend I made when I was in fourth grade. We soon discovered – miracle of miracles – that our mothers (Ona and Wilda) had been best friends when *they* were in fourth grade, and so our friendship rekindled their friendship! My family moved the next summer and I lost track of this dear friend. Twenty-eight years later my husband and I moved back to Delaware with our children. I was walking downtown one day as a woman walked toward me and suddenly, we both stopped, recognizing

one another! It was Shelly, and our childhood friendship was instantly renewed, and we've never let it go.

Coincidentally, when my husband and I returned to Delaware, I once again found myself living near Delaware Run. It flowed at the bottom of the ravine behind our barn, bringing all sorts of wildlife to its banks; from raccoons to deer and many more that enjoyed its seasonal floods when we could hear it roaring clear up in our back yard. We moved again toward the end of our married life only to find Delaware Run running alongside our condo community. We would walk down next to it on daily tours with our little dog, Max.

Now at the end of my moves, Delaware Run is still with me at the back of Willow Brook at Delaware Run. My parents also live at Willow Brook at Delaware Run, as well as my mother's fourth grade friend, Wilda, mother to my dear friend, Shelly. So once again I find myself coming home to Delaware Run, united by family and rekindled friendships as we weave our way through the patterns of life: the perfect mosaic. 

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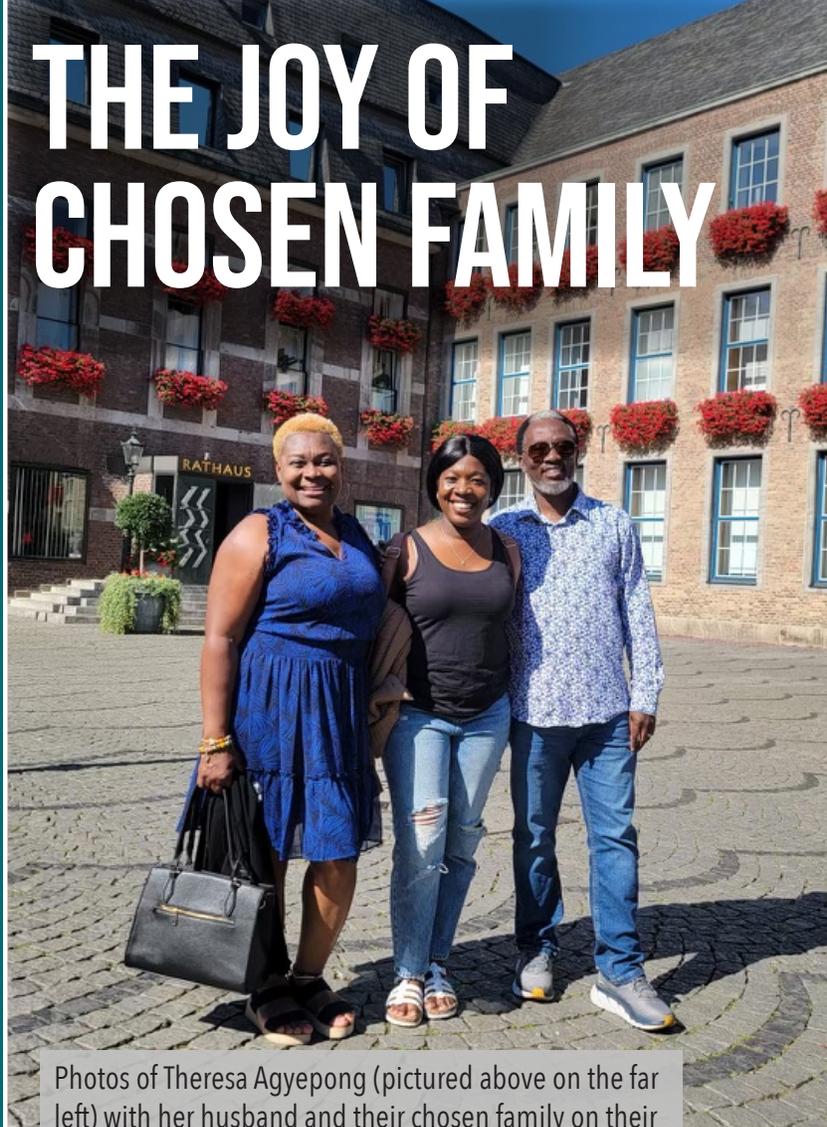
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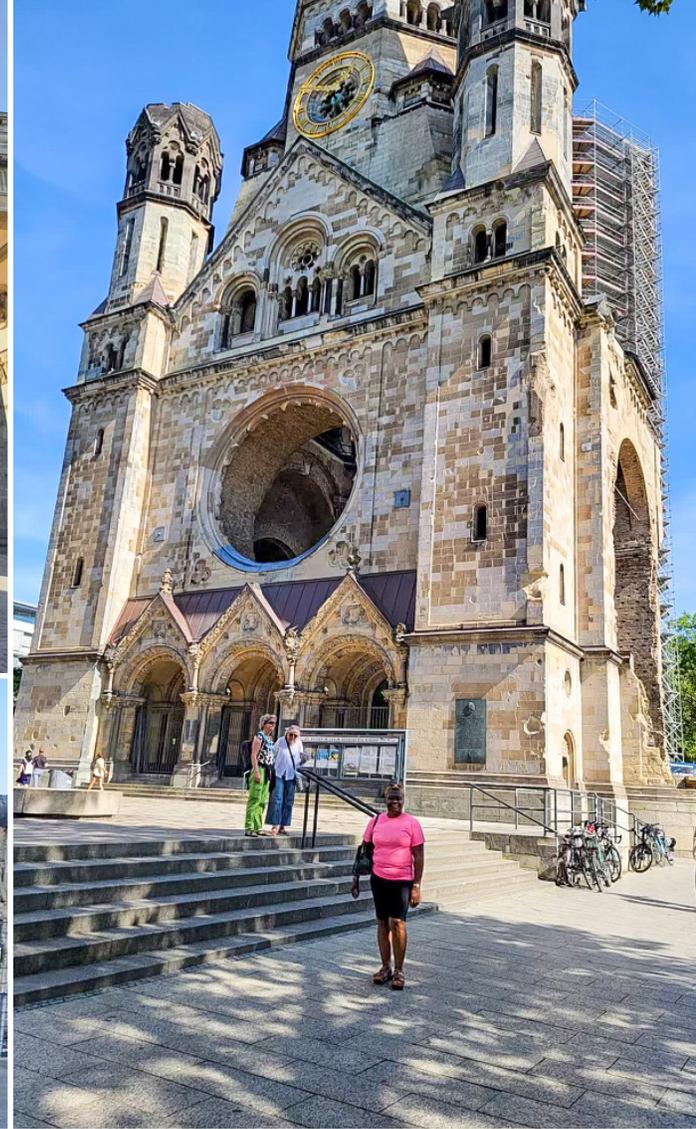
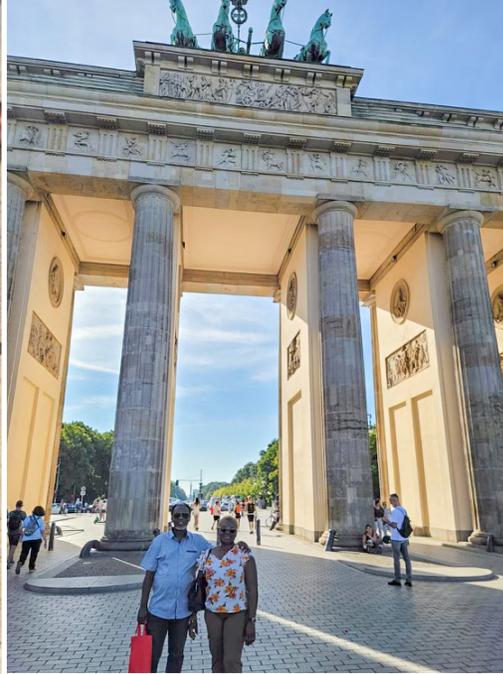
THE JOY OF CHOSEN FAMILY



Photos of Theresa Agyepong (pictured above on the far left) with her husband and their chosen family on their recent visit to Berlin. Photos submitted by Theresa.

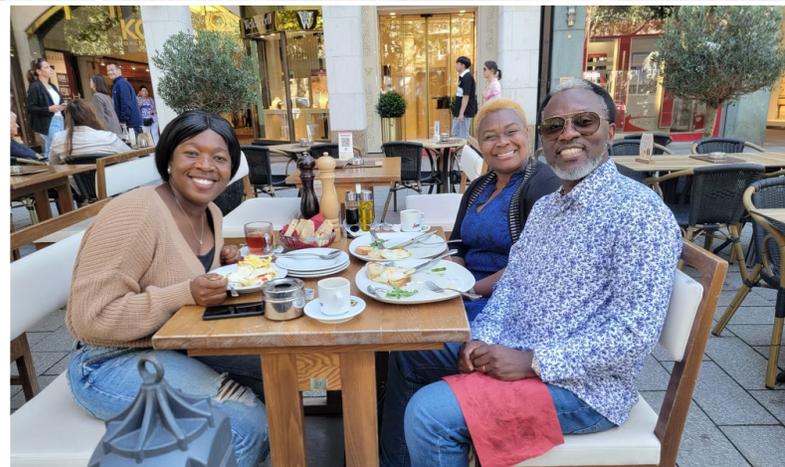
In September, Willow Brook Christian Home Director of Nursing Theresa Agyepong experienced a special homecoming. She and her husband, Akwasi, returned to Berlin, Germany, where the couple lived for 11 years from 1990-2001. Germany is very special to Theresa. Not only is it where her husband received his Pharmacy degree, but all four of her children were born there! "We formed bonds during our years in Berlin that will last a lifetime," says Theresa. "The friends that we made became family."

Both Theresa and her husband are from Ghana. Her husband's desire to study abroad led them to Berlin, where they discovered a community of other welcoming Ghanaians, many of them students like her husband. "The friends we



made in Berlin were a real comfort to us. We were making our way in a foreign country, learning the language, and acclimating to a new culture," says Theresa. The newfound friends began to worship and hold bible study together, and later formed a church.

So often we think of a homecoming as going back to a place, when frequently, it is about returning to the people who have brought us joy and seen us through both our best, and most challenging, times. Those same friends Theresa and her husband made over 20 years ago were there to welcome them back after so many years away. "It was surreal," says Theresa. "Being with our chosen family again was so sweet and beautiful. We felt so at home." ❤️



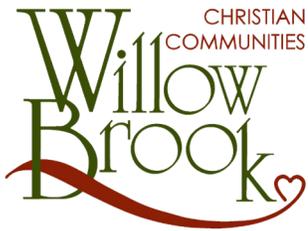
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Willow Brook Christian Village
residents at Fall Fest.
Photo by Christina Dresdow.