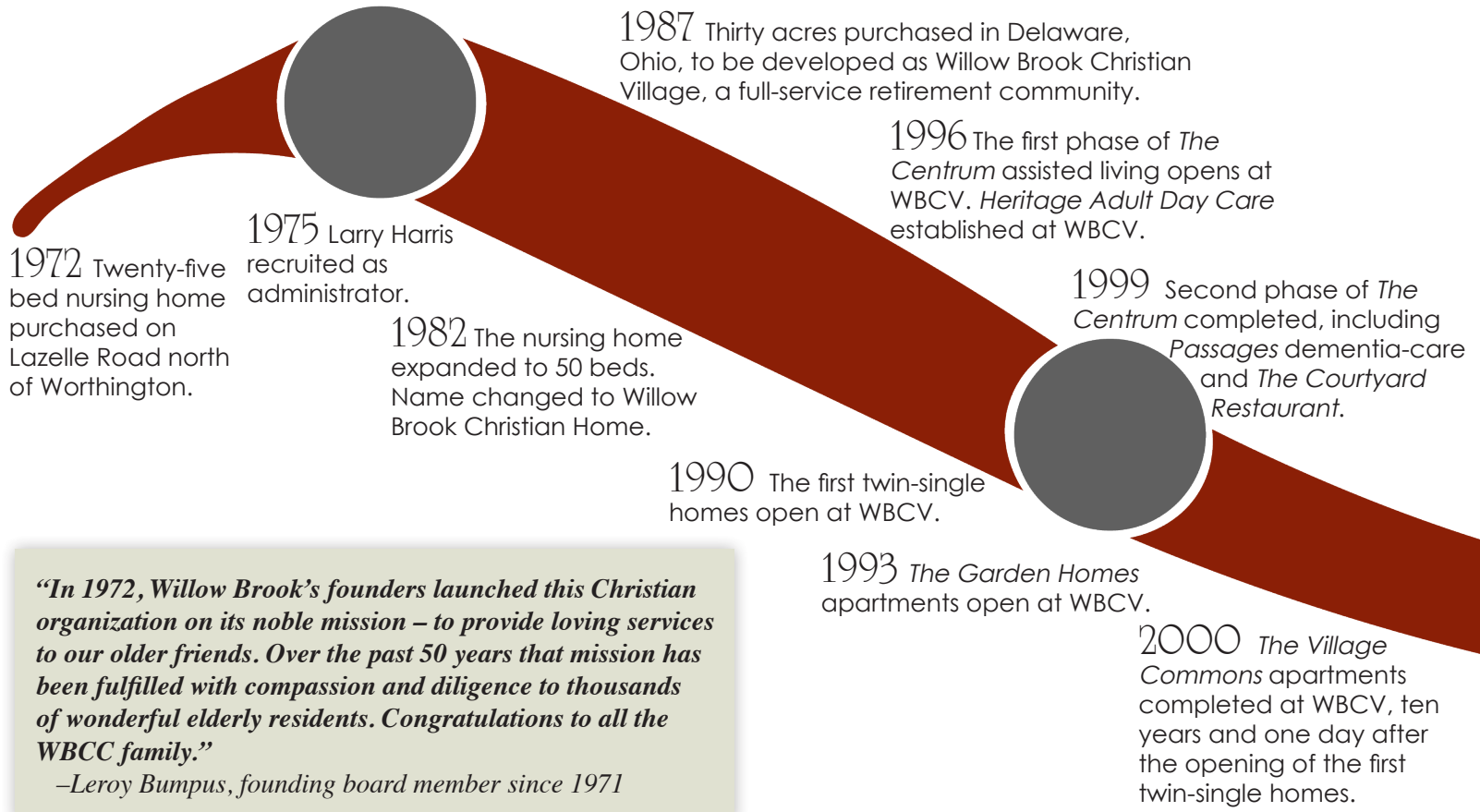


## Willow Brook Turns 50!

This is a very special year for Willow Brook Christian Communities. March 15, 2022, marks Willow Brook's 50th birthday, and we'll be celebrating all year long! What began as a 25-bed nursing home in north Columbus beset with major financial and operational challenges has transformed, with love and dedicated leadership, into a destination for senior living options in central Ohio. Willow Brook now has three campuses with a total staff of nearly 500 people. That single nursing home (what is now Willow Brook Christian Home) paved the way

for all that we offer today: independent living, assisted living, transitional living, memory care, skilled nursing care, rehabilitation, respite, and adult day programming. From our humble beginnings to now, 50 years later, we have been blessed to be a faith-based, not-for-profit organization that puts mission above all else. Willow Brook is synonymous with quality, but if you have ever been to a Willow Brook community or have been part of the Willow Brook family, we think you will agree: love makes the difference!



Willow Brook is an epic love story spanning a full half-century. Since our founding in 1972, thousands of faithful friends have each written a piece of that story – generations of residents, their extended families, board members, and of course our staff angels. Some wrote just a paragraph or two. Others, a full page. Some submitted an entire chapter. A precious few have left their mark on most every page. Together, we have written a beautiful, winding tale of triumph and heartbreak, of faith and fulfilled dreams, of human frailty, perseverance, and celebration.

Entwined around each line is a golden ribbon of love.

I have served as Willow Brook’s leader for all but the first three of those 50 years. In quiet moments, I sometimes think back to those early days and reflect on some of the old friends entrusted to us – Herbie Strigle, Bessie Beard, Mary Shelton, Abe Goffman, to name a few. I doubt that these names ring any bells to you. There is almost no one around anymore who remembers that first wave of residents. But their faces and voices, their quirks and habits come percolating up for me from a deep pool of misty memories, and I smile.

And I look back at our halting start. By all rights, Willow Brook should not be here. On March 15, 1972, a board of six brave men (yes, all men back then) took a deep collective breath and ponied up \$175,000 to

purchase an unassuming 25-bed nursing home just north of Columbus. That fragile little care center was beset with troubles from the start. When I came on board in 1975, it technically was bankrupt (although it was an undeclared bankruptcy, thank goodness) and plagued with all manner of operational demons. The Ohio Department of Health had just revoked its license due to staffing inadequacies and code violations. Staff members were downtrodden. The board was dispirited. There was talk that maybe those six had made a grievous mistake, and maybe should be making preparations to sell.

Welcome aboard, Larry.

We rolled up our sleeves and got to work. We fixed the license transgressions and set about raising money to shore up finances. Things perked up, and before you know it, roaring earth movers and churning concrete trucks showed up for our first expansion project. We glided into our next development, Willow Brook Christian Village, a grand retirement community. And another, Willow Brook at Delaware Run. Wedged in between is an almost-unbroken succession of construction projects and renovations. There has rarely been a time when something or other wasn’t in the hopper.

*A Golden*  
by Larry Harris,

*"In 50 years, Willow Brook Christian Communities has grown from a small nursing home to three grand campuses to better carry out our mission. Congratulations to the leaders and staff and residents who over the years have made WBCC so successful."*

*—Terry L. Irwin, M.D., board member since 1984*

*"Congratulations on 50 years of compassionate service to seniors! In both ups and downs, Willow Brook has shown that achieving this milestone only takes place with passion, perseverance, hard work, and sincerity. Thank you staff and board for all that you do. With God's grace, let's plan on celebrating again in another 50 years!"*

*—Peggy Tidwell, board member since 2013*

2022 Willow Brook turns 50.

2002 A portion of *The Centrum* assisted living converted to *Cherith Care Center*, a skilled nursing facility.

2005 Willow Brook Christian Home renovated and expanded to include a new floor of assisted living.

2009 The apartments, healthcare centers, and *The Water's Edge Restaurant* open at Delaware Run.

2003 Fifty acres purchased on Delaware's west side for the construction of Willow Brook at Delaware Run.

2006 The twin-single homes open at Delaware Run.

2018 Final apartment wing opens at Delaware Run.

That initial \$175,000 outlay has swelled to \$100 million. Those 25 residents now number 685. That little starter nursing home was all of 6,500 square feet. Today we have 684,000 underroof. That's nearly 16 acres all framed up, bricked, and shingled.

Strangers tell me that Willow Brook has a golden

## Ribbon of Love

CEO

reputation out there. "You guys are the best," people

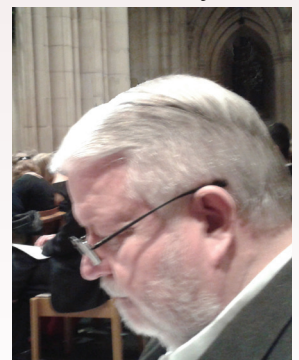
say. Sound counsel cautions against believing your accolades, but so many bouquets have been offered that I am starting to accept a few.

No telling of the Willow Brook story would be complete without introducing you to two men who were vital in the planting and watering of this ministry: Leslie Ward and Frank Chappell. Willow Brook wouldn't be here without their love and wise guidance in our early years. Leslie was our in-house prophet. In the 1960s, he dreamed of a care center for older adults, related to the Churches of Christ. He started talking it up, recruited that first board of six, and pushed toward opening day in 1972. He died in 1980, never having witnessed even our first expansion. I like to think he would be pleased to see all the good that has come from his dream.

Frank Chappell was a founding board member recruited by Leslie who served 45 years until his death in 2018. He was the elected president for 13 of those years. The first three years when that little nursing home was drifting as a ship without a rudder in a stormy sea, he stepped up and took the helm. His evenings and weekends were given over to his 25-bed passion, in addition to his fulltime job as a chemist. Willow Brook would have collapsed without his selfless support. And mind you, he was never paid a nickel. His was a labor of love. Frank recruited me in 1975 and became my life-long mentor and guide. He died four years ago, and my heart still aches.

This past year, as we approached our half-century mark, we were in hopes of throwing ourselves a grand birthday bash. Turns out Covid said no, so we will just have to wait on that party. But I call on everyone associated with the Willow Brook ministry to silently reflect on the past 50 years, consider the good that is done every day within our walls, and then offer up a quiet prayer of thanksgiving.

Larry Harris, CEO  
[lharris@willow-brook.org](mailto:lharris@willow-brook.org)



[willow-brook.org](http://willow-brook.org) 3

**George & Lynn Ankney**  
 Dianne L. Almendinger  
 Glenn & Sara Beaber  
 Lois Dale  
 John & Sue Dickman  
 Robert & Mary Holm  
 Thomas & LaVonne Moore  
 Robert & Nancy Rietz

**Richard C. Atkinson**  
 Carol A. Roden

**Clifton Bailey**  
 Corinne D. Esau  
 Peter & Mary Grace  
 Helen J. Reppart  
 Lucretia M. Wellman

**Marion & Anita Blaszkowiak**  
 Irene C. Blaszkowiak

**Gretna Bohl**  
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**Verila "Virgie" Bussman**  
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 Jodi Giesler  
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**Carol Hallenbeck**  
 Dianne L. Almendinger  
 Robert & Mary Holm  
 William & Judith McCartney  
 Thomas & LaVonne Moore

# *Tribute Gifts*

## Memorial Contributions

November 22, 2021 – February 24, 2022

**Audrey & Alberta Harris**  
 Larry & Janet Harris

**John T. Hayes**  
 Karen S. Hayes  
 Ronald & Donna Moore

**Mary Jo Humes**  
 Corinne D. Esau

**James E. Jackson**  
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**Arden LeBlanc**  
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 Helen J. Reppart

**Robert & Elsa McLoughlin**  
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**David L. & Rosalie M. Miller**  
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**Gene & Emma "Maude" Prince**  
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 Lucretia M. Wellman  
 Willow Brook Christian Village  
 Residents Advisory Council  
 Evelyn Winter  
 Jeff & Susan Wolf

**Corrine Snyder-Poulson**  
 Thomas & Sara Poulson

**Sam & Bessie Taylor**  
 Lawrence & Alice Smith

**Max Wildermuth**  
 Jayne W. MacKay

**Nicki V. Zanetos**  
 Lisa Mack

# *Tribute Gifts*

## To honor the living

**Larry & Janet Harris**  
 Robert & Linda Gaffey  
**Carol Roden**  
 Gerre & Brooke Ann Martin  
**Dana Slingluff**  
 Lois Dale

# A Life that Rings True

Columbus native Diann Ring has called Willow Brook Christian Home “home” for about a year. She can often be found playing on both of the Home’s pianos before and after meals, to the delight of residents and staff. Diann learned to play the piano by ear, just like her father. She has a vast repertoire of songs and hymns that she knows by heart. In fact, she might be playing an old Frank Sinatra tune right now, no sheet music needed.

But painting and sculpture have always been what she enjoys most. She took classes at Columbus College of Art and Design to hone her craft, but her talent for all things art has always been innate. When she was not working her day job in human resources, Diann was teaching private art classes in her home, everything from oil paint techniques to working with clay to cake decoration.

Diann and her husband Charles were married for 30 years; and Diann will tell you that despite the Charles & Di jokes, Charles really was her prince charming, and they lived happily ever after until Charles and her two dogs passed in the span of six months. Diann fell into a depression. “I lost the will to live,” she said, “I just didn’t care.”

After struggling in the aftermath of Charles’ death and the loss of her precious dogs, a brief hospitalization led to her rehab stay at the Home, where, coincidentally, Charles had lived in his last

***“You take care of yourself,  
and you take care of others.”***



*The vibrant colored fish seem to swim to life in one of Diann Ring’s beautiful paintings.*

days. While she was in rehab, Diann’s sister noticed how much better Diann was doing. Always one who loved to socialize, Diann was talking to people, playing the piano after dinner, and eating well. (Says Diann, “You’ll never go hungry here!”) Diann seemed more and more like her old self – in fact, she was thriving.

The decision was made to make a permanent move to the Home last April. “You know how to get through hard times?” she asks, “You share your life with others.”

In her one-bedroom apartment, she is surrounded by her work: paintings, sculptures, and her other original art pieces that catch the eye and bring Diann comfort. Her sister, Lisa, calls every morning and they discuss the day ahead. Diann usually spends at least part of each day coloring in her adult coloring

books or organizing her many albums of photos and art. She can be a night owl, too, and the night shift staff know her well. In fact, Diann cites “freedom to move around” as one of the best things about living at Willow Brook Christian Home.

In her most reflective moments, Diann ponders her life now. She is happy. She meets new residents every day and takes a special interest in the ones who are struggling or depressed, like she was when she came to the Home over a year ago. “I’ll often ask myself,” says Diann, “where did the time go? What can I do to make it last longer?” She answers her own question: “You take care of yourself, and you take care of others.”



*Diann Ring, resident at Willow Brook Christian Home, loves to play the piano, create art, and bring joy and friendship to those around her. Her love of the arts shines through her bright smile.*

# Welcome, Chaplain Adam

Willow Brook extends a warm welcome to our new chaplain, Adam Metz. Adam graduated from Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, with a degree in youth ministry, and remained there to earn his Master of Divinity in 2003. He completed his Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, in 2015. Adam and his wife Mary Beth have three children, Clark (17), Clementine (14), and Cecilia (13).

Adam has served as minister of the Alum Creek Church of Christ in Lewis Center, Ohio, since 2003. In 2018, he published a book, *Elite? A Christian Manifesto on Youth Sports in the United States*, which makes sense because Adam has served as a licensed high school football official for 18 seasons! His personal interests include reading anything

*"I believe that everything is spiritual, and I have a passion for making the Bible relevant and exciting..."*

*Chaplain Adam Metz shares a spiritual message at Willow Brook at Delaware Run.*

written by Stephen King, and Cleveland sports.

Says Adam, "I believe that everything is spiritual, and I have a passion for making the Bible relevant and exciting. I am truly excited about joining the staff at Willow Brook and helping our residents flourish in their faith and enjoy their lives together."

## Congratulations, John!



*John Regalsky meets with independent residents, Ona and Randy Randolph, at Willow Brook at Delaware Run.*



On January 1, Delaware Run independent living director, John Regalsky, was promoted to the newly-created position of executive director of Willow Brook at Delaware Run. He oversees the daily operations of Delaware Run, a function that had been a part of CEO Larry Harris's job description for the past 13 years. Harris says, "I am so proud of John. He has proven to be a diligent, loving servant of all, and an invaluable support to me. Willow Brook is in his DNA. Frankly, he has already been doing some of the duties that will come with the new position. My biggest challenge now is to get out of his way and let him lead."

## WILLOW BROOK CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

*not-for-profit • Churches of Christ*  
[willow-brook.org](http://willow-brook.org)

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Christina Dresdow, Designer

Independent Living • Skilled Rehab  
Transitional Living • Respite  
Assisted Living • Memory Care  
Long-Term Care • Adult Day Program



# Rising to New Heights

Arlene Palenshus and George Kannapel, both third floor independent residents at Willow Brook Christian Village, live right at the end of what used to be a dead-end hallway. Arlene shared the story of how she once had to be rushed to the ER in a squad. The EMT told her that if she had been having a more serious medical emergency she could have died since the closest elevator at the time was not near enough for quick access. So, when she returned home to the Village, she pushed hard for this elevator to be installed, not only for her own safety, but for the safety of her friends and neighbors as well.

George Kannapel said he, too, lobbied for the elevator to be installed because there was no easy way, without taking the stairs, for residents to get down to their basement storage units. "Plus," he said, "this elevator will be hooked up to the back-up generator so that in the event of a power outage, we [residents from the third floor] will have a way to get downstairs without having to take the stairs (or be carried down)."



Arlene and George try out the new elevator at Willow Brook Christian Village.

***The new elevator is so convenient  
– residents just love it!***



Darshawn Eiland  
The Home



Scott Folchert  
The Village



Kathleen Barnhart  
Delaware Run

## Second Mile Award Winners

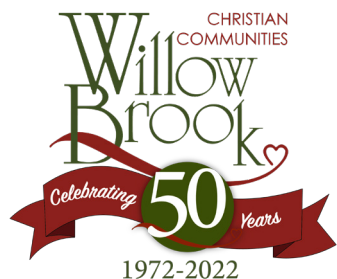
Each year around Christmas, at all three Willow Brook campuses, staff and residents nominate staff members for *The Second Mile Award* - an award which recognizes the staff member's dedication and hard work and their willingness to "go the extra mile". Congratulations to our 2021 recipients; we are so thankful for all you do for Willow Brook!

# Reflections

Willow Brook Christian Communities  
100 Delaware Crossing West  
Delaware, Ohio 43015

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*Photo Credit: Joyce Stambaugh, Willow Brook Christian Village resident.  
Joyce delights in photographing the wonderful wildlife outside her home.*