



# THE COVENANT

NEWS AND EVENTS FROM COVENANT WOODS, A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CONTINUING CARE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

## Trailblazer Gene White knows all about covering miles

Gene White has accomplished some remarkable things in his life. He modestly says it's all been a series of happy accidents, and "I've never planned a day in my life." But one soon realizes that his remarkable energy and determination have allowed him to make the best of those "accidents."

What else could lead to a man who was then 60 years old to compete in the Hawaii Ironman competition? That's the premier event of the endurance sport, consisting of a 2½-mile ocean swim, a 112-mile bike ride and a full 26.1-mile marathon.

Gene has been running since his late 40's, and at age 75, he was ranked #1 in the country in his age group for duathlons and #2 for triathlons. Yet he insists that even the athletic accomplishments were an accident. "When I went into military service, I was in an outfit that had to run everywhere you went, so I discovered that I had a little endurance," says Gene. In middle age, after gaining some weight, he decided to take it up again. "I didn't make it around the block," he says with a laugh, but he happened to read about the Richmond Marathon in the newspaper and decided to train for it. That led to 24 more marathons.

Now that he's 78, he devotes himself mostly to triathlons. "I began to find that marathons beat my legs up so badly that it took a long time to recover," he says. The more reasonable distance of an Olympic triathlon – a mile swim, a 24-mile bike ride and a 6-mile run – suits him better these days.

Gene calls his career another accident. As a youth, he had never intended to go to college. But his best friend's father was in the pharmacy business, and according to Gene, "He knew the only way he would get his son into college was to send both of us. I had

no idea what pharmacy school was about, but I was smart enough at that point to know that I didn't have much going for me." Gene repaid the favor after he graduated, but says, "I would have been pumping gas if it hadn't been for that gentleman."

After his stint in the Army, he found

himself drawn into law, got a degree from the University of Richmond, and worked for a time as an attorney for the American Pharmaceutical

Association. Then came another "accident." He says, "Out of a clear blue sky, the dean of the School of Pharmacy at MCV called me in and asked me if I'd like to join the faculty. I taught for 39 years, and thoroughly enjoyed every day I went to work."

Gene also met his wife, Nancy, by accident. He loved riding horses as a young man, and met her doing the same. That has led to a marriage of almost 55 years.

Now that he's retired, Gene devotes his time to training, singing with "The Virginians," a barbershop chorus ... and another happy accident. The same great friend he went to pharmacy school with many years ago, looked after the carriages at Maymont, and told Gene that they needed someone to tend to the estate's horses on Fridays. Gene says, "I never thought I would have a chance to work with horses again. That's been like a little kid going back to what he used to do and just having a ball."



Gene White, running his early morning miles.



Gene White, training on his bike.

## Holmes Community Service Fund

When Beth Richardson, Director of Development and Marketing, announced the creation of the Raymond Holmes Community Service Fund at last year's Donor Reception, the new benevolent fund was set to be focused on the community at large. The Community Involvement group, comprised of Covenant Woods residents, staff and board members, has been working since then to set specific uses for the monies in the Fund.

Beth recently said, "We wanted to broaden the reach of our dollars to more people. We researched the needs of Hanover County seniors and came up with three core objectives." Elizabeth Pace, Community Relations, invited representatives from organizations serving seniors in the area to the committee's meetings. Covenant Woods resident, Harriet Brockenbrough, who sits on the committee, said, "Elizabeth was our chairwoman, and she did an excellent job. It was not an easy decision."

After many presentations from worthy organizations, the committee ultimately made their choices. Board member Susan Drumright said, "We felt there was a tremendous need in the Hanover area for transportation ... both in the community and at Covenant Woods." And Harriet Brockenbrough added, "We decided that it would be more effective to give a really meaningful gift to one group, to really make a difference." In their July 14 meeting, the committee determined to initially distribute \$10,000 flagged by the board, with the balance remaining in the Fund for growth.

Three areas that will have the greatest impact on the community at large are slated to receive support from the inaugural contribution:

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### Look Inside...

- Resident's Corner
- Staff Profile: Debbie Beach, CNA
- A Look Back in Time...
- A Roundtable Review of the Last 10 Years at Covenant Woods
- Faces of Covenant Woods
- Iris Apartment Feature

Masthead photo of Peaks of Otter in Fall by Linda Neely Andrus



Continued on Page 4

## Resident's Corner:

Flower embroidery  
made by Sidney.



Sidney Black,  
holding one of  
the dresses that  
she created.

### Sidney Black, “the needlepoint lady,” keeps her hands busy.

Times were hard when Sidney Black was growing up on a farm in Currituck County in the Outer Banks. She lived in a house built by her grandfather from the trees he'd felled while clearing the land for farming. Both her mother and grandmother did a lot of sewing, mending and quilting, and she was very young when she got her own start in needlecraft.

“I was five years old, and I asked my grandmother to teach me how to knit. She taught me how to do it with grocery string,” said Sidney. That was just the beginning of a long history of exploring and mastering knitting, needlepoint, crocheting, sewing and spinning. Now the walls, furnishings and dresser drawers of her Covenant Woods apartment hold the results of what would become a lifelong passion.

She can't recall exactly when she started with needlepoint. She said, “A long time ago, it was fashionable to do the background of dining room chairs.” But she found that boring, until



One of Sidney's needlepoint kneeling pads.

needlepoint began to change. “Later, you got a canvas and you did the design, as well as the background, and I found that challenging. If there's a mountain to climb, I want to climb it,” she said.

As her skills grew, she found an intersection for her handiwork and her devotion to

her church. She and her husband, Joe, had become members of Reveille United Methodist Church when they moved to Richmond in 1963, and she began lending a hand with needlepoint projects during the 1980's. She said, “Our minister at the time talked some of the women into doing the kneelers, because that was what all the churches were doing then. They sent out a call for needlepoint people, and I went and I did my little test piece.” The beautifully-crafted kneeling pads they created are still in use at Reveille ... and that was just the beginning.

Sidney and Joe did a lot of traveling in Europe during the '80's, and she was particularly interested in gardens and churches, “Because that's where the gorgeous stuff is. We visited a lot of the cathedrals, and almost all of them had nice needlepoint, from the cushions on the pews to everything.” After one of their trips, she broached the idea to the Bishop in Residence at Reveille, who playfully suggested, “If you want something done, you need to do it yourself,” said Sidney.

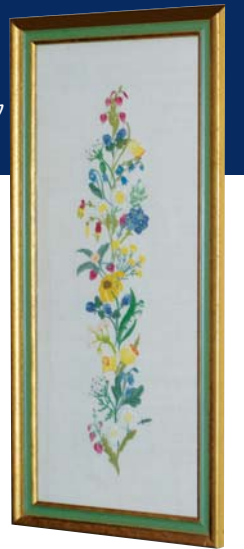
“We decided that we would start with stoles for the ministers. We found an artist that could draw them, and we found some money, and we found people who could work on them, and we did a set of four in the different colors for the different liturgical seasons,” said Sidney. That led to additional sets of stoles. And then pieces for the altar and pulpit. Over the decades of these combined projects, at the customary 14 stitches per inch, Sidney and the other volunteers have amassed some significant work. “I figure we've probably done 5 or 6 million stitches, give or take,” she said with a chuckle.

The group completed two remarkable examples of needlepoint art just last fall. On either

side of Reveille's altar sit two Bishop's Chairs. The backs and seats of the chairs have been decorated with original needlepoint that is not only beautiful, but deeply symbolic, too. Sidney explained, “Reveille is two congregations that came together.” So the two crosses on the backs are different. “Reveille had a fire in the early '60's that blew up the sanctuary,” she said. So the designs also show stylized fire and flames, as well as brightly-colored shapes that symbolize the rose window that exploded above the altar.

Many of Sidney's other projects have more homey and practical origins. Her living room contains a pretty love seat with needlepoint seat, back and contrasting throw pillow. There's also a Civil War era folding camp chair, the seat for which was one of her first projects. And with a little prompting, she can show you multiple shawls, stoles, sweaters, rugs and blankets that are as useful as they are lovely. Joe Black teased her by saying, “She's got so many things, I have to remind her. She's got drawers full of them!”

Sidney and Joe moved into Covenant Woods four years ago, and they love it. “It's right where we ought to be right now,” she said. Joe loves getting out to swing a golf club and also plays the fiddle. In addition, they keep a garden in the community plot. Sidney said, “Believe it or not, I have been digging in the earth since I was about three years old. I used to go with daddy to the fields, following him as he plowed, and took a nap at the end of a row when I got sleepy.” And at Christmas time, they enjoy baking 60 or 70 dozen cookies for their extended family. If you're looking for idle hands, the Black's home is not the place to look.



## Staff Profile: Debbie Beach, Covenant Woods CNA

Written by Jennifer Rudolph, Community Relations Intern

Although Covenant Woods has continued to grow and develop from its modest beginnings as The Richmond Home for Ladies into the current ongoing expansion, a few important things have remained the same. One staff member has provided a bridge from the Home to the present day. Debbie Beach, a Covenant Woods CNA, joined The Richmond Home for Ladies staff almost thirty years ago, quite literally starting out by following in the footsteps of her mother.

Debbie Beach and her mother found out about the CNA job openings at the Home through one of Debbie's friends in 1975. This opportunity developed into a long term relationship, during which Debbie began to grow

fond of the residents and was able to work alongside her mother for 20 years.

When asked what she liked the most about the Richmond Home for Ladies, Debbie said, “the residents and being able to work directly with them.” Even after all these years, Debbie loves her job at Covenant Woods for the very same reasons that got her started. And while her commitments remain the same, some aspects of her work environment have slightly changed. When comparing the feel of The Richmond Home for Ladies with Covenant Woods today, Debbie noted that “because of the size, The Richmond Home for Ladies was a bit homier, and everybody knew everybody.” However, she admits that a touch of this

“homey” feel still remains in the area in which she works.

While the environment around her has gradually changed, Debbie has been a constant, providing a consistent smile over the years that has allowed for a piece of The Richmond Home for Ladies to remain very much alive today. It is committed employees like Debbie that provide the comfortable environment for residents and make up the heart and soul of Covenant Woods. Her dedication is still greatly appreciated today.



Debbie Beach,  
Covenant Woods CNA.

# A Look Back in Time...

Written by Jennifer Rudolph, Community Relations Intern

While Covenant Woods has only been in Hanover County for a decade, if you take a walk through the halls you will find pieces that are decades and even a century older than the building where they are housed. These items testify to the history of Covenant Woods and tell the story of its founding. Covenant Woods began in 1883 as the Richmond Home for Ladies and many who have lived in and worked for the organization have donated these historical treasures. The buffet table outside of the Multi-Purpose room, the paintings that hang in the Assisted Living wing, the silver pieces in the display cases and other items have helped Covenant Woods to preserve a record of its history and keep a touch of the Richmond Home for Ladies alive.

Take a walk into the Multi-Purpose room and you will find one such treasure. The long table has an engraved plaque that reads: "In memory of Georgeanna Callis West, Served as member of the Board 1883-1924." This



One of the historical treasures donated to Covenant Woods.

piece was given by Miss Georgia West and her sister to honor the memory of their mother, who helped found The Richmond Home for Ladies. A note discovered in the Covenant Woods archives from Miss Georgia West, who passed away in November of 1953, said the following:

"It is really true that I have known this Home since it was first organized in 1883, as the Old Ladies Home. Only two and a half blocks from my birthplace, our home. It was a very home-like place- using the open fireplace, and many times, I went there, and sat by the fire, not to spin but to roast peanuts and apples. I loved the dear ones there and they called me "Little Georgia." Those were truly happy days. You may know that the long table in the assembly room was given by my sister and myself in memory of our mother. It was my personal pleasure to give the frame for the picture of Dr. Hoge. I am glad it is now in its proper place again."

Like Miss West, others have donated possessions to stay with their new "family" and "home" that they have found at the Home and Covenant Woods. Every piece has a tale and each example of generosity contributes to the story of the organization's history.

In 1938, Mrs. Herbert Johnson presented the Home with a portrait of her husband and the entire Board of Directors was asked to be present at the unveiling of the portrait. Mr. Herbert Johnson's portrait continues to hang in the hallway, along with the portrait



Sketches of Covenant Woods 1914 -2001

of Dr. Hoge mentioned in Miss Georgia West's note above.

In 1958, the Tuckahoe Women's club donated a different buffet table and a server with a silver punch bowl and ladle, now located in front of the Multi-Purpose room for all who pass by to see and enjoy.

In 1976, Mrs. W. Bright Anderson donated the pair of intricate candelabras located in the display case nearby, while in 1978, Mrs. Robert B. Williams, also known as Minnie Lee, donated the large and beautiful mirror which now hangs in the beauty shop in the Assisted Living wing.

These items have been used and cherished since the day they were received and they act as a reminder of Covenant Woods' roots. The pieces add to the character of Covenant Woods through a "historical meets new" perspective. Even though some donations have not been recorded or the records have been lost over time, these invaluable pieces continue to be appreciated as a reminder of the traditions and values upon which this home was founded. Today, Covenant Woods continues to receive generous donations of furniture and decorative items, which will be enjoyed now and by future generations.

## A Roundtable Review of the Last 10 Years at Covenant Woods

Written by Jennifer Rudolph, Community Relations Intern

To commemorate and review the years since the Richmond Home for Ladies relocated and opened as Covenant Woods in 2001, a group of residents held a roundtable discussion in July 2011. As participants shared their experiences, they smiled as they remembered the joy of meeting new friends and enjoying new activities, and nodded in agreement as they recalled the challenges that came from adjusting to a new environment. Over the course of the discussion, it became clear that Covenant Woods is not just another not-for-profit organization, but rather a home, filled with history and memories. While The Richmond Home for Ladies may have a new facade as Covenant Woods, a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) tucked away on 75 beautiful acres in Mechanicsville, some things have never changed. Over the years, residents have made the choice to move for similar reasons, and faced similar apprehensions in the process. But, while joining the Covenant Woods community is, without a doubt, a major life decision, the atmosphere of the room was

lighthearted and jovial, filled with very positive remarks, delivered with kindness and laughter. These memories are all a part of what makes this CCRC a real community of neighbors.

Newcomers learned about Covenant Woods through many different sources of information, from their own rewarding volunteer experiences to references from neighbors, but people were drawn to Covenant Woods for many of the same reasons. During the discussion, a current resident, Audrey Duval, reminded attendees that the establishment was "named Covenant Woods because of the original covenant that agreed to take care of people living there for their entire lives, and that was something that really impressed me." Mrs. Duval was not the only one attracted by the foundational values that have guided the organization for nearly 130 years. Others echoed similar sentiments during the discussion. Other residents were attracted to the planned activities, the dining services, therapy options, and the fact that they would no longer need to worry about maintaining their homes, cutting the grass,

shoveling the snow or other time and energy consuming tasks. During the discussion, many people also addressed how they made their choice to move for the well-being of their children; they did not want their children to feel "burdened" in caring for them as they aged.

Numerous people moved to the community expecting no more than to have a safe and well-kept place to live after they retired, but a lot of residents have found so much more. Despite having moved from different places and having diverse experiences in life, they have found common values, desires and goals with others, along with new experiences, friends, interests,

Continued on Page 4



The nature trail at Covenant Woods with a cottage in the distance.

## Review of Last 10 Years

*Continued from Page 3*

hobbies and a sense of “family” within the community. Even in times of distress, the residents are devoted to the home and community that they have helped to build. According to board member and future resident, Don Tindall, “the February board meeting held after the fire [in 2006, before anyone had moved in] was our finest hour...I walked away extremely proud of the decisions the board made in response to that situation.” The reason this community has continued to successfully grow is because of the strength of the people that live here, who constantly strive to make Covenant Woods the best place to live and are proud to call this place their home.

The Covenant Woods community is pleased

to offer a wide array of activities and experiences to its residents. Resident Virginia Bloch mentioned enjoying seeing the blue heron (that she says is actually white) on her walks through the nature trail, while resident Bev Lordi admitted, “I had no idea how busy I would be after moving to a retirement community!”

*The last ten years have been defined by the memories and initiatives of the residents that make Covenant Woods a great place to call “home.”*

Many of the residents are surprised to find themselves becoming more active after moving in. Instead of keeping busy with housekeeping and home maintenance though, they enjoy volunteer projects,

choirs, Wii games and other enjoyable activities. While life has changed a great deal for everyone, and downsizing and saying goodbye to neighbors has been difficult, most would agree that the changes have been for the better. The last ten years have been defined by the memories and initiatives of the residents that make Covenant Woods a great place to call “home.”

## Holmes Fund

*Continued from Page 1*

- ❖ RideConnections, a subsidiary of Senior Connections, which supports the transportation needs of Richmond area seniors, will receive \$8,000 in three distributions.
- ❖ The remaining \$2,000 will be split between scholarships for the caregiver training program of the Alzheimer’s Association, and scholarships for seniors to community service programs such as the Open University courses offered by The Shepherd Center at Covenant Woods.

About the Fund, Beth said, “It’s an important initiative for Covenant Woods, and will likely turn into a major initiative.” Harriet agreed, saying “I would hope that in the future there will be even more money for this cause.”

To learn more about the Holmes Fund, its work, and opportunities to support the fund, get in touch with Christie Jones, Covenant Woods’ Development Officer, at (804) 569-4282.



Clambake



Clambake



Enjoying the talent show.



A trip to Colonial Downs.



Libby Taylor teaching her students how to paint.



Resident artists show off their creations.



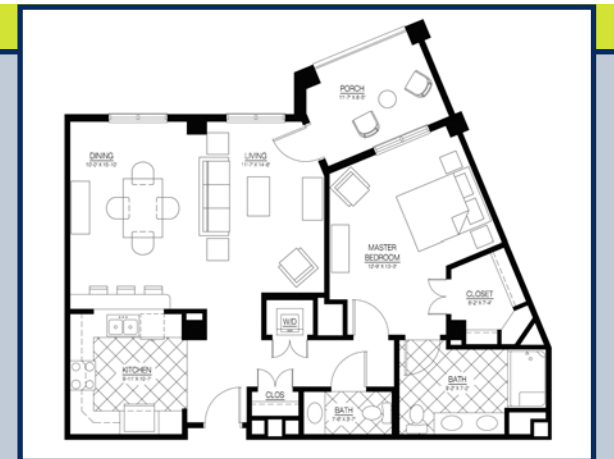
Sarah & Mack Perkins



Residents enjoying a dinner cruise on the Potomac River.



Residents taking in the waterfront view of the Potomac River.



Our Iris apartment features 1,028 spacious square feet, including a master suite comprised of one bedroom, a large walk-in closet with shelves and a bathroom with a double vanity sink, a full kitchen with plenty of countertop and cabinet space, a balcony, and an additional half bathroom. 17 Iris apartments are planned for The Lodge and 6 are already reserved.

Contact one of our lifestyle counselors, Erin, Anthony or Colin, for more information and to lock-in our current starting entrance fee of \$247,232 today!



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