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On the Cover

Trish Martindell (center) congratulates Mary Pat Burke and Portia Ventus, ERH employees and recipients of the first-ever Martindell Award. Photo by Gary Kessler

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Linkage is a resource to address issues and interests of older adults, providing a link between ERH's programs and the community. For 60 years, Episcopal Retirement Homes has been a not-for-profit, financially sound organization dedicated to improving the lives of older adults from all faiths through innovative, quality services based upon their values and delivered by highly experienced, deeply committed professionals.



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ERH Promotes Yellow Dot Program

Ohio State Legislature Considers Statewide Push By Rick Bird

hanks to ERH efforts, the Yellow Dot program continues to gain steam as the Ohio legislature considers whether to officially implement it statewide.

The Yellow Dot concept is simple and sensible: A yellow dot decal in the left corner of a car's rear window alerts first responders that there is vital medical information in the glove box concerning the driver.

ERH staff members have been at the forefront of distributing more than 5,000 Yellow Dot packets in central and southwest Ohio for almost two years. The program, implemented statewide in Connecticut, Alabama and New York, is gaining momentum in many U.S. communities.

Initially, ERH officials got behind the program when Deupree House resident JoAnn Plotkin read news stories about how Yel-

low Dot worked in other states and approached staffers about ERH mounting an organized effort. Plotkin, who requires oxygen, was worried about traveling with a tank in her car in the event she might be involved in an accident.

The Yellow Dot decal alerts emergency crews to check the information in the glove box, which can detail a number of critical issues the driver may have, such as diabetes, seizure disorders, allergies, heart issues or special medication.

Since then, the campaign has been managed by the Parish Health Ministry (PHM) program of ERH, which helps churches renew their role in health and wellness through advocacy, education and activities.

PHM has provided Yellow Dot packets to senior citizen groups and local churches. The

Your Community 💠

packets, designed by ERH staff, contain the decals and medical forms

"The info comes in a zip lock plastic bag with a bright yellow form," says Rose Lindeman, PHM Coordinator. "We've been doing our best to get it out there, but once the state is behind us that will help immensely." She also notes that PHM has been distributing packets throughout central and southwest Ohio churches of all denominations, at services and festivals. "The police and firemen we talk to are very supportive," Lindeman says. "First responders know the value of having this type of information."

Lindeman notes that it would be a huge boost for the program if the state of Ohio makes the Yellow Dot program official. Legislation was introduced in the last Ohio General Assembly, but not acted on—that would require the Department of Transportation to implement Yellow Dot statewide and send the information packets free of charge to those who sign up.

Backers are more optimistic the plan could pass this fall. It was reintroduced in September by Connie Pillich, state representative from the 28th district. A spokeswoman for Pillich said hearings are planned this fall. The plan has bipartisan support.

For more information about how to implement the Yellow Dot program at your church or organization, contact Rose Lindeman at (513) 272-5555 ext. 4289 or rlindeman@erhinc.com.



Meet the Board

he Episcopal Retirement Homes (ERH) Board of Directors makes it a priority to serve the ERH mission: enriching the lives of older adults in a personcentered, innovative and spiritually based way.

"I am a true believer of ERH's mission," says Robin Smith, Chair of the Board and former Procter & Gamble IT professional. "I am giving my time and talents to spread that mission to as many older adults in our communities as possible."

In each issue of Linkage, you'll meet the dynamic and passionate volunteer board members who help drive ERH.

By Whitney Harrod Morris // Photographs by Gary Kessler



Gates Smith

Member of the Board; serves on Affordable Living Committee and Development Committee

Former occupation: Executive VP of agency operations at Ohio National Financial Services

Area of expertise: Marketing

Something people might not know about you: I was Board chair for seven years at Madisonville's St. Paul Village, which selected ERH to manage the community. The two organizations partnered together to completely renovate the Village. I have also served as a board member of Ohio National Life Insurance Co.

How long have you been on the Board? Four years Why do you volunteer on the Board? I'm privileged to work alongside a group of competent and passionate Board members and staff. ERH has grown dramatically in just the few years I have been on the Board.

Most rewarding part? The completion of the St. Paul Village upgrade. The partnership with ERH enabled a transformation that only ERH could have accomplished. The result was the realization of our many prayers for the residents.

What do you do in your free time? I golf and bike the Little Miami Scenic Trail.



Anne Warrington Wilson

Member of the Board

Occupation: Episcopal Priest-in-Charge at St. Mary Magdalene in Maineville, Ohio

Areas of expertise: I pay attention to people's needs and wants. I think I see the simple, direct questions that need to be asked about a new program or policy.

Something people might not know about you: I garden for several churches. I also raise vegetables to give to the local food pantry.

How long have you been on the Board? About six years

Why do you volunteer on the Board? People should be well taken care of during their older years. I am most concerned about alleviating social isolation when it becomes difficult for people to be part of their communities. Life in ERH communities helps improve these problems. I wish we could offer this life to all seniors.

Most rewarding part? Getting to know seniors who still live a full, stimulating life, even if driving, cooking and housework have become difficult.

What do you do in your free time? I re-read novels and walk with my children and dogs.



Tate Greenwald

Vice Chairman of Personnel; serves on Compliance Committee and Foundation Board

Former occupation: Human resources executive at Sharonville based Xtec Inc. and most recently The National Underwriter Co. in Erlanger, Ky.

Areas of expertise: Employee benefit plans, pension plans, employment and compensation

Something people might not know about you: I have sung for more than 50 years in several Episcopal church choirs. My wife and I volunteer with ERH's Meals on Wheels program, which is a heartwarming experience.

How long have you been with ERH? Seven years Why do you volunteer on the Board? ERH is a well-run, mission-driven organization. Since joining the Board, I have been overwhelmed by the dedication of the Board members, the leadership team and ERH's employees.

Most rewarding part? ERH lives up to its mission of enriching the lives of older adults. That mission continues to spread to more and more older adults with compassion and organized strategy.

Favorite destination in Cincinnati? My wife and I enjoy Broadway in Cincinnati at the Aronoff Center for the Arts.



A Movable Feast

Meals on Wheels Volunteers Fill the Need



It takes a special group of people to organize and implement such a busy program. A staff of eight in addition to 60 volunteer drivers provide clients with meals—including vegetarian, low fat or low sodium—four days a week. Some clients qualify for meal subsidies through the Council on Aging; others pay \$7. Sue Susskind, supervisor of the Deupree MOW program, ensures



that everything runs smoothly. "I don't like the thought of people going hungry," she says. "I'll frequently deliver a meal on the way home."

Many of Susskind's volunteers have been with ERH for more than 10 years; many hear about the opportunity through their local churches.

One such dedicated volunteer is Steve Peelman, a retired mailman from Kennedy Heights. Peelman was looking for meaningful volunteer work when he left the workforce, and later noticed a MOW announcement in the bulletin of St. Anthony's Church in Madisonville. Peelman found Meals on Wheels to be a meaningful way to give back. He also enjoys the rewarding relationships he has developed with some of his clients.

Retired school counselor Don Popelar began volunteering in February 2013. "I was looking to stay involved," Popelar notes. "It has worked out well." The reaction from his clients is universally positive. "It's very rewarding," Popelar says. "I'm happy to help."

Anne and Tate Greenwald deliver meals to people in the Cambridge Arms. A Hyde Park native, Anne had been familiar with the work of MOW for years. The retired teacher decided to dedicate her volunteer efforts to a program that offered regular hours and a chance to engage with others. "The story of their lives is interesting," she explains. "We enjoy getting to know them." She also notes that her clients enjoy having someone to talk to and believes that volunteers can truly make a difference.

Southwest Ohio.

Welcome Aboard!

ERH Introduces Jeff Sellers, Vice President of Philanthropy by Marnie Hayutin



he new face on the Episcopal Retirement Homes executive team belongs to Jeff Sellers, who joined the community this summer as Vice President of Philanthropy.

"My duties are to raise philanthropic dollars in support of ERH's mission of enriching the lives of seniors," Sellers says.

With a grandmother in her 90s and a greatgrandmother who lived to be 104, Sellers says this is a mission very close to his heart. "A large portion of what we raise is needed for resident aid for our Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs)," he notes. "I believe in the mission of what ERH is trying to accomplish, and I am ready and willing to help them achieve their philanthropic goals."

In addition to his commitment to the well-being of seniors, Sellers brings with him 15 years of fundraising experience for organizations such as the Cincinnati Area Chapter of the American Red Cross and Union Institute & University.

"What excited us about Jeff is his very deep and substantial experience in the fundraising profession, with a good deal of success," says Doug Spitler, President and CEO of Episcopal Retirement Homes.

Sellers has some big shoes to fill, taking over for the Rev. Jim Hanisian who recently retired to North Carolina. For starters, Sellers is not a priest, so he won't be providing spiritual counseling. But, the two professionals worked closely during the transition period, and Sellers looks forward to picking up where his predecessor left off and moving the organization forward.

"There are some exciting plans looking ahead that Jeff will be able to address as our new vice president," Spitler notes, including a four-plank transformational campaign. "I am confident that Jeff will be able to further advance our initiatives to build significant philanthropic support for some key strategies that we're going to be pursuing."

Getting to know Sellers will be as easy as attending a Coffee & Conversation event at either Marjorie P. Lee or Deupree House, where the ERH executive team discusses current happenings within the organization with the residents. "I will be a regular figure there," Sellers says. He's also easy to reach by phone, email or social media. Or, just stop by to chat—his door is truly always open.

Jeff Sellers welcomes your questions. Contact him at (513) 272-5555 ext. 4242 or jsellers@erhinc.com.



Singing Their Praises

The New Martindell Award Celebrates the Work of ERH's Unsung Heroes

by Marnie Hayutin // photography by Gary Kessler

hen you work in a place where everybody goes the extra mile—where it's not uncommon for an employee to shop for a resident's favorite soda on her day off—you might be surprised to be singled out for recognition. Mary Pat Burke and Portia Ventus were both moved to tears upon learning they were selected as the

first recipients of the Martindell Award, an honor designed to recognize those who go above and beyond the call of duty in caring for the residents of ERH.

"I couldn't believe that it happened to me," Ventus says, who has been welcoming residents at the front desk of St. Paul Village for 15 years. "For the residents and the staff to think that much of me to

nominate me for an award like this, it was really an honor and a privilege to accept it."

Burke, Life Enrichment Coordinator at Marjorie P. Lee, got a little teary again as she recalled receiving the honor. "This means a lot to me," she says. "I would treat each one of the residents as if they were my own mom or dad. They're all such special people."

The Martindell Award was created this year by Trish Martindell, a board member and former chair who became part of the ERH family years ago when her father, John Wahlberg, was a resident at the Deupree Health Center.

"I searched the city for a facility, and I chose ERH," Martindell recalls. "It was one of the best decisions I ever made in my life."

As she prepared to step down as board chair last year, she looked for a way to leave a legacy in memory of her father and in honor of the caregivers who made the last five years of his life happy. The result is this new annual award, which Martindell says was inspired by Vickey Burt, her father's primary caregiver.

Burke and Ventus, who were selected from more than 70 nominations, certainly exemplify the legacy. Burke knows where each of her residents was born, where their children reside and what their former occupations were. She strives daily to find creative new ways to enrich the lives of her residents—from planning fall apple-tasting parties, to engaging a discussion of favorite flowers during a flower arranging class, to doing a resident's nails. She surprises residents with her response when they try to pay her for their manicures: "It just costs you a smile," she says. "See, you've already paid it!"

Ventus' mission is to do everything possible to help residents feel comfortable in their homes. "My main thing is to listen," she says. "If they need me to come to their apartments to read something, or they want to share something with me, I have to take that time. I'll be there after work or on my lunch break. Whatever it takes to help them."

Martindell Award nomination submissions are open to residents, families and managers at ERH. Joan Wetzel, Director of Organizational Development at ERH, was overwhelmed by the outpouring of support for the award in this inaugural year.

"One resident in particular has poor evesight, and it's difficult for her to write. But it was so important to her to nominate someone, she asked if I would write the nomination as she spoke to me about it," Wetzel recalls.

The award was designed to honor one recipient each year, but this year's nominations were so strong that Martindell and the selection committee couldn't narrow it down to only one. Both Burke and Ventus received gifts of \$1,000. A special movable display case will celebrate the winners for six months in each workplace.

"I cannot tell you how happy I am that this award exists, and that it's at least bringing joy to a few people who rarely, rarely get recognized," Martindell says. "I just hope that my dad knows that this award exists and is smiling."



Trish Martindell created the new award as a legacy for her father, John Wahlberg, who was a resident at the Deupree Health Center. The award was inspired by his caregiver, Vickey Burt.



by Rick Bird

Four Years and Counting!

ERH Receives Top Workplace Award



hat makes for a rewarding workplace environment?

Joan Wetzel, Director of Organizational Development and Human Resources for ERH, says the goal is to create an atmosphere of collaboration and empathy where workers develop respect for each other and feel cared for by the organization. For employees, that can simply mean it's a friendly place to be.

"From the day I started at ERH, it has always been very welcoming," says Kathy Alsept, billing specialist and an ERH employee for more than 20 years. "Everybody goes out of their way to help each other out."

For the fourth year in a row, Episcopal Retirement Homes was named a "Top Workplace" in the Tristate finishing fifth in a survey of mid-sized companies conducted by *Enquirer Media*. The

survey samples more than 27,000 employees at 128 companies.

ERH was also given a "best in class" citation for communication noting that frequent formal and informal meetings allow management to keep employees up-to-date on what's happening throughout the organization.

Wetzel says the Top Workplace honors are especially meaningful since the survey measures attitudes, not merely workplace metrics.

"What is so special is it doesn't measure bottomline profitability or other performance criteria, it measures culture," Wetzel explains. "It's based purely on the feedback of staff. If the staff isn't happy or is not feeling valued or cared for, they are going to say so."

Wetzel notes that the secret to ERH's successful workplace business model is pretty straightforward: "Our organization believes if we take good care of our staff, the staff will take good care of our residents."

Indeed, internal surveys confirm that what seems intuitive to management is actually working in practice. Wetzel says there

is a correlation in ERH internal surveys with satisfaction levels between staff and residents. She calls it a culture of partnership.

"There is a sense of community between the staff and residents, and everyone seems to be on the same page," says D.J. Brengle, who has worked as a Marjorie P. Lee receptionist for two years. "Everyone cares about each other and wants what's best for each other. It's part of the person-centered care that we do."

Wetzel believes the high workplace satisfaction scores among the 425 ERH employees is related to the organization's "person-centered care" model. In years past, staff mentioned that they felt their time during the work day didn't allow for ample time to

build trusting and meaningful relationships with the residents, which struck a chord with the leadership of ERH and eventually became one of the pillars of person-centered care.

Shifting to this model empowered employees, giving them more freedom to do what they are trained to do, which is to continually exceed resident expectations, Wetzel says. Within every ERH community, there is a distinct culture built upon respect. It goes along with the philosophy that residents are not living in ERH buildings, but rather the staff is working in the residents' homes.

"It allowed a lot of freedom and flexibility for our staff to have a different relationship with our residents," Wetzel says. "There is time built into the

day to really get to know the residents and participate with them in daily activities—maybe just taking the time to sit down and read a newspaper with a resident, discussing local news."

Wetzel also thinks the ERH principle of assigning all employees (not just caregivers) to volunteer during work hours in extended resident families helps solidify a caring team spirit.

Brengle agrees. "I don't

know of anyone who complains," he says. "It helps our roles to become more than a job and become something enjoyable. It's great to have some one-on-one time with the residents. You get to know them, and it drives home the fact of why we are all here."

Work-life balance has always been an important value within ERH. "We view employees as individuals who have a life outside of work," Wetzel says. "They are a mom, a wife, a husband, a son, not only a nurse, an accountant or a receptionist. Managers are in tune with their team members and who they are, what their strengths are and where they find joy. People are given space to be who they need to be. Sometimes that may mean more time with their families."

"There is a sense of community between the staff and residents, and everyone seems to be on the same page."

—D.J. Brengle, Marjorie P. Lee receptionist





It's "Game On" in Affordable Living Communities

Programs Offer Physical Fitness and Social Benefits

t Episcopal Retirement Homes, Affordable Living means a lot more than providing clean and safe housing; it means providing an enriching community where residents can thrive regardless of their income level. ERH is committed to providing extensive activities and services not typically found in affordable housing.

"We have a lot of things to choose from," says Florence Beaber, a 100-year-old resident who attends nearly every activity offered. "They help stimulate my mind, and they help keep me aware of things that are going on." From morning coffee gatherings to spiritual services to bus trips and exercise programs, there's always something happening for the residents.

ERH provides a variety of activities and programs to meet the residents' interests—there is truly something for everyone. Needle workers gather every Wednesday for Crochet for a Cause, where residents knit or crochet hats and scarves to donate to local hospitals and organizations that assist the homeless. Once a month a group goes out to dinner at a restaurant chosen by the residents. And on the third Friday of every month, a loyal following attends Prayer, Praise and Potatoes where, with help from St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, the residents enjoy Bible discussion and gospel singing, followed by a baked potato lunch.

Chair volleyball is another popular weekly event where residents play volleyball in chairs set up like a volleyball court. "They get into it like the real ballplayers do," says resident Willa Wright, a regular chair volleyball team member.

All of these activities help keep the residents engaged. "We want our residents to thrive, and these activities help them to do so," says Kathy Ison-Lind, Vice President of Affordable Housing and In-Home Services at ERH. "When people are involved and staying active, they are much healthier and happier."

The activities are all made possible through ERH's extensive fundraising efforts and the help of Chris Lemmon, Activities Director and Volunteer Coordinator for Affordable Living, along with her assistant JoAnne Lacey and a wonderful crew of volunteers, who get as much out of interacting with the residents as the residents get from them.

"They really go all out, and we have a lot to be thankful for," adds Shirley Turner, the reigning champion at Wii Bowling at St. Paul Village who holds the record with two perfect-300 scores.

That's the Episcopal Retirement Homes' difference. Providing not just an apartment building, but a real community where residents live well into the future.

(Left) Residents at Canterbury Court can test out their green thumb in the year-round greenhouse. (Right) St. Paul Village residents relax with their weekly on-site class with Project Yoga.



Sunflower Power

Residents Bring ERH Gala's Theme to Life by Whitney Harrod Morris

he festive sunflower became the theme for the ERH Gala 2013, held at the Hyde Park Country Club in Septem-

ber. More than a dozen ERH residents worked behind the scenes to create the event décor and sunflower-themed artwork, pitching in with their talents and creativity to make the night a success.

"In the last couple of years, the gala committee has put more effort into getting resi-

dents involved in planning," Deupree resident Nancy Holterhoff says. "Some of the residents are party people. As soon as you say 'party,' they say, 'how can I get involved?'"

Deupree resident Vickie Chisholm led the efforts for table décor. Each of the 30 tables

featured a fresh sunflower in a tall, slender vase with accents of silk autumn leaves selected from Hyde Park Floral & Garden Center.

"It's a wonderful opportunity," says Chisholm, a former floral designer. "For last year's masquerade theme, we decorated masks with feathers

and glitter. This year we went back to the idea of having fresh flowers."

About 220 attendees admired the residents'





Pat Donaldson, resident of Deupree House, worked diligently in her apartment to help create artwork for the 2013 ERH Sunflower Gala.

stylized and artistic renditions of Van Gogh's iconic painting *Sunflowers*. Interpretive works from residents graced each table.

About 15 Deupree and Marjorie P. Lee residents hand-painted these tabletop works during 90-minute classes. They came away with three different styles – acrylic on canvas, reverse glass and slates. Lucky attendees at each table won the artwork by finding a number under a chair.

"The art instructor encouraged those whose backgrounds weren't in art. She would give tips on outlines and strokes," says Pat Donaldson, who participated in the painting classes and donated her slate artwork to the silent auction.

Sunflowers also appeared

on the gala's invitations and promotional materials. The invitations carried a design that Holterhoff originally created as a 12 x 16-inch watercolor of a vase of sunflowers using shades ranging from dark gold to pale lemon. The original sold at the gala's silent auction. The committee also used Holterhoff's design on note cards available for sale at the event.

Besides Holterhoff and Donaldson, six other residents donated silent auction items, including a photograph of the Marjorie P. Lee fountain and batik (dyed-cloth) artwork. Other silent auction donations from ERH Board and community members included Cincinnati Reds signed baseball tickets,

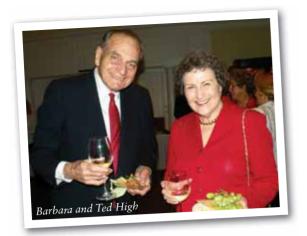
a week's stay in a two-bedroom condo in the Grand Caymans, two round-trip tickets to New York, restaurant gift cards and theater tickets.

Now in its eighth year, the ERH gala raises money for the Good Samaritan Mission, which supports ERH ministry programs and services for older adults. This includes Meals on Wheels, Partners in Care, affordable living activities and services for limited-income seniors, staff hardship assistance and aid for deserving residents of ERH communities.

Besides raising program funds, the gala provides a chance for residents and community members to come together. Attendees look forward to talking with residents at the gala and seeing the culmination of their efforts and energy.

The planning committee includes two Board members, four residents and the president of the Marjorie P. Lee Auxiliary. The group began planning for the event last winter for festivities that included a silent auction, appetizers, a three-course dinner and dancing along with entertainment from the 1940s cover band *The Mix*. Busken Bakery donated custom desserts with the ERH logo.

"People enjoy being in such a festive environment," says Diane Decker, ERH Director of Fund Development and member of the ERH Gala Committee. "People tend to know one another because they've attended over the years. It's like family coming together.



Donor Spotlight

Barbara and Ted High Join Living Legacy Society

piscopal Retirement Homes would like to share its appreciation for Deupree House residents Barbara and Ted High, two members of the Living Legacy Society. The Highs moved to Deupree House in 2010 and learned their new stress-free lifestyle gave them ample time to become involved in the community. Barbara serves as the Chair of the Wellness Committee and as a board member for the Executive Residents Committee. Together, they are advocates for planned giving, which allows ERH to sustain its promise that no resident in its Continuing Care Retirement Communities of Deupree House and Marjorie P. Lee will be asked to leave even if their financial situation should change.

Barb and Ted High wish to show their gratitude for the quality of life they have experienced at Deupree House by making a planned gift. The Highs decided to use a charitable gift annuity as the vehicle for their gift and have established two within their time at Deupree House. While gratitude was their primary motivation, they also realized that charitable gift annuities offered significant personal financial rewards.

Charitable gift annuities offer large tax deductions in the year that they are made. Secondly, they have a very high interest rate, up to 9 percent per year, based on age, for the life of the donors. Finally, a large part of the annual annuity that the donor receives is tax-free income for a period of time.

Donors considering charitable gift annuities in 2013 should understand that annuities are extremely popular this year due to changes in tax and estate laws. Therefore, if you are interested, please make your intentions clear by December 1, 2013, to receive the same benefits that the Highs have received.

ERH would like to thank Barb and Ted High for their generosity and support. ■

For more information on planned giving, contact Diana Collins at (513) 272-5555 ext. 4224 or dcollins@erhinc.com.

Charitable Distributions from IRAs

IRS rules require individuals age 70½ and older to take required minimum distributions (RMDs) from their IRA each year, regardless of whether the income is needed. These annual withdrawals are subject to ordinary income taxes.

Good News!

If you are required to take an RMD during the remainder of 2013 and would like to donate money to charity, you can do so by making the contribution directly from your IRA. This will satisfy your RMD amount without reporting additional income on your 2013 income tax return and will allow you to see your gift at work.

How Do I Take Advantage of this Opportunity?

- Determine the charity or charities you would like to assist. This can be any public charity excluding donor advised funds and private foundations.
- Determine the amount you would like to contribute to each charity. The total amount that can be contributed each year is \$100,000 per individual.
- Call your financial planner or banker to review your current financial situation to make sure your donations will not adversely affect your ability to live comfortably. Discuss the charities and amounts you would like to contribute to each charity with your financial advisor or banker. Your advisor can use this information to complete forms to direct the contributions directly from your IRA to the charities you have identified.



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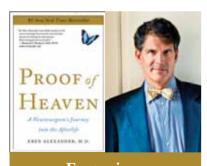






Parish Health Ministry

Refresh Your Soul 2014



Featuring:
Dr. Eben Alexander,
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will present
"A Neurosurgeon's
Journey into
the Afterlife."

Connecting Heaven and Healing

Save the date

Saturday, March 1st 7:45 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

at

The Community of the Good Shepherd (Northern Cincinnati)

We hope you'll join us! To register (after December 2nd), visit www.parishhealthministry.com Questions? Contact 513.272.5555 x4285



Parish Health Ministry
A Service of Episcopal Retirement Homes