

# Protecting the Environment

One of the important aspects of stewardship at Presbyterian Senior Living is related to the more than 1,700 acres of land that we occupy for our current and future generations of residents. Aside from being a significant corporate asset, the way we care for this land creates an environment that significantly adds to the quality of life of those we serve. Whether the space is large, like the 485 acres on the Glen Meadows campus, or a much smaller site in an urban setting, like the Easton Home, each environment is carefully tended with an understanding that we are the caretakers of a precious resource.

The below article, reprinted from the Carlisle Sentinel, is an indication of the interplay between those we serve and the need to protect the environment. The habitat for wildlife is an important consideration at Green Ridge Village, and the presence of wildlife, like bluebirds, is an indication of a healthy environment on the 380 acre campus.

## Green Ridge Village Birdhouses

*Michael Bupp/The Sentinel*  
*Travis Kellar, Sentinel Reporter (reprinted with permission)*



*Green Ridge Village resident Cletus Benjamin investigates a bluebird nest.*

Green Ridge Village residents have taken it upon themselves to monitor bluebirds and other bird species within their community.

The Newville residents monitor 52 birdhouses that are along a bluebird trail that runs throughout the entire community. A dedicated group of individuals trek through the community to each birdhouse to take a peek inside the houses. They gather data ranging from species in the house, how many nests were built, how many chicks fled from the nest and how many died.

“We report the caches report to the Pennsylvania Bluebird Society — how many we’ve had for the year,” said Cletus Benjamin, a resident of the community. This year marks the third year the community has monitored the birdhouses. Fifty birdhouses were monitored in 2012, and nests were built by bluebirds, chickadees, tree swallows and house wrens. There were 10 bluebird nests, with a total of 44 chicks that “fledged,” or flew from the nest. Those numbers were up from 2011, which saw six bluebird nests with 22 chicks that fledged.

The bluebirds did not always have that sort of presence in the area.

“Bluebirds started to disappear all over the United States, partly because of the starlings, sparrows, some other birds,” Benjamin said. “They just got crowded out of their natural nesting cavities.”

### Building the houses

Benjamin got the idea to increase the number of the houses in the community three years ago. He approached a local farmer for building supplies for the houses. He then sought newer boards, and 40 birdhouses were initially built. Now, there are 52.

Fellow resident John Bartko helped to build the houses, along with other residents in the community. He said the process took about two weeks, and the job was split up among the residents.

“It was just a production line,” Bartko said. “You drilled all the holes, and then you cut all the boards for all the roofs and the sides, and then you just put them all together.”

Benjamin said another resident then got the idea to use the houses as a fundraising opportunity. Bluebird houses were then sold for \$40 for a pair — \$30 of the profits went to the Green Ridge Village Auxiliary, the other \$10 used for supplies. Benjamin said a resident had a friend in the garage door business who donated scrap track to be used for posts.

“It saved us a lot of money,” he said. “We didn’t use \$10 for materials and stuff, so there was even more profit for the auxiliary.”

### Attracting birds

Benjamin said the birdhouses have been popular amongst residents. As residents put out birdhouses, he said it has been a way to gauge what works and what doesn’t in terms of attracting bluebirds.

Benjamin said sightings of bluebirds, or any other species, starts a sort of competition for community members. Members will boast that their birdhouses have birds or that their birds have made nests. He said that sheet is posted in the community’s message room, which residents are able to list what species they have seen or heard. So far, 77 species have made it onto the list so far.

Benjamin attributed the sense of friendly competition as a “generational” aspect of the community.

“A lot of people here grew up knowing their birds a little bit and being interested in birds,” he said.

Catherine Kirkham, executive director of Green Ridge Village, got a first-hand look at the nests when she came to the community. She was taken on a tour throughout the campus on a golf cart and shown all of the birdhouses — something she said typically happens with new staff members and visitors.

“I see it as a mission in motion for them, that they really want to do this to help preserve our environment,” Kirkham said. “I see it as a bigger piece that they enjoy this because it makes them feel fulfilled.”

### Tips for success

Benjamin and Bartko stressed that virtually anybody could build a bluebird house.

“It’s a very simple thing to build a bluebird house,”

Bartko said. “It’s just like building a box.”

That simplicity is not to be taken lightly. Benjamin said bluebirds have particular preferences that need to be considered when building and placing a box. He and Bartko suggested looking up box designs online, as they constantly change. Benjamin also noted that bluebirds like areas with lawn-mowed grass so that they are able to eat off of the ground. Location of the house is also key.

“They like to be not too far from somewhere where they can perch and see stuff,” Benjamin said. “They don’t like to be in brush or with something shrubby real close to them.”

Bartko agreed. “All of our birdhouses ... they’re free, in the sense that there’s nothing around them,” he said. Bluebirds can be seen from early April to September, according to Benjamin. He and Bartko also recommended that those interested in bluebird houses check out the Bluebird Society of America. The website is [www.thebsp.org](http://www.thebsp.org).

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## When Doing the Right Thing Pays Off

At Presbyterian Senior Living, we talk about Stewardship as a higher calling - doing the right thing to make the world a better place. There are various intersections between doing the right thing and achieving a positive financial result. In 2010 and 2011, Presbyterian Senior Living was awarded two *Smart Rehab Grants* from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency – one for Presbyterian Apartments, a 165 unit high rise apartment on Second Street in Harrisburg, and the second for Geneva House, a 67 unit senior apartment building in Scranton. Both buildings were constructed in the late 60s and early 70s when energy conservation was less of an issue than it is today.

Presbyterian Apartments

The cost of improvements at Presbyterian Apartments and Geneva House was significant – over \$900,000. The



*Smart Rehab Grant* made it possible to tackle the problem in a comprehensive way to begin realizing the benefits immediately.



Geneva House Apartments

Reviewing our energy usage for the past three years, the results at Presbyterian Apartments, and to a lesser degree Geneva House, are profound. Over the last three years, gas; electric; water; and sewer

expense have declined significantly – 35% at Presbyterian Apartments and 21% at Geneva House.

Clearly, the *PFA Smart Rehab Grants* have made a significant difference in these two facilities where we support seniors with significant financial needs. Also, what is wonderful about these results is that the improvements were nothing fancy; basic things like newer HVAC units, Energy Star appliances, window and package tightening, and low flow toilets.

Saving energy fits in with our desire to behave as responsible citizens and do our part to conserve finite resources. It is also a way to conserve the resources of PSL and the people we are called to serve.

## Stewardship and Community Excellence Plans

Twice a year Presbyterian Senior Living Leadership staff gathers to share their community excellence plans (CEP) with each other. These regional events provide a forum for innovation and creativity for continuous improvement and major changes in the way we provide service. One of the frequent themes of community excellence plans are green



Kirkland Village

initiatives, an important area of stewardship. The following is a summary of the green initiatives from Kirkland Village in a recent CEP presentation. The goal was to focus on better utilization of supplies and utilities.

- **More than 58 billion disposable cups are consumed each year in the United States. Laid end to end they would stretch over 4.8 million miles.**
- **A thin layer of wax coats the inside of most disposable coffee cups and prevents them from being recycled. In an effort to reduce our carbon footprint, Culinary Services initiated a \$.50 surcharge on our disposable cups. The reusable cups given to all staff by Kirkland Village helped the effort considerably. As a result, Culinary Services is purchasing 1,500 fewer disposable cups a month, or 18,000 cups A YEAR! As an added bonus, Culinary Services will save close to \$1,000 in paper supplies in 2013.**



- **There are more than 100 million exit signs in the United States, including 61 at Kirkland village. Those 100 million signs use a combined total of 35 billion KWH of power per year, the total output of 4 power plants. Kirkland Village has begun installing new exit signs that use LED bulbs. The new signs use 1/5 less electricity than the old signs which use fluorescent bulbs. At an average \$.08 per KWH, the 32 signs that have been replaced have saved \$76 in electricity costs during 2013! The LED bulbs also have an average life span of 10 years vs. 14 months for florescent bulbs, saving an additional \$4235 in bulb replacement costs over the next 10 years. This means less electricity used, less maintenance, and an upgrade cost of just \$18 per fixture. A goal of replacing all 61 signs by the end of 2013 has been set.**



- In January of 2013 Culinary Services made some employee scheduling changes which reduced the number of hours the equipment is in operation, from 22 hours per day to 15. Electricity savings from turning off the lights an additional 35 hours per week @ \$.08 KWH, totals over \$350 per year. We will also see additional savings, because gas equipment is not being used and refrigerator doors remain closed during off times.

- Single use plastic shopping bags can take over 400 years to break down in a landfill, and only a small percentage of the 380 billion bags used each year are recycled. In an effort to reduce the number of plastic shopping bags used at Kirkland Village, we are purchasing reusable cloth shopping bags, which will be sold at a minimal cost.

- A ten member committee is also being established and will focus on finding a minimum of 2 new ideas to reduce energy and water use by December 2013. The Green

Initiative will be promoted with education sessions held each quarter focusing on environmentally responsible living and



through articles posted in the Contact newsletter.

Every Presbyterian Senior Living location has a Community Excellence Plan (CEP) that is unique to each location. Often these plans focus on stewardship issues - from energy and water conservation to preserving natural habitat for wildlife. Residents and staff work together to make each CEP a unique response to fulfill our stewardship responsibility as an organization.

Steve Proctor, CEO

