

Vibrant living

Unique clubs and activities for seniors

BY JINELLE VAIANA

Seniors are often reminded to focus on a healthy lifestyle—eating well, prioritizing physical activity, maintaining a social life, and more.

Engaging in these activities leads to slower rates of cognitive decline in the elderly, allowing them to live more independently later in life, according to the National Institute on Aging.

Luckily, most senior living facilities in our area understand the importance of keeping their residents engaged, learning, and social through various activities and clubs. We spoke with several facilities for this article, all with special offerings for their residents.

STARGAZING SENIORS

The Summit at Brighton's Astronomy Club attracts members of all backgrounds: librarians, teachers, engineers, and more.

"It's a very special club that levels the playing field—everyone gets to experience the world above together," says Wendy Ferrer,

senior vice president of housing and marketing.

The club was founded in 2015 by Summit resident Dr. Alvin Ureles (who goes by Dr. Al), now a centenarian. Today, the Astronomy Club has twelve members who meet every other week to view the skies together.

The Summit at Brighton, Jewish Senior *Life's* independent living community, boasts an onsite observatory with a domed enclosure where residents can go to observe the sky. And when the club can't get outdoors, there will typically be a presentation topic, discussion, pop quizzes, and more led by Tony Columbeck from the Astronomy Section of the Rochester Academy of Science.

HEARTFELT GENEROSITY

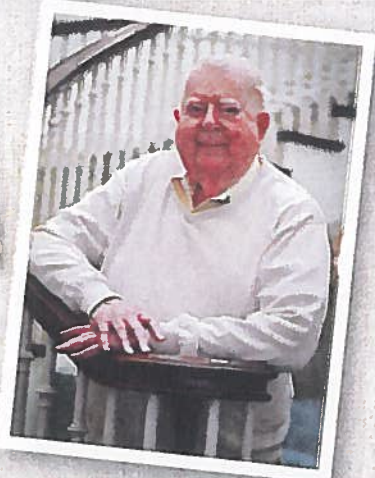
Two or three decades ago, facilities focused on fewer activities and clubs for seniors because it seemed more residents shared the same interests, says Maplewood Nursing Home owner and

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administrator Greg Chamberly.

"Today's residents have more diverse interests and backgrounds, often participating in a large variety of social activities," he explains. "They expect us to provide adaptive opportunities that allow their continued involvement."

To best meet the needs of Maplewood residents, recreation staff interview residents and family members to learn about their interests and desires. Their input directly impacts recreation program planning.

Many Maplewood residents have shown an interest in giving back to the community, which ensures continued engagement in the annual Holiday Bazaar. Local vendors participate onsite, selling a variety of homemade items to residents eager to check items off their holiday list. Residents choose a charity to benefit from each event, and they facilitate raffles and a bake sale to raise funds.

Also around the holidays, the facility helps a local women's shelter by setting up a holiday angel tree. Angels are hung on a Christmas tree, and each one lists the desired gifts of a family in need. Residents come together for a wrapping party after all gifts are collected, and the resident who leads the event helps drop off the gifts to the local shelter.

FROM HEARTS TO HEARTH

Just like getting a good night's sleep, Dolores and John Granito consider socialization to be essential to their well-being as they age.

Both residents of Ferris Hills at West Lake in Canandaigua, Dolores takes advantage of mahjong and tai chi classes, bridge parties, and other card games.

She also has a studio in her apartment where she creates handmade cards to sell at a local farmers' market, so it was a natural transition for Dolores to start leading a card-making class at Ferris Hills on a monthly basis.

Another unique and popular activity offered by Clark Meadows, the facility's enriched living community, is a monthly cooking demo lead by staff.

"Our life enrichment assistant brings a unique recipe to the table every month, which she bases on seasonal ingredients. My personal favorite was back in the summer when she made grilled peaches with burrata, basil, and balsamic reduction on a crostini," says Katherine McGrath, the lifestyle coordinator at Clark Meadows.

SONGS THAT SOAR

All voices rise at Fairport Baptist Homes (FBH), where Adult Care and Long-term Care residents come together for the Resident Choir.

The group learns and practices songs

to sing and then performs in concerts throughout the year.

"The choir has brought both facilities together, giving residents a purpose. Our holiday concert brought families together, and they got to see their loved ones do something they enjoy and see them happy," says Jill Sypniewski, activities and volunteer director at FBH.

The facility also hosts a FBH Men's Group and a FBH Women's Group, giving alert and oriented residents of long-term care a chance to "socialize, share stories, and develop friendships." And residents enjoy participating in the FBH bowling league, as well.

"Bowling has become a very popular program; we've even held a few tournaments this past year," says Sypniewski. "It's amazing to see how interactive they get during the activity and how often they give positive feedback toward other residents' efforts during the game. We celebrate each other and have fun and laughs along the way."

GOING GREEN

In an effort to better their community and beyond, residents of the Highlands of Pittsford began a Go Green Group, which became active in 2021.

The group supports the residents who initiated the facility's community

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Focusing on a healthy lifestyle leads to slower rates of cognitive decline in seniors.



garden. The garden features native plants and flowers that attract beneficial native wildlife.

They've also introduced reusable containers for food deliveries at the Highlands. The containers are recyclable and can go through 1,000 commercial washes before degrading. In one year, they saved enough waste to build a structure as tall as the Empire State Building.

Whether it's astronomy, charity, cards, or environmental work, the key is finding an activity that seniors can look forward to and learn something from. As Dr. Al of the Summit says, "Most people live their whole lives without looking up." So, look up. Keep learning, growing, reaching.

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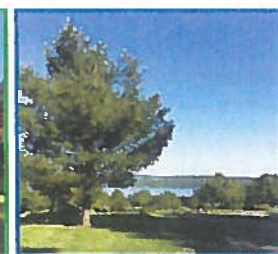
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